

# THE MODERN WORLD

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Edited by The Right Hon. H. A. L. FISHER, M.P.

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**THE MODERN WORLD**  
*A SURVEY OF HISTORICAL FORCES*

*Volume II: GERMANY*

# GERMANY

BY G. P. GOOCH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
THE RIGHT HON. H. A. L. FISHER, M.P.



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## INTRODUCTION

To minds of a certain calibre and training this book on Germany, written by one of our most distinguished living historians, will seem surprisingly dispassionate. Certainly we are here a thousand miles removed from the heat and dust of the conflict. What can honestly be said for the Germans and their policies during the last half-century is set down in this volume with a measure of sympathy and understanding which probably only an inhabitant of our cool, self-critical, and judicial island could achieve within so short a distance of the fiery ordeal. I do not profess that my estimate of the great transactions recorded in the central part of this volume agrees in every particular with that of Mr. Gooch. There are in history certain imponderable and impalpable things which are felt in the personal intercourse of statesmen, but leave only a faint and inadequate trace upon paper. One of these is behaviour. Imperial Germany in the hour of her pride and power was unfortunate in her behaviour. She was arrogant when she should have been restrained, capricious when she should have been steady, and if she were in truth anxious to keep the peace, nevertheless behaved as a Power designing war. One great condemnation of her statesmanship is that it created in the minds of the Liberal and peace-loving Cabinet of Great Britain the strong impression of a German peril.

In this island two things were generally overlooked by those who were not closely concerned with the study of foreign politics. The first was the genuine and widespread fear of Russia which prevailed among the German people; the second, the lively apprehension of

Vienna in face of the disruptive movement of the Slavonic races within and without the Austrian Empire. The dangerously high temperature which Colonel House observed in Berlin in May 1914, four weeks before the Archduke's murder, is partly to be attributed to these causes and partly to the rising impatience of the military caste and to its growing ascendancy in the counsels of the Empire.

That Germany had good reason to fear Russia is as true as it is damaging to the reputation of her politicians, who at one time might have had the Russian alliance and at another a solid British understanding, and with incredible blindness rejected both. In wartime the political direction of the country was equally at fault, and next to her original invasion of Belgium, it is difficult to decide which of her grand errors was the more expensive—her refusal clearly to intimate to Europe in 1916 a willingness to evacuate without guarantees every yard of Belgian soil, her adoption of the unrestricted submarine campaign, or the senseless and terrible devastations wrought by the orders of the General Staff during the retreat of the German armies to the Rhine. For these and other blemishes she has paid a heavy price.

Mr. Gooch has traced with a masterly hand the intellectual and moral forces which are now working in the defeated State. He has shown the industry, the courage, the steady impulse to self-improvement which persist, despite the darkest discouragement, in the soul of this remarkable people. He has enabled us to realise by how narrow a margin of public confidence the

Republic survives, and how easy it would be for the Allies, should they fail in a due measure of consideration for the real difficulties in which Germany is placed, so to swell the forces of monarchical and nationalist sentiment as to sweep away the Weimar Constitution and all that has been erected on its foundations. Were such a situation to be created the future of Central Europe would be dark indeed.

H. A. L. FISHER.

*March 1925.*

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