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To
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
IN APPRECIATION

PREFACE

THIS investigation of the Reichsbank in the decade 1924, to 1933 is a study in central bank control. It was undertaken in the belief that our knowledge of the operation of central banks is altogether too limited to permit of broad generalizations concerning the objectives and techniques of monetary management. In spite of the introduction of stabilization funds and Treasury operations with partial control functions, central banks have been in the past, and are still to a very large extent, the institutions entrusted with monetary control. The battle is now joined between those who claim much for the management of money and those who deny to the managers either wisdom or power to achieve their ends. Too often the argument on both sides rests upon a factual background inadequate to support any valid conclusions and one is faced with the contemplation of mere assertions of personal preference. One of the best ways to discover what the objectives of monetary management may be and how they may be attained through specific control techniques is to increase our knowledge of the actual operation of central banks as they meet and deal with the problems that arise. The central bank of Germany in the decade under discussion offers unlimited possibilities for such a study.

The present study begins just as Germany, impoverished and nervous, was making fresh contact with the post-war world. Her currency had been stabilized and her Bank law rewritten; the reparations question was for the time being settled. It ends with the year 1933 when she turned her back upon international political and economic theory to embrace National Socialism. The decade covers, therefore, the beginning and the end of the Reichsbank as a free central bank endowed with certain powers over the credit life of the nation. It was my original intention to indicate in a final chapter the changes that have taken place since 1933 in the Reichsbank, the commercial banking system and the money market, and even in the concept of monetary

control itself. It soon became apparent, however, that any such study must be independently conceived; for the changes in the money and credit life of Germany have been too far-reaching to be handled adequately in the space of a chapter. The material in the following pages must be read with the terminal date clearly in mind. An analysis of the Reichsbank in the Third Reich is the subject for a later volume.

My indebtedness to Dr. James W. Angell of Columbia University is greater than can be acknowledged. The study was conducted under his direction and at every point it has benefited by his criticism and suggestions. Not only am I grateful for his direct help but also for the more intangible support which came from his steady encouragement and from the example of his scholarship. The leisure to complete the manuscript was made possible through a fellowship granted by The Brookings Institution. To them, and particularly to Dr. Charles O. Hardy, I express my thanks. I am also indebted to my many friends in Germany who gave freely of their time, their libraries, and their own detailed information when the intricacies of the German banking system and of the stock exchange were beyond my unaided understanding.

MILDRED B. NORTHRUP

WASHINGTON, D. C.
DECEMBER 29, 1937.

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