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## Black Record: German's Past and Present

Robert Gilbert Vansittart

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# BLACK RECORD

GERMANS  
PAST AND PRESENT



by

Sir Robert Vansittart

Price Sixpence net

# BLACK RECORD:

GERMANS PAST AND PRESENT

*by*

THE RT. HON. SIR ROBERT VANSITTART,  
P.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.LITT.



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TO  
DOROTHY THOMPSON



## PREFACE

IN response to very numerous requests, and in particular to those resulting from the extensive extracts which have appeared in *The Sunday Times*, I have agreed to the publication of these seven broadcasts. In view of some of the comments received it is clearly better that the whole, and not only parts, should be available, in order that it may be seen not only what I have said but what I have *not* said. I am proud to be able to dedicate the whole to Miss Dorothy Thompson, whose clear thinking and clear writing have long laid the world in her debt.

As a foreword I have a few quick observations to make.

Firstly, these talks deal only, and in the smallest possible compass, with the facts of Germany's conduct toward her neighbours. I offer some short explanations of this "plain and ugly" record. I do not attempt, in these few and condensed pages, to cover the whole German field. In particular I do not attempt to deal with such other virtues or vices as Germans, singular or plural, possess. These are mainly unrelated to the facts from which the world has repeatedly suffered at German hands. It would be irrelevant, for example—even if I had space—to discuss German contributions to art and science. These, in any case, may cut both ways. Science clearly does so. Neither Wagner nor Nietzsche has been politically harmless, though Nietzsche, a very great artist in prose, has probably been more misinterpreted than any other writer. It would be equally irrelevant to discuss the domestic qualities of

Germans or the conflicting height of their statistics of crime.

Secondly, strict brevity and self-limitation to this one subject—the conduct of Germans toward their neighbours—have of necessity cut the story to the bare bones, and so cut out many arguments and theories bearing on German wars. I am less concerned with arguments and theories than with the sufferings of mankind; and if anyone affirms that this brevity has weighted the scales in favour of the victims, my reply must be that the world would have been a far less painful place if it had habitually followed that course instead of the opposite one. I make no further apology for keeping to the point—a sharp one—of the German will to wars. Germans have made five wars in the last seventy-five years, besides four “near misses”. If Germans had had their way, there would have been a war every eight years for the last three-quarters of a century. This sequence is due to their character and system. I hope that these talks may help to dispel the timorous fallacy, that men are not concerned by the systems of their neighbours.

Thirdly, these talks have been unwelcome to the School of Advanced Flying in the Face of Experience.

I have observed that some critics of them have suggested that I have lumped all Germans together as bad. I have said explicitly the opposite. I have said that the good exist, but that they have hitherto not been numerous enough to turn the scale. That, one would have thought, was obvious. Again, it is alleged that I wish to deal with Germany in this or that way. I have said no word whatever on that subject. What I *have* said is that the record is a black one, and that time and caution are essential, before we can believe in conversion. That also, one would have thought, was a simple and obvious proposition. This

type of critic goes on to suggest that I do not believe in the possibility of conversion. I have said nothing of the kind. I explicitly do not discard the possibility of a change of heart—though it must be utter and therefore not easy—provided that it is not impeded by indulgence and wishful thinking. I have been further criticized for saying that Germans are emotional rather than sentimental. Here is the answer. “The authoritative German War Manual, *Kriegsbrauch im Landkriege*, prepared by the German General Staff in 1902,” says Professor Goodhart, Professor of Jurisprudence in the University of Oxford—and please note the date, 1902—“warns military commanders against the humanitarian tendencies of the times, and refers to the humane principles of The Hague Conventions as ‘sentimentalism and flabby emotionalism’.” The Germans do not know one from the other, and discourage *both*.

Again, I have been told that not many historians would accept my “philosophy of history”. I have no more attempted a “philosophy of history” than I have attempted to define war aims or methods. I have merely said that Germans have continually and copiously killed their neighbours, and how, and why. I hope to help in preventing them from doing it yet again—a rather laudable object, I should have thought. I am being sternly practical. I am *not* philosophizing. I would not presume to make so large a gesture in so small a space. Another suggestion is that the case would have been stronger, if I had not gone so far back, if I had confined myself to the effects of Prussianism in the last hundred years. Surely any picture of Prussianism would be incomplete without some reference to Frederick the Great. On the Germans’ own franker showing before 1914 “the political history of Germany, from the accession of Frederick in 1740 to the present hour, has



admittedly no meaning unless it be regarded as a movement towards the establishment of a world-empire, with the war against England as the necessary preliminary". I do not over-rate the pre-Frederick periods, though they cannot be simply disconnected and side-tracked; indeed they could hardly have received briefer reference. The omission of *all* reference to them would also have been partial and arbitrary. Moreover the atrocities committed under this German régime, and in this German war, and the open return to literal slavery in Europe, are no accidental and ephemeral outcrop. They are a reversion to something much further back than the Kaiser, or Bismarck, or Frederick, to the doings of a thousand, and two thousand, years ago. Again, I am told that I have myself used the racial theory dear to Germans. The suggestion seems to me devoid of meaning. I am not using *any* theory at all of any sort or description. I aspire to no theories. I am a working diplomatist with his coat off; and I am simply saying that mankind has suffered atrociously from a series of gratuitous wars. These wars have been inflicted on mankind by one race, and mainly for one reason. That may make the problem of prevention easier than if each of these wars had been made by a different race for a different reason. And I have always held that prevention is possible, if one is sternly practical enough. For that purpose it is necessary to discard once and for all what Sainte Beuve rightly called the "vague and lyrical" view of Germany diffused by Madame de Staël, and to keep strictly to the record—the worst ever. That is not racial theory, nor any other kind of theory. It is a plain statement of the truth. If anyone is using racial theories it is those who persist in the delusion that the Germans are our "blood brothers" and "hereditary friends". These theorists must bear their share of responsibility for the fact that Germany was thus

able to spring two great wars on an unprepared world. Suppose, however, for an instant that we were *both* using racial theories. Theirs has had the consequences described. Mine at least enabled me to foresee with accuracy both the time and manner of the two last wars that Germans have now made on mankind. Which of the two "theories" has justified itself? We need not proceed with the argument.

It is only natural that many would still prefer to doubt; and they may be more inclined to believe Heine than me. I refer in particular to that passage in his *History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, where he speaks of "that ancient German eagerness for battle which combats not for the sake of destroying, not even for the sake of victory, but merely for the sake of the combat itself". He goes on: "Christianity—and this is its fairest merit—subdued to a certain extent the brutal warrior-ardour of the Germans, but it could not entirely quench it; and when the cross, that restraining talisman, falls to pieces, then will break forth the frantic Berserker rage whereof Northern poets have said and sung so much. . . . The old stone gods will then arise from the forgotten ruins and wipe from their eyes the dust of centuries, and Thor with his giant hammer will arise again, and he will shatter the Gothic cathedrals. . . . When you hear a crash such as never before has been heard in the world's history, then know that at last the German thunderbolt has fallen. . . . There will be played in Germany a drama compared to which the French Revolution will seem but an innocent idyll. . . . They do not love you in Germany, which is almost incomprehensible, since you took such pains to please at least the better and fairer half of the German people. *But even though this half still loved you, it is precisely the half that does not bear arms, and whose friendship,*



*therefore, would be of little help to you.*" This was, and is, the point. It was written over a hundred years ago. It will be admitted that Heine was not only a dazzlingly great lyrical poet but a startlingly accurate prophet.<sup>1</sup> I am in good company. He has been banned in Germany not only as a Jew but as one who also saw too clearly what he called "the bitter truth".

I have never understood why people should expect Truth to be indefatigably pleasant; besides, it is cheaper exercise to grapple with facts than to cling to illusions. If there were never a need to face reality, all our best qualities would be gone. And one can only face it by standing up. Foresight is difficult on all fours.

<sup>1</sup> I have also been criticized for quoting Tacitus. He says that Germans would sooner get things by blood than sweat. Before 1914 Germany was on the high road to economic domination. She preferred the short cut of the sword. Tacitus, like Heine, knew something.

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## BLACK RECORD

### I

#### FOUR HUNDRED MILLION HAPPINESSES

IN 1907 I was crossing the Black Sea in a German ship. It was spring, and the rigging was full of bright-coloured birds. I noticed one among them in particular, strongly marked, heavier-beaked. And every now and then it would spring upon one of the smaller, unsuspecting birds, and kill it. It was a shrike or butcher-bird; and it was steadily destroying all its fellows. Now I am a bird-lover, and I couldn't stand this. I only had a revolver handy, and it took me the whole day to get that butcher-bird. And while I was doing it, a thought flew across my mind, and never again left it. That butcher-bird on that German ship behaved exactly like Germany behaves. I was twenty-six at the time, and life looked pretty good—or should have looked, for there were four hundred million happinesses of a sort in Europe. But already I could feel the shadow on them, for I had spent long enough in Germany to know that she would bring on her fourth war as soon as she thought the going good.

Now, think for a moment of the butcher-bird's record. It has been well said by a German social historian that "the rise of Nazism in Germany extends over three generations". Nazi methods are certainly deep-rooted in Germany. Bismarck's resort to forgery—to make sure of war in 1870—was thought clever in Germany, if a little original. Since then forgery has become endemic: for



years now it has been an integral part of the German system. No German State-paper is ever issued that does not bristle with falsification, no German communiqué that is not compounded of lies. Anyone henceforth who believes in any German official publication qualifies automatically as a professional dupe.

Well, by hook and by crook—especially crook—the butcher-bird got three wars before 1914, and each time the stakes and the butcher's bill mounted; they were higher in 1866 than in 1864, and higher in 1870 than in 1866. Each of these wars was carefully planned and provoked by the butcher-bird. Then, in 1905 it nearly got another war; but the French submitted to the humiliation of throwing overboard their Foreign Minister, Monsieur Delcassé, just as before Germany's Fifth War they recoiled again and again rather than give Germany any pretext for turning Europe into a blood-bath. There was another narrow squeak in 1911, but the butcher-bird landed its fourth war right enough in 1914. This time the *crescendo* mounted formidably; stakes and butcher's bill went rocketing. And what had Adolf Hitler to say about that? He says in *Mein Kampf*: "I sank down upon my knees and thanked heaven out of the fullness of my heart for the favour of being permitted to live in such a time." But don't think Hitler was, or is, an exception. As early as the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 the King of Prussia was continually thanking God in letters to his wife for the number of fellow-men whom he had killed. Even to our Victorian ancestors this seemed insufferable, and I think it was *Punch* that published a parody of the correspondence:

Thanks to the Lord, my dear Augusta,  
We've hit the French an awful buster.  
Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below!  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow

For generations Germany has been trying to annex not only the earth but heaven. When the Nazis found that heaven could *not* be annexed, they discarded it altogether. You can see, then, that Hitler didn't come from nowhere. In his own exultation and sniffing of carnage, it never occurred to him in 1914 that four hundred million happinesses were to be lined up and knocked down. Hitler's mind, of course, is incapable of working on those lines. You may think it strange that anyone should thank heaven—why heaven?—for the chance of wholesale slaughter. But you will see from what I have just said that Hitler was one with the past. This was *Der Tag*—"The Day"—that had been toasted all over Germany; and those of us who had lived in Germany had long known it was being toasted and lived for. It is therefore not surprising that last year Germany's Fifth War began. Hitler was so overjoyed at the Fourth War that he was determined to have a fifth all of his own, and he left no stone unturned to ensure and prepare for it. This must be clear to anyone who looks back over the years, though the sheer beastly folly of the thing made decent people believe it to be impossible. From the days of my youth the German people have been taught to regard great wars as inevitable and salutary. *We* have regarded them as neither. That has been the great gulf between us. And so Europe has had five wars in seventy-five years! People tried hard to believe the best, or anyhow not to believe the worst of Germany—a creditable trait in human nature when it is not too expensive. But the worst was true all the time. A Nazi is congenitally incapable of peace. It is not his idea of life. There was never the least real chance of the Kaiser or Hitler *not* making war. A German War every fifteen years on an average. Butcher-birds are destructive animals. There was no drinking to, or preparation for, "The Day" of 1914



in England or France, let alone in poor little Belgium. I have already said how far France went to avoid it; and England's "contemptibly small army"—as Germany described it—was not designed or ready for continental warfare. The characteristic of the butcher-bird is to pounce upon his neighbours when they are living peaceably beside him; and it is their characteristic never to suspect him till it is too late.

The butcher-bird had had, and won, three wars before any of his neighbours began to suspect what he was really after. It was world-domination. The first three wars were prelude and preparation. The fourth war was a bid for the real thing. This lust of world-domination has been working in them for generations, and for two of them I have myself watched it at work. I have seen the idea of the German Empire corrupting German nature, as the German philosopher Nietzsche foresaw seventy years ago.

It has had three elements to work on, all of which are well known to those with any knowledge of German psychology. The three are Envy, Self-pity and Cruelty. I was made personally and painfully aware of these characteristics during my early years in Germany; and characteristics are an infallible guide to actions. Let me give you an example of the cruelty. I was eighteen at the time, and it was a bitter winter. A starving German lad of my own age stole a cutlet from a butcher's shop and bolted. He was pursued, caught, and kicked into a mess—not by toughs, but by apparently ordinary citizens. I tried to intervene, but was told that, if I didn't stand clear, I would be served in the same way.

There are of course many Germans who dislike the habits of the butcher-bird as much as we do. Unfortunately they are never there on The Day; and the German

nation—stertorously breathing Hymns of Hate—is periodically stampeded into blood-thirsty expansion, be the Leader Bismarck, Kaiser or Hitler. By the way, the Hymn of Hate against England was the best German poem of the last war. But its author, Ernst Lissauer, was a Jew; so Hitler could not use it this time. He had to have instead: "We're marching against England." Quite a good tune—relatively doggerel words. But please note that *the enemy* is always England. That is because the British Empire stirs Germany to envy. It is very important to recognize this.

Well, it so happened that Germany's Fourth War failed, though it only *just* failed. From that moment the welkin rang with German grievances; and everyone was so anxious to forget the gratuitous destruction of the four hundred million happinesses, that they also forgot the cruelty with which Germany had conducted that war—gas, indiscriminate sinkings, mass-deportations, cruelty in prison-camps—and the type of peace that she had imposed at Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest in the days when the aggressor seemed to be winning. And so everything must be blamed on the Treaty of Versailles; the whining bully must be picked up and dusted down, and put on his feet again. And soon the butcher-bird was back on his perch in the thornhedge, preparing for his next meal. This time it was destined to be a record one. And the strange thing was that his victims had contributed to put him there by all the means, including loans, in their charitable power. Of course they got nothing but abuse for that. I said just now that his fellow-birds always seem incapable of telling a butcher-bird when they see one; and it is uphill work pointing out its distinguishing marks, unmistakable though they are to any bird-lover.

The Treaty of Versailles, of course, had practically



nothing to do with Germany's Fifth War, just as it had nothing to do with the Nazi mentality of war on private life, the family, Christianity and culture, the burning of books and the assaults on the universities. Most of the Treaty of Versailles was dead long before 1939; and its remnants were more than balanced by the fact that the butcher-bird had already gained more—Austria and Czechoslovakia, for example—than it had lost in Europe. It had, in fact, guzzled part of the Austrian Empire that Bismarck had been intent to drive *out* of Germany. Appetite comes in eating. The truth is that Germany's long training in militarism had led inevitably first towards expansion in Europe and then towards world-domination. And this urge had become so strong that the temporary set-back of 1918 would *in no circumstances* have sufficed to stem it. After a period of disappointment and recovery, Germany—moved by what a German writer has called "the snarling, blood-thirsty resentment that spread throughout Germany after 1918"—would have had her fifth fling *in any event*. The butcher-bird was foiled, not repentant. What made its fifth war a certainty was the advent of the most horrible oppression that the world has ever seen. This tyranny was brought about and guided by fanatical, efficient gangsters; their efficiency worked up the Envy, Self-pity and Cruelty latent in their fellow-countrymen until they produced the Germany of today. Hitler has capitalized the German strain of ill-defined mysticism—a blind faith fed on phrases about Germany's mission, Germany's destiny, which thrives on blind obedience to blind doctrines. This is the explanation of the otherwise inexplicable bestialities committed by Germany in her fifth war; the methodical obliteration from the air of defenceless townlets and villages in order to drive refugees out to block the roads;

the crushing of fugitive civilians by tanks, the machine-gunning of women and children, the machine-gunning of merchant-seamen and lightship-keepers in the water, the machine-gunning of seamen even when they have been trying to rescue Germans, the systematic bombing of hospitals and hospital ships. These "knights of the air" are the worst of the butcher-birds; and we hope to cleanse the sky of them. To do all these things, that no Briton could or would do, the Nazis can find a large supply of cold-blooded young barbarians, who are not only willing to do them but revel in doing them. But, equally, they expect, and receive, chivalrous treatment when they are caught. Ah, if life consisted *only* of easy shooting! That would be the Nazi's idea of Paradise. Do you want full proof? Then read the Polish Black Book. Read it, every one of you, every word of it, beginning with the introduction by the Archbishop of York. He says: "This volume supplies convincing proof, if any were needed, of the complete ruthlessness of German methods." If this tale of horror is not enough, read what Cardinal Mercier said about the German atrocities of 1914. He said simply: "The truth transcends the limits of the probable." It does indeed. Or read Marshal Foch, when he spoke of "the army of clever and convinced criminals whom Prussianized Germany let loose—in defiance of all treaties—upon the peaceful population of Europe". His colleague, Marshal Pétain, was more confiding. Before he left us—I shall say nothing here of that pitiful episode—he dreamed of an honourable peace between soldiers, and said that "he gave himself to France for that purpose". Alas, he thereby gave France to Germany, and his gift to Germany was greater than his gift to France. France, of course, is now being devoured. If you study the butcher-bird and his larder you will soon be convinced that you



cannot possibly make honourable terms with a butcher-bird. It will *always* insist on eating you.

The butcher-bird has been given every chance to change its habits, but of course it has not done so. It is extraordinary how many patient people have trusted the creature. Hitler said on the first day of this war that he would not wage it on women and children; yet that is exactly what he did from the start. But when did Hitler ever keep his word? Literally never once. And there is nothing new in Hitler. Frederick the Great was an adept in perfidy. And what, in 1914, did Bethmann-Hollweg call a solemn treaty with Prussia's signature on it? "A scrap of paper." He could have bitten his tongue out the moment he had said it, for in four words he had given the whole German show away. That is what most Germans really think of treaties. There is a definite continuity in their outlook. Bismarck announced that he was satisfied after 1871; and Ribbentrop and Hitler kept saying they were satisfied with every fresh acquisition, especially after the annexation of the Sudetenland.<sup>1</sup> Of course they didn't mean it, as everyone can now plainly see. And yet, long after this war had broken out, a well-known author, Dean Inge, could write of Hitler's "fibs"—a striking case of ecclesiastical charity.

How is it that people were so indulgent and credulous towards Hitler, particularly in view of his foul and turgid

<sup>1</sup> "Germany neither intends to interfere in the internal affairs of Austria, to annex Austria, nor to conclude an Anschluss."—HITLER, 1935.

"After three years I can regard the struggle for German equality as concluded. We have *no* territorial demands to make in Europe."—HITLER, 1936.

"The Sudetenland is the *last* territorial claim I have to make in Europe."—HITLER, 1938.

"Czechoslovakia broke up."—HITLER, 1939.

book, *Mein Kampf*, cribbed largely from a renegade Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who wrote a deal of rubbish in German? How is it that modern Germany has surrendered itself to one who wanted war, as he himself said, when he was fifty years old—he just couldn't wait until he was fifty-five? The answer is that the remnants of German conscience are easily satisfied by the drug of mechanical obedience to any order, however cruel. Prussianism, militarism, lust of world-conquest, Nazism—that sequence has made Germans the exponents of every imaginable variety of dirty fighting and foul play. Incidentally, Nazis have some very odd notions of play. Listen to the adjutant of Julius Streicher, chief Nazi purveyor of smut. He is urging children to play football instead of going to church; "but," he says, "if one of your comrades will not play, then beat him till he drops dead". Sad stuff! But it catches on and spreads. Cruelty has grown with every war on which Germany has embarked, each time swearing raucously that she has been attacked by someone half her size.

This degradation of the human species would have astonished our Victorian ancestors, who believed that progress was inevitable and automatic. Nazi Germany has taught a tortured world that it is easier to go backwards towards barbarism than it is to go forward to a higher civilization; and that, if we were to fail in standing up to her, the clock would go back *by* a thousand years and *for* a thousand years. Indeed, it would be worse even than that. A distinguished American has said that to compare Nazi Germany to the Middle Ages is an insult to the Middle Ages.

A year ago today it was said that we are fighting evil things. I wonder if even now the world realizes how evil. One of the first "sights" that I saw as a boy in Germany



was the relics of the mediaeval torture chamber at Nürnberg. I can assure you that tortures are practised in modern Germany on a scale that puts the Middle Ages into the shade. The enormity and ferocity of those tortures are almost beyond belief. The Marquis de Sade, who has given his name to Sadism, was a pretty foul creature; but he would have taken the strongest exception to having the word Sadism applied to present practices in Germany. He would not only have turned in his grave; he would have sat bolt upright. Never before in any Christian country, or indeed in any land or period, has there been anything like the Nazi concentration-camp. But then the Nazi Government is anti-Christian. There is no time here to dilate on the persecution of the churches. Let me just give you two or three quotations that tell the whole story. Listen to the Proclamation of the German Faith Movement: "The Cross must fall to make Germany live. . . . The Christian religion must be destroyed. . . . Jesus is the enemy of all Germany." Or to Hitler himself, speaking to Mussolini: "Christianity is the Bolshevism of Antiquity." What a precious pair of scholars! Or to Herr Kerrl, the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs: "The Fuehrer is the carrier of a new Revelation. . . . Adolf Hitler is the true Holy Ghost." I need not multiply these blasphemies. There are millions of them. They admit of no doubt or argument as to the anti-Christian nature of the Nazi régime. No wonder that Pastor Niemöller said: "We feel obliged to express our concern at honours being bestowed on the Fuehrer which are due only to God." And no wonder that, for saying so, Niemöller was clapped into solitary confinement for life. And why is Christianity rejected? Because it is too gentle to be compatible with world-domination. And why is Jesus the enemy? Because He spoke of a kingdom *not* of this world.

And why does Germany put up with, and even glory in, this new barbarism, for after all there are many Christians, though few Niemöllers, in Germany? The answer is that Germany so worships power and efficiency, that she is ready not only to forgive but to deify the gangsters who provide it in sufficient doses. And these gangsters supply it in such quantity that the mass forgives them for another defect—corruption—which normally arouses condemnation, or at least jealousy. The Nazi leaders, one and all, started without a cent. Goering, for example, used to peddle cocaine in the Bristol Bar in Berlin. All of them have grown rich on political plunder; and many have amassed enormous fortunes in cash; they have bought valuable works of art, pictures and large houses. How did they get hold of all this wealth—which, by the way, is quite incompatible with Socialism even of the "National" brand? I will tell you one story—it is enough to answer that question. There lived in Austria a harmless squire, Herr von Remitz, and he owned an attractive residence on Lake Fuschl, near Salzburg. Unfortunately for him it was *too* attractive. Ribbentrop saw it and liked it. The squire was put into a concentration-camp at Dachau, where he died after many months of slow and systematic torture. Ribbentrop, who instigated and enjoyed the performance, annexed his victim's home. Now, this sort of thing would never be tolerated in any decent country; but in Germany it is condoned because it is practised on a vast scale by *all* the Nazi leaders, who have not only no religion but no morals. Just think of it like this. What should we say if one of our Cabinet Ministers looted the National Gallery? Yet that kind of thing no longer seems to shock Nazi Germany. Whenever I think of the Nazi bosses, I am reminded of a certificate ironically given by a friend of mine in a far part of the world to his



servant, who triumphantly displayed it as a recommendation. The certificate ran: "X has been with me for eight years, and I can honestly say that I believe him capable of anything." There can be no doubt about one thing. Nazism is a fundamental fraud. It is a pluto-bureaucracy; every Nazi creates a job for his pal, and the vast corrupt gang enjoys a life very different from the hardships of the ordinary German. There is hardly a single professional Nazi with a clean pair of hands. The only equipment needed in Nazi politics is a pair of sewer-boots. What do the people get in return? Efficiency. Efficiency for what? For the destruction of Four Hundred Million Happinesses.

Impregnate a race with militarism, imbue it with a sense of its own superiority, convince it of its mission to enslave mankind for the good of mankind, persuade it that this end justifies any and every means however filthy; and you produce a race of hooligans which is a curse to the whole world.

But, if you want to succeed in this kind of government, there is one more thing you must do—you must rob people of all critical sense. Take an example and a warning—one among millions. When Nazis murdered Dollfuss, they let him bleed slowly to death for long hours, during which they would allow him to see neither priest nor doctor. For this thirteen brutes were very properly hanged. Listen now to what two of the Nazi leaders have to say of these murderers: "Wherever in all the world National Socialists march, these dead comrades march with us." That is Herr Hess, Hitler's Deputy. You would not think that anyone would take credit for the eternal company of thugs. And here is Herr Bohle, Organization Leader of Germans abroad: "Their sacrifice is an example which National Socialists in all countries must emulate." It is a

strange admission that Nazis must murder everywhere. All wise men in the Old World and the New will do well to heed it. But these are only echoes of their Master's Voice. In 1932 the famous Potempa murder took place. A large number of Nazis set upon one poor man in the dark, and kicked him to death. They didn't like his politics, you see. Hitler thought this was grand. He sent a telegram saying he was entirely with the murderers; they were quite right, he said, and they were his comrades. My mind went back to the jackbooting of that poor little German lad of the 'nineties. Once again, I say, Hitler is no accident.

Yes, in very truth we are fighting against evil things—evils which have possessed the German people for weary generations. Twice in my lifetime have these evil things devoured FOUR HUNDRED MILLION HAPPINESSES in Europe. Think of it! Twice. Eight hundred million happinesses! The butcher-bird has been furiously at his habit during the last two and a half years; it has impaled on its blackthorns Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Luxemburg, Holland, Belgium and France. In every case the butcher-bird, with its beak in the neck of the victim, squawked and shrilled that the victim had begun it. Hitler attacked Poland without warning, and bombed its innocent civilians out of existence. How did he explain this? He said to his servile Reichstag on September 1st, 1939: "Since a quarter to six this morning we have been returning the Polish fire." (Loud cheers.) *Of course* Hitler said that Poland had attacked him. And every good Nazi knows that Belgium attacked Germany in 1914. Rabbits, those beasts of prey, always *do* attack dogs. Don't you know that too? Then you know nothing of Nazi natural history. And every time it has to be substantiated, forgeries are found in railway carriages or



other convenient receptacles. But no honest man now believes a word of what a Nazi says, unless he wants to; and, if he wants to, he is not an honest man. Since the fall of France, the brunt of eliminating a scourge falls on us in the British Empire. It is a duty, and an *honour*. We believe that we have the good wishes of all that is best in the world; and we accept them. By the Grace of God and for the salvation of man, we shall rescue the earth from Germany and Germany from herself.

## II

### GERMANS IN THE PLURAL

IN my last talk, on the anniversary of our entry into the fifth war of aggression which Germany has forced upon the world in seventy-five years, I compared her with the butcher-bird. The butcher-bird, I may remind you, is an animal which *looks* harmless enough to deceive its neighbours, but which is continually springing on them when they least suspect it, and butchering them. How does it happen that, despite all experience, the other birds are always caught unprepared? I will try to explain this, and also to show you why and how these other birds might have known better. Perhaps they did not do so because the true story of Germany has never been made available in sufficiently revealing brevity. People sometimes fail to connect, or even to see, the relevant facts, because those facts are too widely dispersed. In these talks I am going to bring them together for you. The story of

Germany's past is both plain and ugly; but it is time that it was told, so that it shall not again be forgotten in a hurry.

At all costs the world must never again be dragged by Germany into a war—merely because it fails to understand how Germany has behaved in the past and how it will behave again in the future, unless the German people undergo a deep, spiritual regeneration. There *can* be a new Germany, but it must be a quite new Germany, the Germany that has been imagined, but has never been. The real German reformation is yet to come.

Of course, there have been potential reformers in Germany, but they have always been a weak minority, and have never been able to impede the iniquitous habits and courses of the majority. That does not necessarily mean that it is hopeless *ever* to expect them to be in the ascendant. But the facts which I am going to connect for you do show that if Germany, after a long and unbroken record of evil-doing, is ever to cease to be a curse to herself and to everyone else, she will have to undergo the most thorough spiritual cure in history; and part at least of that cure will have to be self-administered. It will have to comprise a complete change of heart, mind and soul; of taste and temperament and habit; a new set of morals and values, a new, a brand-new way of looking at life. Such an achievement is not inconceivable; but it will at the very best be extremely difficult. You are going to see for yourselves how tremendous is the leeway to be made up; and you will then want to be sure next time that the cure really is complete, that it is a fact and not a hope. The world must never again take anything for granted in Germany, or endanger itself by further illusions.

Let us begin by considering the oft-expressed German complaint that other nations are hostile to her. So far from there ever having been any prejudice against Ger-



many, the reason why the butcher-bird has been given every conceivable chance is that everybody has always wanted to believe the best of it, or rather not to believe the worst; and this charity, always disappointed, comes up smiling again between catastrophes. That is exactly what the butcher-bird wants. He likes his victims to get cosy and confiding, before he pecks them to death. Let me give you an example.

In his book, *Failure of a Mission*, Sir Nevile Henderson says: "Who was I to condemn the Nazis off-hand or before they had finally proved themselves incurably vicious?" But it is too late to condemn them *afterwards*, anyhow in the nine countries that they have eaten. That quotation is characteristic of the attitude of scores of thousands of kindly souls who wanted to believe the best, and therefore did not see ahead. Well, for salvation you *must* see ahead; and a sure way of seeing ahead is to look back.

Let me now try to show you why it is wrong to count on the better nature of the butcher-bird, and why bird-lovers know he hasn't got one—so far. We must all drop the habit of making allowances for the Germans. It isn't fair to ourselves. And if anyone asks you to do it again, make sure that he knows the German record, and is now sure that the change has taken place.

This bird of prey is no sudden apparition. It is a species. Hitler is no accident. He is the natural and continuous product of a breed which from the dawn of history has been predatory and bellicose. It has thriven on indulgence, which has always been in favour of giving the aggressor another chance. And the aggressor has always taken it. This country, for instance, rescued and subsidized the bankrupt Frederick the Great; Russia successfully pleaded on behalf of Prussia with Napoleon when he

had her beaten at Jena; and after the war of 1914-1918 all wishful-thinkers pleaded for Germany and lent her money. With that money she rearmed. The creature has its habits, and great suffering has come because those habits have never been widely enough known. Hitler's dupes even believed that his proclaimed demand for expansion was compatible with his professed offers of non-aggression pacts.

Of course there have been, and are, Germans who may not have liked executing the programmes of their leaders; but with individuals we are not concerned; the fact remains that the programmes of their leaders always *have* been executed. And there is a remarkable resemblance between those German leaders. It is therefore dangerous to persist in the hallucination that there is in Germany an effective element of kindly and learned old gentlemen, and of sweet pig-tailed maidens. That is unhappily a myth. The German professors either vanish on the day of battle, or they turn out to be the worst of the expansionists. Don't count on the maidens either. Women have never been allowed to play much part in Germany; and Hitler has put the clock back for them, not forward. The little influence that they have enjoyed has mitigated nothing; and you will even find in the Polish Black Book German *girls* gloating over the sufferings of the victims. That is less surprising when one remembers that in early times German women were famed for inciting their men to ferocity. Nazi girls have gone further; they have become raucously blasphemous. Today the official "League of German Maidens" is singing:

We've given up the Christian line,  
For Christ was just a Jewish swine.  
As for his Mother—what a shame—  
Cohn was the lady's real name.



That song is a literal word-for-word translation of the original German.

This point about the sphere of women is so significant that it needs a little more explanation. Hitler has thrown them right back into their traditional limitations as cooks and child-bearers. But very few of them mind going backward—backward for the Fatherland. They have never received much encouragement from their men; and the truth is that German women have no more wanted social emancipation than the German middle class has wanted political emancipation. "The world of liberalism and humanism is dying," says one of the German women's leaders gleefully. There are exceptions, but the rule is clear. Germans, male and female, are content with servitude, on condition that they are provided with enough of their blindly idolized efficiency to inflict servitude on others. That is why you must never think that Hitler was an unnatural taste forced upon Germany. On the contrary, he gives to the great majority of Germans exactly what they have hitherto liked and wanted; and that in turn is why he has been able to enforce on them, without any effective resistance, his distorted and sanguinary doctrines. The women, as a whole, have taken to him with little, if any, more reluctance than the men. They have remained as primitive in their own way as German men in theirs. The ground was already prepared for Nazism before Hitler sowed the dragon's teeth in it.

Sir Nevile Henderson says that war was due to the "blind self-confidence of a single individual and of a small clique of his self-interested followers". That view is common among the indulgent; but, historically and psychologically, it is very wide of the mark.

Drop the myth of the professors and the maidens, and the other fictitious restraining influences. It is too expen-

sive. Instead, let us face the truth. "No one has ever dared to call me a coward," yelled Hitler a few short years ago. I do—because the former mess-waiter and police-spy has never once faced the truth. And I say the same of anyone in like case in any country, including my own. History puts it to you plainly. The *German* is often a moral creature; the *Germans* never; and it is the *Germans* who count. You will always think of *Germans* in the plural, if you are wise. That is their misfortune and their fault. I learned the beginning of the truth at school from having to construe Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar says that in Germany two thousand years ago: "Robbery has nothing infamous in it" when committed upon a neighbour; indeed, it was even thought to keep youth fighting fit for the annual war. It never occurred to the Germans that there should *not* be a war every year. It was only a question of *who* was to be attacked and devastated—for in those days they destroyed towns and townlets as thoroughly as they did in Flanders and northern France in 1914 or in Poland in 1939; and they killed and burned everything they could see, including animals, just as today they machine-gun cows if they can't find children.<sup>1</sup> If the world is ever to enjoy lasting peace, the Germans must be made to abandon this centuries-old taste. The Romans knew what their savage neighbours were like as clearly as the French knew later; so the Romans too built a Maginot Line and tried to demilitarize the Rhineland. You will find that history *does* repeat itself with Germans whatever it does with other people.

I was still at school when I came across them a stage later in Tacitus. He admired them in some ways, but found them disquieting neighbours. He says that "they

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter of a German officer in France: "It is great fun knocking down little houses. I love bombing."



hate peace"—their whole history is in that phrase—and "think it weak to win with sweat what can be won by blood". You will remember Bismarck's saying that all problems must be solved by "blood and iron". That has been the German view throughout the ages; and by that they mean German iron and other people's blood. And a further observation of Tacitus on their habit of murdering their slaves would be endorsed by the poor Czechs and Poles of our day.

Within a short while from the time of Tacitus two further facts about the Germans became notorious, and have never varied since. The first was that they were out for ever more and more living space—the unlimited *Lebensraum* that they claim today. For example, seventeen hundred years ago they were busy occupying Rumania. The second fact early and universally recognized was that Germans were not only very dirty fighters but they never kept a pledge or treaty. Gibbon has commented on this characteristic. It is worth noting that the first German national hero to make himself a name for treachery was Hermann in the year nine. The centuries have rolled by, and brought to us Hermann Goering! The first Hermann—who was subsequently murdered—was a double dealer like the later one, or like Hitler, or Neurath, the "Protector" of Bohemia. Some people, by the way, believed Neurath because he belonged to "the old school". That is why they should have disbelieved him. There is, as you will see, no fundamental difference between the Old School and the New. They think and act in the same way. The ages during which civilizing influences have changed other nations have so far left the Germans relatively untouched. It is time that the change began. Capacity to change is the very essence of man; and a nation that should lack it would be less than human.

## III

## THE BRAZEN HORDE

HUNDREDS of years ago there seemed nothing surprising in German barbarism, since the world was full of savages in these early days. In the thirteenth century a great part of Europe was overrun by Mongols known as the Golden Horde, who committed the most appalling atrocities. Germans in the plural are the Brazen-Horde. At least the Golden Horde was not brazen enough to pretend that they were anything but barbarians. Other people grew up and settled down. The Germans never did. The Brazen Horde remained savages at heart. That is far the greatest tragedy in the world.

German barbarism first crushed Latin civilization at the battle of Adrianople in the year 378, and it has again crushed Latin civilization in France today.

Wherever they went, the invaders submerged all culture; Paris, Arras, Rheims, Amiens, Orleans, Tours, Bordeaux—all the familiar names of places so often overrun since—were sacked with frightful and habitual ferocity by the German vandals. The word "vandalism" was coined to describe gratuitous German savagery. "From their youth up war is their passion," said a contemporary historian. These words are a refrain in the German record.

War was the passion of the great Charlemagne too—conquest and expansion as usual. With all his other brilliant qualities he too had the lust of world-dominion; so he had a war every year—as Caesar had noted of his forefathers. Eight hundred years had passed, but in this respect the German instinct remained constant.



By the time they got to their famous warmonger, Frederick Barbarossa, in the twelfth century, the only bone of contention was not whether they should remain at peace, but which race should they conquer and dominate—should it be the Italians or Slavs? The twentieth-century Germans have answered that question by saying that—with the help of Mussolini—they will dominate both. And it is interesting to note that, where the twelfth-century Germans did overcome the Slavs, they forbade the use of native languages and excluded Jews. Do you begin to recognize familiar features? Listen to the greatest chronicler of his time, Froissart, in the fourteenth century. The Germans, he says, “are covetous people above all other, they have no pity if they have the upper hand, and they are hard and cruel with their prisoners”. How true that is, all Europe bears witness. By the fourteenth century people were complaining of the Fifth Column activities of the German Hanseatic League, the forerunners of Herr Bohle’s *Auslandsdeutsche* of today. In the fifteenth century most countries were sowing their wild oats, and by the seventeenth they were settling down. Germany, to the sorrow of the world, never got beyond the bald lust of battle.

These fierce characteristics showed themselves to the full in the Thirty Years War of the seventeenth century, in the first phase of which Bohemia was overrun, and the Czech population subjected to a persecution almost equal to that of 1939. In this war the German Commander Tilly distinguished himself by the sack of Magdeburg, in which thirty thousand people were butchered—rather less than were butchered at Rotterdam this year.

The next German hero was the Great Elector—a man of remarkable ability, but we are not discussing that—who laid the foundations of Prussian military and bureau-

cratic despotism, and permanently stunted and brutalized whatever soul Prussia might have had. And in due course came the Soldier King, the father of Frederick the Great, one of the nastiest bullies that ever lived. He used to bellow as much as Hitler. And *he* ruined whatever soul Frederick the Great might have had.

This Frederick, the admiration of all Germans in subsequent ages, was another man of outstanding gifts and attainments; but neither heart nor conscience was among them. He was as treacherous and aggressive as the Nazi bandits. He lost no time in invading his neighbours, and remained faithful during his long life to his own lack of principle. He destroyed all freedom among his robots, and moulded Prussia into a totalitarian autocracy. That he had great administrative abilities and considerable culture is beside the point. We are discussing morals, not talents. I am afraid that England helped this able and unpleasant creature to survive, and financed it, just as we lent money to the Germany that produced Hitler. And Frederick was the precursor of Hitler in partitioning poor Poland with the help of another Prussian, a ruthless and promiscuous woman known to history as Catherine the Great of Russia. Be careful, by the way, how far you swallow these historical labels of “the Great”. Frederick “the Great” was a Prussian pervert with a bent for killing and dominating people. And Catherine “the Great”, the Prussian with the morals of a street-walker, also had a bent for killing and dominating people. That is not greatness. I call Dorothy Thompson great and Catherine abhorrent. I wish history would adopt this standard, and discard the old one; but that also would require a vast change of values, particularly in Germany. For all Germans love their Frederick, whom they still affectionately call Old Fritz. People have been apt to misuse the



word "great" for anything that is done well, whether it be the innocent profession of cutting clothes or the guilty one of cutting throats. I knew a firm that called itself Alexander the Great—tailor.

After the Napoleonic wars there was a moment when it seemed that Prussia might lead Germany into liberalism. But the flicker went out, and the new movement had about as much chance as the Weimar Republic after the last war. Germany as a whole has always been hostile and unsuited to democracy. Hitler had this old instinct to play on. Prussia went in for a policy of repression. While elsewhere man was opening his mouth, Prussia clapped a muzzle on it. Just the same effort to extinguish the human brain has been made by Goebbels. Once again there has been no change.

Prussia's last chance of being human went when King William of Prussia, another anti-democrat, came to the throne in 1861, and took for his chief adviser one Otto von Bismarck, who reinforced the concrete foundations on which were built the autocracy of the ex-Kaiser and the dictatorship of Hitler. They all derive from one another. No other race could have managed to idolize such people; but German heroes have always been offensive persons according to the standards of anyone else.

Bismarck again was a man of supreme capacity; and again we are not talking of that. From the point of view of conduct towards one's neighbours, he was a crafty Prussian bully. His manners towards weaker vessels were sometimes nearly as nasty as Hitler's; and, on occasion, he made as little secret as Hitler of his aggressive intentions. Within three years he had crushed and plundered little Denmark. Hitler has been his logical successor and swallowed it whole. Bismarck could not manage to bring off a war every year like

Caesar's Germans or like Charlemagne; but he did his best. Two years later he brought off another carefully contrived one against Austria, after annexing a few smaller countries first. Hitler, his successor, swallowed Austria altogether. When did the butcher-bird ever change a feather? Four years after that, Bismarck, having gauged the weakness of the French Empire as Hitler gauged the weakness of the French Republic, brought off yet another war, equally well contrived, against France, though at one moment it looked as if war would slip through his fingers; and that nearly broke his heart. And again, today, Latin civilization is prostrate. Again and again, the German repeats himself. Bismarck and the Nazis spoke the same language about Germany's "mission". It has been a mission of destruction. Germany, in Bismarck's time, was militarized, materialized, and started on the high road to her present religion of "blood and soil". Her natural appetite for both had indeed always been so strong that she had hardly got her breath before she wanted more of both. There was in fact such rumbling in the new Germany, because Bismarck had not sufficiently destroyed France, that he nearly had yet another annexationist war against her five years later. This time he was baulked by Russia. But his tribe had Prussianized Germany; and from that moment Germany became not a local but a universal danger. The Great Cannibal was born. The Nazis are the product of the German Reich.

We have come to the ex-Kaiser. He at once set out on the next stage to world-dominion. Not content with dominating Europe, he must dominate the seas, and Africa and South America and the Near East as well. Note the resemblance between what he wanted and what Hitler wants in Africa, South America and the Near East. Well,



the windbag was to sweep us off the seas. Germany must "become master of the ocean"—his own words—and Wilhelm frothed against England as much as foaming Adolf. The "war of nerves" is nothing new in German policy. It has always been part of German technique to try to make people's flesh creep, if Germans in the plural don't get all they want. And this has led each generation of Germans, in turn, into their inordinate threats and boastings. In this country we have always erred on the side of under-statement. We have even deemed it a virtue; and one of our famous men has been called in praise "a master of the under-statement". I doubt whether it is quite such a quality in most foreign eyes; and I am quite sure that it isn't in German eyes. Indeed, we live at opposite poles. We have not a main idea in common because—as Dorothy Thompson has pointed out in an impressive catalogue—words have entirely different meanings in our respective tongues. Our terms and concepts, our aims and admirations, are in complete contrast, even if the labels are the same. We have no real mental relations with Germans. For instance, only one Englishman—Lord Strafford—has ever adopted the German motto "thorough", and his countrymen cut off his head—three hundred years ago!

Whenever I hear the Voice of the Nazi I think of Ahab. He was the author of one of the finest sayings in history. He was at war with a bully called Benhadad, who said to him: "Everything you have is mine, and I'm coming to fetch it." How like Hitler! Ahab refused, and Benhadad then threatened him with extermination by overwhelming forces. Now comes the passage: "And the King of Israel answered and said—"Tell him, let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.'" Isn't that the perfect answer to Benhadad—Adolf? Surely

much must be forgiven to Ahab for that. Also he gave Benhadad what he deserved—a licking.

There is an important incidental remark to be made here; boasting and a sense of humour rarely go together, because a sense of humour is a sense of proportion. Neither the ex-Kaiser nor Hitler have ever had any; and they have got on well with their people because the sunless, funless folk never really had any either.

## IV

## SINGULAR BUT STILL PLURAL

I READ in a German newspaper a week ago: "The English should know by now that we never joke." Yes, we know.

For a German even to see, let alone make, a joke it must be about as long as it is broad. Hitler, the ex-Kaiser, Bismarck, away back into the dank record, you will find nothing but a procession of mirthless braggarts ruling over dreary robots. That has been the aim of German rulers; and they have been successful men. Every régime strives to create the same unflowering November marsh of the mind.

Such few faint sparks of fun as were left floating about have been ruthlessly stamped out by the club-foot of Goebbels; he was afraid they would set the marsh on fire. The authors of any little jokes were clapped into concentration-camps, as many comedians found to their cost.

No one has ever dared to start a rumour  
That a true German has a sense of humour



And that is why the Germans, who love to be feared, cannot understand why nobody loves them.

Let us kill two butcher-birds with one stone: German honour and German humour. Here is Field-Marshal Goering: "Germany has no possible designs against Czechoslovakia. *I pledge my word of honour* that we only wish for better relations between our two countries."

So much for the Marshal's honour. He pledged, or pawned, it in 1938. We need no further witness. The Germans have always held that morals were made for their inferiors, but that the superior Germans made their own.

Between Bismarck's wars and the Kaiser's war there was a spate of books by distinguished Germans, gloating in advance over "the next war", war that "fountain of health", that "noblest of human activities". These books dwelt on the necessity of annihilating everybody on their road to supremacy, shouting their hatred and contempt for their neighbours, and urging the utmost savagery in the conduct of "total war". Literally hundreds of these war-books were published every year, and found a voracious public. The Germans had no more intention of disarming, or of limiting warfare, before 1914 than before 1938, though they sometimes dangled baits—swiftly whisked away—before the democratic nose. Never forget that it was a German hero who said that a conquered people should be left nothing but their eyes to weep with. Have you ever wondered why the Nazis have left the ex-Kaiser unmolested in Holland? It is because his foreign policy was broadly the same as that of Hitler or any of their distinguished predecessors. And the Nazis in turn have given to their people the foreign policy of aggrandisement that the Germans love. "They hate peace," said Tacitus. He knew. "Thinking with the blood" is an old German habit.

When I first went to Germany in the 'nineties I read and listened to this screeching crescendo; and my first impression was that I had come into a country of homicidal maniacs. That impression has been fully justified. I have said enough to show you that the most righteous clause entered in any treaty ever concluded was the war-guilt clause of the Treaty of Versailles. In justice to Germans in the plural, they "made no bones about it", save those of the prospective dead. It was to be—quite openly—*Weltmacht oder Niedergang*: World-dominion or decline. The Germans themselves boasted how well they had planned and executed the war—*while they thought they were winning*.<sup>1</sup> It was only when they lost that they proclaimed their innocence; and again they found dupes to believe them. Why? That will always be one of the greatest mysteries in history. But Hitler took heart from so encouraging an example. "If anyone is prepared to be deceived," he said, "he must not be surprised that he is." This saying is the moral descendant of the maxim of Frederick the Great that "he is a fool, and that nation is a fool, who, having the power to strike his enemy unawares, does not strike and strike his deadliest". Germany has laid these butcher-bird tactics to heart, and these talks are designed to make them more difficult in future.

After the gross offence of 1914, however, many people hastened again to believe the best of Germans and to give them another chance. It came in 1939. Every time you give the butcher-bird another chance *he* will give *you* another war. And every time the intended victims show

<sup>1</sup> German thoroughness—or contempt for the intelligence of others—always has ready a number of contradictory versions of every German venture. Cf. the laughably conflicting speeches of all the Nazi leaders on the rape of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.



any sign of drawing together, there comes that monotonous squawk about encirclement. And the victims have been simple enough to listen to the cry. Germans always cry out before they hurt someone else. The technique of Self-pity developed into the technique of aggression.

Bismarck had a low opinion of this country. The Kaiser went one better. He loathed England, and so did *his* Germany. The loathing was all set out, blatant and patent. How little men see! How much they forget! At the time of the South African War, the Kaiser tried to form a coalition against us. That failed. He nearly brought about another war in 1911. That attempt failed too. But in 1914 he made *his* bid for world-dominion; and, fortunately indeed for the world, that failed too. The Kaiser ran away, and Germany pretended, sometimes even thought, that it was all his fault. It wasn't. No country had ever so well deserved defeat or asked more loudly for retribution; but she got off with a fraction of the penalties that she would have imposed on the world had she won. How loud the Germans cried about reparations. "Poor, poor, Germans," said all the tender-hearts. And some added: "Besides, the figures are too big to make sense." Well, the figures are nothing compared with those that the poor, poor Germans have now enforced on the poor, poor French. "What will you do if you lose?" said a prominent neutral to a prominent German in mid-war. "We will organize sympathy," was the reply. They did. But Hitler's only criticism of the Kaiser's crime was that it had not been well enough prepared; and he certainly prepared his bid better.

Hitler will fail too, but not for want of forethought and calculation. Some people have suggested that Hitler's policy was guided by brainstorm. It was not. His every aggression has been cold and deliberate like those of his

forerunners. He has been perfectly true to type from the start. There is nothing abnormal about him except physically. He is like the mule, without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity, and the mule is a bad-tempered animal. These physical defects are no doubt irritating, but they could never explain his kicking over the traces to *this* extent.

Force and fraud, fraud and force; that is the old German gospel. Before the world can ever be at peace, something will have to happen that has never happened yet; the Germans who do not believe in that gospel will have to predominate over those who do. How can that come to pass? There was an old Russian saying that one only learns to pray from the heart on the sea in winter. Germans will have to learn to pray anew, to ask pardon of mankind for the agonies that they have inflicted on it. The prayer is ready and it is this:

Thus to our children there shall be no handing  
Of aims so vile and passions so abhorred,  
But peace, the peace that passes understanding,  
Not in our time but in their time, O Lord.

Germans in the plural will have to say it often before they know what it means, and still more often before they mean what it says. And their own god, Force, will be needed to persuade them to their knees; for the League of German Maidens is a long way from that prayer.

I pointed out the other day that German heroes were mostly offensive persons judged by other people's standards. The Nazis have pushed this tendency to amazing lengths. Horst Wessel lived on the immoral earnings of women. In England he would have been gaoled as a White Slaver; in Germany he is a National Anthem. And Hitler doesn't like Goethe, and Niemöller is in a concen-



tration-camp. You will now see that the mythical German heroes are also an unappetizing crowd.

You have heard of the Nibelungenlied, and you may have heard the expression Nibelungentreue. *Treue* in German means a combination of Loyalty and Straightforwardness. Let us look at the confused outline of this story, because it is an important window of the German mind.

Siegfried, grandson of the Divine Wotan the Warmonger, Siegfried, the German hero of heroes, the usual mixture of force and fraud, got hold of the Tarnhelm, a helmet which not only made one invisible but enabled one to take any shape one liked, particularly a shady one. Now King Gunther, another noble fellow—they are always called Noble Gunther and Noble Siegfried—wanted to marry Brunhild, a very formidable lady. Brunhild, however, who was as hard as nails, wouldn't look at anybody who wasn't tough, and Gunther wasn't a tough enough suitor. He accordingly got Siegfried to deputize—under his hat. Gunther in fact swindled Brunhild into marriage by a sort of *ersatz* athleticism. But on the occasion of the wedding the muscular and aggressive Brunhild proved rebellious; in fact, she laid Gunther out and tied him to the bedpost. An impossible woman, I should say; but Gunther persevered. The next day he again put up his substitute. Siegfried, still under his hat, took the place and shape of Gunther, who was in pretty bad shape. But Noble Siegfried had a wife of his own called Krimhild, Gunther's sister—and when Krimhild and Brunhild both found out that Noble Siegfried has been taking Noble Gunther's place, there was some unpleasantness. It was worse than the eternal triangle; the wrangle was a quadrangle. But it's all great German romance. Of course it didn't suit Noble Gunther that

an inconvenient witness of his shortcomings should be alive and swanking; and happily he had a pet crook called Hagen, always known as Faithful Hagen. Faithful Hagen worked up Krimhild, and got her to mark the only vulnerable spot on her husband's body; and then Noble Gunther invited his collaborator to an athletic competition. Siegfried was for the high jump; for Faithful Hagen stabbed Noble Siegfried in the back, and embezzled the widow's Nibelungen treasure, because he thought all this necessary to protect the honour—mark the word "honour"—and interest—don't forget the interest—of his Noble King Gunther *über Alles*. Heil Gunther! But this was a bit too much, even for Krimhild; and it became altogether too much when Faithful Hagen, having swindled her into murdering *her* brother and *his* master by promising to tell her where the swag was, just laughed at her when she produced Noble Gunther's head. So she carved off Hagen's head while he was at lunch—with some other heads—and then Krimhild was killed too; and finally Wotan the Warmonger—according to Wagner—set fire to Valhalla and burned up the other gods, Brunhild having meanwhile burned herself up on Siegfried's funeral pyre. So a good, if somewhat confusing, time was had by all according to these lurid German lights.

Literature owns no comparable epic, save perhaps the pointless and improbable pursuit of the Farmer's Wife by the Three Blind Mice, and her ruthless and senseless application of the Carving Knife to their tails.

Now the Nibelungenlied is interesting precisely because it is not immediately apparent to anyone but a German where the Loyalty and Straightforwardness come in; and because it is difficult for anyone but a German to under-



stand how such people are taken as models of faith and honour. It is all the more interesting now because to modern Germany Hagen rather than Siegfried is the hero; and that is because Hitler himself is much nearer to Hagen than to Siegfried. And what is the attraction of this sordid record of force and fraud? Hitler has told us. "We want to be barbarians," he said. There is nothing new or surprising in the German rejection of Christianity. "The governing idea of the centuries, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth, is the wrestle of the German intellect not only against Rome but against Christianity itself. . . . While preparing to found a world-empire, Germany is also preparing to create a world-religion." So wrote Professor Cramb in 1913. High talking and low living! The new "world-religion" turns out to be identical with Hitler's cure for unemployment: "Arms; for the love of Wotan, arms." And other people's blood, and other people's soil. Small change since Caesar. There is therefore also nothing surprising in the fact that Hitler's Germans *are* barbarians. But why should they *want* to be? Hitler, unquenchably loquacious, has told us again. He has never been able to refrain from letting wild-cats out of the bag. Savagery, illiteracy, perfidy, cruelty are necessary to the creation of a master-class and a master-race. "We are the enemies of intelligence," he has said. I couldn't have put it better. And since Hitler and his Germans wish to revert, and are reverting, to the savage German state of sixty generations ago, it is at least necessary to glance at the conditions of that state. That is why I have gone back to the beginning of German history. Hitler insists on it. Between his conception of a *Herrenvolk* (master-race)—the post arrogated by Germans for themselves—and a *Herdenvolk* (herd-race)—the part assigned by Germans to others—there is a difference of one letter and the whole world. "These slaves

will by no means be denied the blessings of illiteracy," says Herr Darré, the German Minister of Agriculture. Thank you, Herr Darré. Chalk that one up too.

## V

## HONOUR AND GLORY

WHEN I first went to Germany I felt that there might be some difference of outlook between our two countries. There was. I was at a German school at the end of the last century, and learned what it was like to be really hated. For some time a general explosion of Anglophobia had been in full blast. It was unpleasant, sometimes painful, to be in a theatre or restaurant. It was worse to be at home. The head-master's daughter used to pursue me about the house, even into my bedroom, cursing England, foretelling our destruction and the rise of Germany on our ruins. The other inmates joined in her pastime with gusto and venom. The innocents told us that it was "only pretty Fanny's way"; and, as usual, events proved them wrong. In my boyhood it became apparent to me that Germans in the plural meant to destroy us if they could. I have therefore never paid too much attention to their false professions of friendship and protestations of innocent aims.

There has never been any true German departure from that inner political hatred of England, based mainly on jealousy, the most potent engine of evil in the human frame. In all my long experience I have never known



Germans in the plural vary one of two attitudes. They have either openly, and often violently, vented their hatred of us; or else they have tried to throw dust in our eyes. Considering how loudly they have voiced their first motive, I have always been astonished to see how far they succeeded in their second. "For fifty years we have been out to destroy England," said a German General when Germany invaded Norway; "and this time we are leaving nothing to chance." Fifty years is about right, so far as my own observation is concerned. We barred the path of the Brazen Horde to world-domination.<sup>1</sup> (The German grievance has been, briefly, that we began building the Empire while they were engaged in higher and more spiritual pursuits, including the Thirty Years War!) Hence the sound and fury and sabre-rattling, alternating with sapping and burrowing and subtler propaganda and more covert preparations for war. For over forty of these years I have watched them doing this, and said that they were doing it. And many people were angrier with me for saying it than with the Germans for doing it. Throughout that period the world was pathetically loth to believe so much evil in spite of so much warning. There was certainly no prejudice—except in Germany's favour.

Looking back on it all, I sometimes think that the world's virtues can be as dangerous as its vices. After 1918 all the indulgent bobbed up again, claiming that 1914 was an unhappy accident. So many excuses and explanations, biassed or charitable, were invented, that the truth once again became obscured. For the sake of humanity *that* must never be allowed to happen again. The war of 1914

<sup>1</sup> "It is *not* our colonies that Germany desires. It is a great central European State, with these islands as its conquered provinces."—PROFESSOR CRAMB, 1913. See Professor Banse—twenty years later.

was no more an accident than the war of 1939, or the war of 1870, or the war of 1866, or the war of 1864, or the wars of Frederick the Great, or the wars of Barbarossa, or the wars of Charlemagne, or the wars of Caesar's annual war-mongers. All Germany's wars have been most carefully and deliberately prepared, and launched at what Germany's rulers thought the most opportune moment. *Nothing*, in the words of the German General, has been left to chance. *Everything* that ingenuity could devise has always been ready for The Day; and there will never be a day when the world can breathe freely, unless this fact is recognized. Hitler and the long murderous line of his predecessors—Good Old Fritz, Glorious Otto, Divine Adolf—have been outcomes, *not* aberrations.

No sensitive Englishman could live in the Germany of the late 'nineties and early twentieth century, and have Hymns of Hate daily dinned into his ears, without seeing plainly enough where this was going to lead at *some* time in his manhood. I saw too much idolatry of war not only in the professors but in the carefully misdirected young. In no other country could a head-hunter like Treitschke have perverted an entire generation. And in no other country could you make a Leader of the German Youth Movement out of a noted pervert like Baldur von Schirach, or a Leader of the German Labour Front out of a noted drunkard like Doctor Ley. "We have a divine right to rule," said the doctor. The claim to divinity comes strangely from such a source. Dr. Ley and his associates and his audiences are like the lady who had so much taste, and all of it bad. Bad taste, however, has never been a handicap in Germany; on the contrary, it is an essential equipment. Without it you cannot succeed in the profession of political incendiary. People who consider themselves divinely appointed to



rack and pillage their neighbours have necessarily a disgusting conception both of God and man. In consequence all other tastes sink correspondingly low. And bad taste and hard drinking were accordingly a veritable passport to success in Imperial Germany.

I saw something of that in the student life at the Universities. A lot of saccharine, like the play "Old Heidelberg", was handed out to the innocent foreigner; but student life wasn't really a bit like that. Duelling and sousing yourself in beer were the only fashionable pastimes. If you were any good at all, you had to be a member of a fighting students' club, and insult anyone who wasn't a reactionary. It was important to insult people so that *they* should insult you; otherwise you couldn't get your proper quota of duels—Bismarck, for instance, collected twenty-six. This system made it difficult from youth up for a German to grasp the meaning of the word "aggressor", because *everyone* was an aggressor. The word just lost its meaning. Even in the last century I found these lads as automatically aggressive as any of Hitler's vintage. Well, in this quarrelsome crowd there were two codes: a Code of Honour, or fighting, and a Code of Drinking. If you lived up, or down, to both you became a Colour student; you got your colours, as we should have given them for football or cricket. For boozing and slashing you earned a coloured ribbon which, with the angry sword-scars across your face, composed the German Old School Tie. It was a passport to a job when you left, just as membership of the Hitler Youth is the passport to a job now. The Civil Service and the Law Courts were full of this material.

This old Heidelberg racket is partly responsible for the illusion that Germans are sentimental. That isn't the right word. "Emotional" is nearer. Now *emotionalism* can produce tears. It can also produce savagery. It can also

produce both together. After the massacre of Rotterdam this year Ribbentrop started snivelling "Wir haben dies nicht gewollt"—"We didn't want to do it." Such cant only makes the action more contemptible. No one will be taken in by that sort of thing. The Walrus wept over the oysters, but he and the Carpenter ate "every one".

As one grew older and saw more of this German Code of Honour, it seemed a still more curious thing. "Honour in England," says Dorothy Thompson, "means allegiance to accepted standards of conduct. Honour in Germany means prestige." That is well said. And of many exponents of German honour it might also be said:

His honour rooted in dishonour stood,  
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Indeed, that has unfortunately a nation-wide application. When Bismarck committed forgery to ensure the Franco-Prussian war, it did not occur to one German in a hundred that he was a forger. On the contrary, they all thought him very clever; and since his action gave them what they wanted, war, he was completely justified. Forgery, therefore, has not been inconsistent with German honour. Similarly, when the German Chancellor, on the eve of the last war, described a treaty signed by Prussia as a "scrap of paper", not one German in a hundred was shocked; for, as I have shown you, that is exactly what all Germans have thought of all treaties throughout the ages. Bethmann-Hollweg was quite consistent, and, in German eyes, he was a perfectly honourable man. Perjury therefore has not been contrary to German honour. Nor has it ever occurred to one German in a hundred that Hitler has ruined even the sham profession and semblance of German honour; that of all his vows, protestations, promises, internal or external, solemn or bawling, literally not



one has been kept.<sup>1</sup> Has not Hitler been "clever"? Has he not thrown dust in the eyes of his victims? Germans "honour" him for *that*—just as they honoured Bismarck. Lying and cheating have not been contrary to German honour. Germans have pledged no word without breaking it, have made no treaty without dishonouring it, touched no international faith without soiling it. For generations they have been ruining all trust between men; and they will not expect to be lightly trusted again. Black Record indeed! Is it not time there was a change? There *must* be a change, but how vast a one!

Let us look further into that code as practised in private life under the Kaiser.

One sunny afternoon in the 'nineties, after lunching with a crack cavalry regiment, the officers and I drove to the races in a great charabanc. Most of them had done themselves very well at lunch; and some of them leaned out as we went, playfully insulting civilians. Now that was dangerous. Of course in militarized Germany civilians practically never dared to stand up to officers—civilians were inferior beings; but if they did a dilemma arose.

Between *officers* duelling was the only way of wiping out an insult; but it was forbidden by law, while being compulsory in honour. Therefore, if you fought a duel you went into a comfortable fortress for a year; if you didn't fight a duel you were kicked out of the Army. So

<sup>1</sup> These are now too numerous and too notorious to be worthy of mention; but one typical specimen may be included as a joke—the right way to take a German oath. "Germany", says Hitler, "will tread no other path than that laid down by treaties. The German people have no thought of invading any country. Germany will never break the peace of Europe."

"What, never?"—"Well, hardly ever," anticipated Gilbert and Sullivan.

everyone of course fought duels. You had no choice; you just had to break the law. And that led Germans to break other laws, including those of humanity and international law. What else can you expect when the most important class in the community is taught systematically to break the most important laws—those that forbid the shedding of blood? It also led to some horrid domestic consequences.

In my early years, for example, a German officer was going to get married. He gave a farewell bachelor-dinner; and between drinks he quarrelled with his best friend. Both of them were sorry when they were sober; but a Court of Honour decided that they had to fight, and the bridegroom was killed by his best friend on his wedding-morn. The killer went to a fortress, and had a great reception when he came out. He had carried out the Code of Honour. The dead man's fiancée was expected to see that.

But the Code of Honour was much more complicated and absurd when an officer and a *civilian* were involved. An officer might get into a brawl with someone who was not honourably qualified to fight. In that case the officer—even if he had begun it—could only cut the fellow down. If he didn't commit murder, he might lose his commission; and then an honourable man might feel compelled to kill himself. I was wondering about all this on our embarrassing way to the races. Supposing one of the insulted civilians did retort? What then? Would there be murder, or something very like it? I supposed that, according to the Code of Honour, the answer would have to have been Yes. That would be an extraordinary prelude to enjoyment! I was quite certain that I preferred to go racing in less aggressive fashion.



## VI

## ÜBER ALLES

I THINK it was a great master of the German language, Arthur Schnitzler, who took up this ferocious folly of duelling. He wrote a short story, called *Leutnant Gustl*, which made a loud stir in my youth. Lieutenant Gustl comes out of a theatre and jostles a civilian. The civilian isn't qualified to fight; so Lieutenant Gustl tries to cut him down. But the civilian is much stronger than Gustl, and puts his hand over Gustl's hand, so that he can't draw his sword. Gustl is in a ridiculous situation. He worries about it all night, and then does the right thing; he kills himself. The blood-mongers were so angry with Schnitzler for making mock of duelling that he was boycotted.

I nearly got into this sort of trouble myself. I too had been to the theatre with a German friend. I was nineteen, the moon was full; I felt very happy and at peace with all men. Coming out of the theatre I also bumped into a civilian. I apologized, said good evening, and in turning I bumped into an officer. So I cheerfully said good evening to him too. Whereupon my German friend ran for his life. I found him round the corner three blocks away. "Why did you run away like that?" I asked.—"My God," he answered, "that officer would have been entitled to cut you down."—"But I only said good evening."—"Exactly. It was cheek."—"Well," I said, "why, if he might have cut *me* down did *you* run away?" He didn't answer. And then it dawned on me: the officer might have cut us *both* down because *I* had been too matey.

I was more careful after this; but that didn't save me from more trouble. It came to me during my first German tennis tournament. I was a beginner, and got a big handicap; and so it came about that I was still plodding along in the handicap singles, just when the two tennis heroes of *all* our youths, the brothers Doherty, were playing the final of the open doubles on the next court. My opponent was a champion duellist, called Captain Flesch. The town had turned out to look at the Dohertys. The only people near Flesch and me were two Germans flirting with two girls under the trees; also there was a dog. But none of them, not even the dog, was looking at us; and they were quite right. The few points that I scored unluckily coincided with outbursts of applause round the Dohertys' court. Flesch thereupon challenged me to a duel, on the ground that I had packed the court. He also said he would challenge the two Germans; but they knew a thing or two, and made off, girls and dog and all. After Captain Flesch had done hunting them, he came back and challenged me again. But by then I had had time to think. So I said: "Look here, nothing would induce me to fight you with a pistol or a sword; but if you challenge me any more I shall hit you. And then, as there will be no duel, won't you be dishonoured, and have to commit suicide? Let's go on with the game." But the bullet-headed Captain wouldn't. I began to think that Germany was a great country—to get away from.

This story has a postscript in which I took no part. The Captain went on to another tournament, and did exactly the same thing. The duel was fought with sabres; his opponent was a novice and let fly too soon, wounding him severely in the right arm before the show had even started. "Hi," said everyone, "you can't do that."—"Sorry," said the novice, "I lost my head. Captain Flesch



has lost his right arm. We're quits. But, of course, if the Captain would care to go on with his *left* arm, *my* honour will be quite satisfied."

These personal experiences are small things in themselves: yet they illustrate the point that the Germany of the 'nineties and of the early part of this century had many elements of a primitive society, and that German honour was a dense and dangerous commodity even to its owners. A foul and convenient code has however enabled Germans through the ages to do what they like with high-sounding words upon their lips. I have shown you that in public as in private life German honour not only enables but commands a German to kill his neighbour, and to keep always in adequate training to do so. Rabindranath Tagore once said that people who grew more and more armour at the expense of their brains became like prehistoric animals, unfit to survive. That, alas, is true, but it doesn't work out like that.

The Kaiser's Germany was indeed so primitive beneath the veneer, that liberalism had no chance in post-war Germany. The Republic of Weimar fell because Germans in the plural never really desired political independence or maturity. No one of humanitarian views was ever very far out of danger of being murdered. I think it was a Japanese who invented the term "dangerous thoughts". Hitler and his associates have considered as dangerous any thoughts that were liberal, humane or merciful; and they have abused in unmeasured terms all who held them. Perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon of our time is the systematic German degradation of the German language to the permanent level of the barrack-square and Billingsgate. Germans, in fact, have never been able to be polite even to their friends; so we, their enemies, don't pay much attention to their abuse.

It would be an interesting study to compare in detail the Kaiser's Germany with Hitler's, and to show how Nazism is not an aberration but an outcome. The similarities are so numerous that I have no time for all of them; but I will enumerate a few. The Kaiser's speeches were essentially the same as Hitler's. Adolf, the clap-trap king, has echoed the flamboyant flourishes of the imperial barnstormer. The cry for a dominant race of nordic master-men was persistent: at that time it came from unbalanced intelligences like Nietzsche and Treitschke, though I must say again how largely Nietzsche has been misread, and how little these two men had in common. Now the cry comes from crossbreeds like Hitler and Goebbels. Then as now Germans were furious with a world that does not give to them everything that they think their efficiency deserves. And by everything they meant and mean—everything, in particular the British Empire. Then as now Germans said and believed that England was decrepit, the Empire ramshackle, that Englishmen were degenerate, that Germany should and would smash them, and enter into their heritage. Yes, England, always England, was in the German way, and must be destroyed. That has been common ground, in my own knowledge and experience, for over forty years. And, as it has twice turned out, those who didn't hold these views didn't count. Then as now anti-Semitism was strong, though of course not so violent. Then as now the expansionists, especially those in the Fatherland Party, wanted to annex everyone else's Fatherland, and displayed maps claiming as German half France, all Belgium and Switzerland, and most of European Russia. Once again there has been little change in German habits. France, said Bismarck, must be "paralysed". France, said Hitler, must be "annihilated". Why? Just continuity of thought—



"thinking with the blood". How they ranted in imperial days of "frightfulness", "ruthlessness" and appalling things to come. How the words "brutal", "fanatical" "merciless" have always been hopping like toads from Hitler's lips. Then as now militarists persecuted and despised intellectuals. One was always meeting, and shrinking from, the living spits of the Nazi who said: "When I hear the word culture, I push back the safety-catch of my revolver." The man who wrote that, by the way, was President of the Reich Chamber of Culture. Then as now the German working-man had no say in his own fate: he was just cannon-fodder and factory-fuel. Of course there are differences too. There was more lip-service to morals, instead of the present vaunted lack of any traditional restraints. The Kaiser's régime had its scandals: they were nothing to the orgies of the Nazi police-state. In the Kaiser's day Germans had at least some ostensible political morality; politics were to them a proceeding in which there were fair fouls but no foul fouls. If anyone thought differently he must be a hypocrite. Hitler has made fouling conscious and deliberate. Germans have become more amoral than immoral. Hitler, in a word, has gone further in the programme of permanent mastery through planned corruption. Again, in the Kaiser's time there were no concentration-camps. This particular cruelty is a throw-back to earlier forms of barbarism. Here however there *has* been progress—in the wrong direction. The modern German is *more* cruel to his prisoners than were his mediaeval forbears. The Gestapo and the Black Guards of the concentration-camps have steadily increased the methods of anguish that the strong can inflict on the weak, when they have bestial and ingenious minds. The excruciating torments that they have devised for the

human body are beyond belief, and beyond forgetting. I am not, however, going to harrow you here with the detailed catalogue of horrors, under which many prisoners, Jews, Czechs, Poles, and Germans too, have slowly expired. We are fighting to defend the world from suffering them in its own riven flesh. But it must be realized that in Poland, for example, the Brazen Horde is carrying out a policy of racial extermination as systematically as Imperial Germany exterminated the Herreros, and the Poles have been, and are being, deliberately caused to die by the thousand of exposure.<sup>1</sup> The Brazen Horde and its apologists will deny this; but it is true. And it is true because the Brazen Horde has not changed down the ages. The torturers and assassins and exterminators of the Gestapo are the lineal descendants of that imperial butcher-bird, General von Trotha, who, in the Kaiser's hey-day, deliberately wiped out whole tribes in Africa: wiped them out, women and children, in every circumstance of horror and calculated brutality, score upon score of thousands of them—just what his people are doing in Europe today. That was what was meant by "a place in the sun"; that is what is meant by "living-space" today. In 1914 the place in the sun led to the sun being extinguished for ever in millions of eyes. In 1939 living-space meant converting Europe into a mortuary for subject races. "The Germans", said Froissart, "are hard and cruel to their prisoners." He wrote that five hundred years ago. And in October 1940, the German Gauleiter, Greiser, has explicitly instructed his fellow-countrymen to treat Poles with hardness,

<sup>1</sup> "We understand that our two nations (Germany and Poland) must live beside one another, that one of them cannot do away with the other one."—HITLER, 1938.



loathing and starvation. Here again there is no change in the Germans—except for the worse.

There is another difference. Art, in Imperial Germany, was in a fairly flourishing condition. There is none worth the name in Nazi Germany. Nazism is like a beech-tree; nothing can grow beneath it. Another change for the worse—always for the worse. I am a patient play-goer; but the last time I was in Germany I found it impossible to sit through anything, though I believe there has been one masterpiece with a pig as the leading character. "Statesmen without a heartfelt relation to art", said Dr. Goebbels, "are always second-rate." What happens when the art is third-rate? Today, however, we are not concerned with art—save in so far as it has been politically prostituted—but with the unrelated problem of Germany's conduct to her neighbours. This, however, must be said. Compared with the pain that Germans have brought to man, the pleasure that they have given is literally a drop in an ocean. It cannot enter into any serious argument now. To mankind as a whole Germans have brought nothing but misery in all its worst forms.

Other similarities between Kaiser and Fuehrer are their boundless conceit, their laughable megalomania. But for this combination of conceit and megalomania Hitler would never have given away so much of his game in *Mein Kampf*. Unfortunately he gave away so much that again people didn't take him seriously. Surely no one could really be as bad as that! But he was. I remember labelling him in 1930 as "ridiculously dangerous". Let me illustrate by one example among ten thousand what I meant by that word "ridiculously". "America", said Hitler, "is *permanently* on the brink of revolution." He has never been there, but he knows everything, mind you. "I have", he says, "the gift of reducing all problems to their simplest

foundations." Have you indeed? Then let us look at another of your gems on the New World. You could, you say, substitute German for English as the language of the United States. When I was a child of four I remember saying to an inconveniently questioning visitor: "I know everything in the world." But at least I had the ordinary prudence to add hastily: "Please don't tell my governess."

## VII

## THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

THIS inflated Hitler is the man who, like the inflated Kaiser and the Kaiser's inflated ancestors, said, "I want war." They all succeeded. They all had a "mission". Like Frederick the Great they all wanted to extend Germany's borders and cramp her soul, no matter what the cost. We have never admitted the German mission to dictate the destiny of this world. It is not for nothing that a great war was fought eighty years ago in America to *end* slavery. We gave the proper answer to the Kaiser forty years ago.

You were not meant to cut these Gordian knots,  
And solve the nations' problems willy nilly.  
You only make yourself and royal Pots—  
dam silly.

But the Kaiser persevered in his scarlet dreams. In 1933 Hitler talked of taking on his conscience without hesitation the deaths of two or three million Germans. That is what the Kaiser actually did. But a few years later



Hitler was putting his figure at ten millions. Here also there is progress—of a kind. “Fundamentally,” says an American writer, “the German people had remained more or less what they always were.” He is right. And he is right too when he goes on to say how German breasts “swell with pride” at each new exploit of German U-boats and fliers. Yes, swollen indeed—gorged on human flesh! They “swell with pride” though—or because—the U-boats drown women and children, and aviators machine-gun them in the streets and fields. They made a film out of the atrocities committed in Poland, and showed it as proudly as Tilly reported the sack of Magdeburg three hundred years earlier.

In discussing these oath-bound, hide-bound, dreary robots you always come drearily back to war. Germany has always been so mad keen to win victories that it has lost the notion of happiness. Germans have always tended to treat Germany itself as a conquered country. Germans have never been fools enough to repeat that war settles nothing. War, on the contrary, settles everything: the only question is for how long. So Germans have always written up war. Compare the writings of the Kaiser’s General von Bernhardt with those of Hitler’s Professor Banse. Both alike not only glorify war but advocate the crushing of their neighbours. There is no difference between them, except that Banse was so abominable that the neighbours, as usual, would not take him seriously. But the Bernhardt-Banse stuff is common form. The following quotation is taken at random from thousands available. It is from the organ of the German Army, *Deutsche Wehr*<sup>1</sup>: “Every

<sup>1</sup> This must be read with the *Völkischer Beobachter*: “For young Germany there are no formulæ into which we can compress our national claim to existence.” The sky is not the limit.

human and social activity is justified only if it helps to prepare for war. The new human being is completely possessed by the thought of war. He must not, cannot, think of anything else.” People of the world, where is the change since Tacitus wrote: “They hate peace”? If there were the least doubt about it, let us listen again to Hitler himself: “War is the most natural, the most everyday matter. War is eternal. War is life.” Life! What do you say to that, Man in the Street, Man in the Shelter, Man, Woman and Child in the Grave? “We want to be barbarians,” said Hitler. Germans, you don’t have to want. You are. How long are you going on? Your own Goethe said that ages must pass before you *cease to be barbarians*. Why not prove him wrong? Or listen to your own Hölderlin: “Thus I was come among the Germans. I did not look for much, and was prepared to find even less. . . . Barbarians from old time, rendered more barbarous by hard work, science and even religion profoundly incapable of any godlike emotion . . . offending every well-disciplined spirit by all manner of pitiable excess. . . . This is a hard saying, yet I say it because it is the truth. I cannot imagine any people that is more inwardly torn than the Germans. You see artisans but no human beings; thinkers and priests but no human beings; masters and servants, youths and middle-aged folks, but no human beings. Is it not like a battle-field, where hands, arms and limbs of all sorts lie scattered about, while the life-blood gushes out and is lost in sand?” Why not prove him wrong too—at long last. “What would you do, Philip,” said the Court Jester to the French King, “if all the world said Yes, and you said No?” All the world says Yes to progress. Germany says: “No. Go back—back—back—to what we Germans were, and are. *We want to be barbarians.*” Beware, mankind. For once Ger-



mans in the plural are telling the truth. There have been bright ineffectual angels in Germany: but those who have suffered from Germans through the years know only that they have always been ineffectual, and that so we must consider them, till the question is answered whether the Night of the Dark Ages is to descend upon the world, or the "Night of Long Knives" upon the Nazis.

Many prominent Englishmen who met Goering, afterwards professed a personal liking for him. That is certainly charitable; for Goering is a dope-fiend, a wholesale thief and still more a wholesale murderer. Someone will soon be calling *him* great instead of gross. It was he who carried out the massacre of Hitler's friends and his own enemies on June 30, 1934. The Germans tried to make out that only four hundred had been killed. In fact, the figure was nearer twelve hundred killed in that one massacre—part of a continual process. Blood-bath indeed! It was a swimming-bath. And of all the peoples in the world the blood-bath shocked the Germans least. And if they realize one day in defeat—but only in defeat—that they have been led into another *universal* blood-bath by another ferocious expansionist, they will also be the least shocked of all peoples in the world, while expecting more sympathy than all their victims together. Germans, in the plural, are built that way. Yet these Englishmen liked Goering—or persuaded themselves that they did—and made allowances for him and his fellow criminals. Why? Because they definitely did not want to believe the worst. Nobody can say that the butcher-bird has not had every chance.

Another poignant illustration. Goering was prodigal of assurances that "in the event of war, his airmen would not bomb anything except definitely military objectives."

And people believed him. Once again they were slow to believe evil of Germany. Yet long ago Goering had been getting practice in bombing civilians at Guernica. And there again charity stepped in—charity to the Germans. Of course Guernica was just a rehearsal; but at the time the slaughter of the Innocents, the destruction of the unoffending, was so utter that many people at first just wouldn't believe it of the Germans. They gasped, and then began to splutter that the Communists had done it, that the Spaniards had done it themselves. People actually said that! Innocents themselves! The German airman who led the raid was one Sperrle. Remember that name. He was a pioneer.

We are considering only the features of German policy, character and action which for centuries have been a burden to humanity. Those and only those. No feats of scholarship console us for bloodshed. It is a matter of little moment to us that there has been many a German who would prefer to "cultivate his garden", or drive his trade, or play the fool or the flute, if he were let alone. The hard fact is that he never *is* let alone. Frederick the Great played the flute: Catherine the Great dabbled in culture and wrote bright letters. Both were efficient administrators. That is a matter of neither interest nor comfort to victims, who would indeed prefer that aggressors should be *less* efficiently ruled! What do Hitler's alleged passions for Wagner and architecture matter so long as Czech students can be shot for singing at a funeral, and ten times as many be mutilated and done to death on any pretext or opportunity? And Germans raped the girl-students in the presence of the boy-students, before they shot the boys. And many others—boys and girls—have been so handled as to prevent them from ever having children. And Old-School Neurath is their Pro-



tector! And great numbers of Polish girls have been forced into brothels for German soldiers, and there worked to death. "We buried many Polish women when we had done with them," writes a warrior of the Brazen Horde. (The Golden Horde at least could not write.) And things like these are mere episodes and incidents, mere ripples in the great flood of ruthless German tyranny. I speak of what I know. No comments from me are necessary on people who can produce always and in sufficient quantity the men who will do these things. I have met people here who, in smug insularity, refuse to credit, or even to hear, these horrors. This instinctive aversion to "unhappy far-off things" is more than the old dangerous striving not to believe the worst. It is callous selfishness. The Channel has screened the modern Pharisees from agonies which even brave men could not avert from less favoured frontiers. The Brazen Horde, avowedly and in every respect, has lived down to the reputation of the Golden Horde. Wise men knew long ago what was coming. "It is really barbarism which is ready to throw itself upon us", wrote a famous Frenchman after the battle of Sadowa in 1866. What sort of life has Germany allowed the world to lead even between wars?

The thoughts of others  
Were light and fleeting,  
Of lovers' meeting  
Or luck or fame.

Mine were of trouble,  
And mine were steady,  
So I was ready  
When trouble came.

You could adopt that attitude; or you could trust them, and be deceived. What a choice! In either case happiness

was barred. That is not life at all. Generations of us have never tasted *real* peace; and we never shall taste it until the incubus is removed.

A last glance at Hitler—the Apostle of Savagery. "Germany", he says, "is only a beginning. Germany will be Germany only when it is Europe. We are the chosen." What! Is the new chosen people to be one that is prevented from thinking until it can no longer think? Is the master race to be a deaf horde that knows only blind servility to tyrants? Are Europe and the world to be afflicted by a creed that replaces, in its own words, "the European spirit with racial realism", that openly repudiates human rights in favour of national egotism, that expressly makes self-interest the sole test of right or wrong? To that question mankind—however tortured—has but one answer: God forbid.

I end as I began. The regeneration of the Brazen Horde is not impossible. Nothing in history is impossible. The soul of a people *can* be changed. Other peoples have performed the feat. Why not Germany? Because she has not yet really tried. The effort can be made, but it will have to be a very big effort. You have seen how far the German character has to go. I told you at the outset that the cure will have to be drastic, and largely self-administered. Without a fundamental change of soul, no other cure, no mere administrative or technical tinkering can be permanent. I will only add that it must at best be slow. It will take *at least* a generation. Germans call themselves a young nation. They are not. They are as old as anyone else. They are quite old enough to know better. They don't, and—so far—they don't want to. That makes it all the more difficult for them to turn over a new leaf. But they have got to do it, and close the chapter, and throw away the book of their false gods. Believe no false prophets



who tell you that they have done so. Take no German word for it that they have done so. Above all, never be duped by the type of German who says that he disapproves of atrocities, but was obliged to commit them out of loyalty to the Fatherland. If one's father is a professional murderer, one should help the police, not rush into the same profession. Let no other irrelevant qualities divert you from the real issue—the conduct of Germans toward their neighbours. A man may be a killer and a good husband, but only archdupes will be interested in his observance of the Seventh Commandment so long as he is breaking the Sixth. There were plenty of ways out for good Germans in the plural, always in the plural: but precious few took them, just because they were precious few. If they are ever to predominate, there must be many, many more. And be duped no more by the Brazen Horde itself. It will come brazenly after defeat, and profess that it has never done anything wrong, and trot out those irrelevant qualities.<sup>1</sup> Never be blinded again by the side-shows of German literature, medicine, music, philosophy. Like “the flowers that bloom in the spring”, these attributes “have nothing to do with the case”—*your* case. One thing, and one thing only, matters. The facts of aggression are there, and admit no further argument. The innocents have had their Day. It will be your own fault if they have another. Be duped no more by the friends and touts of the Brazen Horde, by the camp-followers, by those who have not the courage to face the truth, let alone speak it. All these will join unctuously in long litanies of denial. They did that after the last war. The denials were lies. They will not work *this* time. There is no horror that Germans have *not* committed; and the

<sup>1</sup> “I have never made incendiary speeches, I have never sown hate against anyone.”—HITLER:

hurricane of cruelty must be succeeded by the wave of indignation. Beware therefore lest another sham reformation be staged. Take nothing for granted. Make sure for yourselves and for your children. A. E. Housman, the giant of the tiny poem, wrote of our fighting men in 1914:

Their shoulders held the sky suspended,  
They stood, and earth's foundations stay.

That was true in 1914: it is ten times truer today. If old Housman were alive, his face would illuminate itself with the glory of our young men, who are saving the world, including you, and you, every one of you who can hear me, from something worse than sterilization. Our fighting men did all that Housman says in 1914; and now they have been joined by every man, woman and child in this island, by the very stones of our cities, that cry out against the Brazen Horde. All these humble, harmless people, *your* brothers and *your* sisters, are holding “the sky suspended”, and they know the sigh of Atlas. If they failed, the heavens would fall, and the human spirit would know a second flood—a flood without an Ark. They are doing this not only unto themselves but unto you—to save you in the Old World, to shield you in the New. On them has been laid an honour, far greater than any German could ever dream, of sharing—in their still, small way—the sacrifice of Hitler's enemy, Christ. For, even as He suffered for our Salvation, every man Jack, every babe Jack, in this tried and United Kingdom is suffering to redeem *your* earth from the Powers of Darkness.



THIS is the full text of Sir Robert Vansittart's broadcasts on the German people, delivered in the B.B.C. Overseas Programme, and extensively quoted in the Press. Sir Robert is Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the British Government, but in his introduction he describes himself as "a working diplomatist with his coat off." It is not customary for diplomatists to take their coats off, or to remove the diplomatic gag from their mouths, and Sir Robert's plain speaking, while it has met with wide approval, appears to have grieved certain people who find it injudicious in him to recall, for example, Tacitus' observation that "Germans would sooner get things by blood than sweat." But these talks are designed to show that the German has not really altered since Tacitus' day. He has always been the barbarian, the war-lover, the enemy—furtive or avowed—of humanitarianism, liberalism and Christian civilisation; and the Hitler régime is no accidental phenomenon but the logical fruit of German history, the German *in excelsis*. Sir Robert believes that we must understand and face this fact, once and for all. He looks forward to a real and profound change of heart in the German people. But this will be a slow process. In the meantime it is necessary for us to realise what we are fighting against in order that we may never again be trapped into weakness by a mere show of penitence. His indictment is not merely propaganda: it is based upon wide scholarship, first-hand experience and the conviction of many years. No man living was better qualified to say these things. They needed saying. They cannot be ignored.