

9-572

V. DURÉE DE L'ARMISTICE.

La durée de l'armistice est fixée à 36 jours à compter de la signature de l'armistice, sans possibilité de prolongation.

# ARMISTICE and Germany's Food Supply 1918-19

by **BERNHARD MENNE**



Paris, le 21 novembre 1918

(9 heures)  
en français

14

*R. Burger*  
*Obermayer*

V55:1945ofJ3  
H5  
023212

IT FOR FREEDOM PUBLICATION \* HUTCHINSON

*(H. H. ...)*

COMING PUBLICATIONS :

- "ABOUT BELGIUM" by Camille Huysmans  
"THE FLAMING BORDER" by Czeslaw Poznanski  
"GERMAN CONSERVATIVES" by Curt Geyer  
"THE WOLF AS A NEIGHBOUR"  
by M. van Blankenstein  
"JUDGES IN ARMS" by Kurt R. Grossmann

NEW SERIES :

THE FUTURE OF EUROPE AND THE WORLD

- "GERMANY AT PEACE" by Walter Loeb  
"FRENCH SECURITY AND GERMANY"  
by Edmond Vermeil  
"PROGRESS TO WORLD PEACE" by K. F. Bieligk

HUTCHINSON & CO. (Publishers), LTD.

**"FIGHT FOR FREEDOM"**

Editorial Board

LUIS ARAQUISTAIN  
JOSEF BELINA  
JOHN BROWN  
CURT GEYER  
W. W. HENDERSON

CAMILLE HUYSMANS  
PROFESSOR A. PRAGIER  
M. SLUYSER  
RENNIE SMITH  
MARY E. SUTHERLAND, J.P.

Armistice and Germany's  
Food Supply 1918-19  
A Study of Conditional Surrender

by  
BERNHARD

*Foreword by*  
CHARLES JARMAN

*Translated from the German by*  
ED. FITZGERALD

HUTCHINSON & CO. (Publishers), LTD.  
LONDON :: NEW YORK :: MELBOURNE

## BERNHARD MENNE

Was born in 1901 in Fredeburg in Westphalia. He studied economics at the University of Berlin.

In 1921 he became a member of the editorial staff of the *Rote Fahne* in Berlin. Subsequently he worked as editor on newspapers in Hamburg, Dueseldorf, Muenchen and Halle and from 1925 to 1928 he was Chief Editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* in Breslau.

After 1928 he published and edited a political weekly paper in Essen. It was there that he completed his studies in the history of German big industry. He fought vehemently against the Nazi movement in the Ruhr.

In 1933 he fled to Prague, where he later became Chief Editor of the *Prager Mittag*. After Munich he came to England.

He is the author of the following books :

- Krupp or the Lords of Essen* (1937)
- German Industry on the Warpath* (1942)
- The Case of Dr. Bruening* (1943)

PRINTED IN  
GREAT BRITAIN,  
AT THE ANCHOR  
PRESS, TIPTREE,  
:: ESSEX ::

"The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who succumbed to the blockade after November 11th were done to death with cold deliberation after the victory of our enemies had been secured and guaranteed."

Count BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU in Versailles, 1919.

"The blockade had been cruelly prolonged for five months after Germany's surrender and for four months after the signing of the Armistice."

W. H. DAWSON in *Germany under the Treaty*, 1933.

"In 1919, before you were born, there was a blockade of Germany, prolonged for months after Germany had been brought, largely by starvation, to surrender. The Vansittarts of those days were eager to prolong it; their enemies then, as now, were German babies and children."

MARGARET COLE in *A Letter to a Student*, 1942.

## Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
FOREWORD BY CHARLES JARMAN . . . . .	5
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
I. ARTICLE TWENTY-SIX. . . . .	14
II. THE ORGANIZATIONAL PHASE . . . . .	
III. THE FIRST DELAY . . . . .	29
IV. THE SECOND DELAY . . . . .	46
V. THE FOOD TRANSPORTS TO POLAND . . . . .	59
VI. THE BREACH . . . . .	63
VII. THE DECISION OF THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL . . . . .	68
VIII. THE BRUSSELS AGREEMENT . . . . .	75
IX. THE GREAT RELIEF ACTION . . . . .	83
X. A HATEFUL LEGEND . . . . .	91
CONCLUSION . . . . .	95

## FOREWORD

THIS booklet is directed against a Legend founded upon a Lie. It is properly sub-titled: "A Study of Conditional Surrender." It contains a warning.

The purpose of the study is to destroy the legend that Germany, after the last war, was deliberately starved by the Allies, to whom Germany's military leaders had made not an unconditional surrender but a conditional one; and in so doing the German people were betrayed. On that lying legend Hitler fastened. Out of it grew Germany's moral apologia for the present war.

This falsification of history has had such fateful consequences that it is well to recall the facts. The capital fact is that after the last war, in the midst of military defeat, peace was made with Germany on the basis of conditional surrender. This fact is instructive. When, on the order of the German High Command—Field-Marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff—a Government was formed by Prince Max of Baden to make peace, the proposal for an armistice contained this significant sentence:

*"As a basis for peace negotiations the German Government accepts the programme set forth by the President of the United States of America in his message to Congress on January 8th, 1918, and in his subsequent declarations, especially the speech of September 27th. . . ."*

This was the beginning of Conditional Surrender, made in 1918, when the Germans, beaten in the field, put forward as the basis for negotiations terms which up to that very day the German Government, backed by the vast majority of Parliament, Press and people, had flatly rejected.

Evidently President Wilson himself felt somewhat uncomfortable and sought assurance about the German attitude, in their hour of military defeat. On October 8th, 1918, President Wilson was constrained to ask:

*"Does the Imperial Chancellor mean that the Imperial German Government accept the terms laid down by the President in his Address to the Congress of the United States on January 8th last, and in subsequent addresses, and that its object in entering into discussions would only be to agree upon the practical details of their application? . . ."*

In their reply the Germans made it more precise that they wanted Conditional Surrender. Let it be remembered that the Allied Governments as a whole had not then accepted Wilson's Fourteen Points, and the German diplomats had seen the chance to drive a wedge between them and the American Government. This is clear in their reply, on October 12th, 1918:

"The German Government *has accepted the principles* laid down by President Wilson in his Address on January 8th, 1918, and in his subsequent Addresses, as the foundation for a just and lasting peace. Consequently the sole object of the proposed discussions would be to come to an understanding as to the practical details of their application. . . . The German Government *assumes that the Governments of the Powers with which the United States are allied also take their stand upon the declarations of President Wilson.*"

To this the American State Department answered on October 14th, 1918:

" . . . that *no arrangements can be accepted* by the Government of the United States of America which do not provide absolutely satisfactory safeguards and guarantees for the maintenance of the present military supremacy of the armies of the U.S.A. and the Allies in the field."

Germany's answer on October 20th, 1918, was:

" . . . the present relative strength on the fronts must be made the basis of arrangements which will safeguard and guarantee it. . . . It trusts that the President of the United States *will approve of no demand that will be irreconcilable with the honour of the German nation* and with paving the way to a peace of justice. . . ."

This was the foundation for all the lying propaganda of the Germans all over the world after the last war—and the most successful of these lies was that the terms of surrender were violated and children and women in Germany were starved by the Allied blockade continued after the armistice was made.

Note the point that Germany after the last war surrendered on conditions. An armistice had been negotiated on terms; alterations were made during the negotiations; German wishes were considered—and in the end an agreement was signed. Its last clause indeed stipulated that the agreement could be terminated by either of the parties. Germany was trusted. It was believed that a New Germany had come into being. And what was the result?

Allied statesmen and politicians, high and low, fell into the trap. Up to this very day, and again and again, it is said that Germany was betrayed, and that the continuance of the blockade after the last war was one of Germany's just grievances, one of the reasons why Germany re-armed and entered upon the path of aggression.

The "Fight for Freedom Publications" have therefore rendered a real service in undertaking an investigation of the facts about the blockade, and of the treatment of Germany immediately after the last war. It is a factual study without prejudice. Bernhard Menne puts the facts before us in this booklet, based mostly on documentary evidence from German sources. No one who reads



the booklet can ignore the facts when discussing this problem and its implications. It stands in the forefront of the record that within an amazingly short time after the Armistice, when the whole Continent, ravaged and devastated by Germany's war, was struggling to get on its feet, a steady stream of foodstuffs, raw materials and requisites of every kind was pouring through German ports. A score of European countries were clamouring for assistance of this kind. Germany, that had been Europe's implacable enemy, received almost a third of the total supplies thus delivered. As Bernhard Menne says, all that remains of this great work of mercy in the minds of most people is a hateful and lying legend—that Germany was refused food, that supplies were deliberately held up, and that hundreds of thousands of German women and children suffered hunger, privation and death after hostilities had ceased.

The legend is false. We learn that from the facts and figures set forth in this booklet. We learn it from the testimony of the Germans themselves. A German economist, in a German newspaper, in November 1918, declared that "actually the danger of real famine does not exist at all in Germany, particularly such a short time after the harvest".

The German High Command and their stooges, the German Government and their collaborators, the industrialists and ship-owners, knew the game they were playing, and I must admit that they played it very well. They did not deceive us all to the same extent. They did not deceive the seamen—but let that pass. The game they played would not have worked all the way in their favour if they had not been helped considerably by one circumstance: the disunity of the Allied and Associated Powers, and the conflict of their policies, especially of France, the United States and Britain.

When we seek the causes of the present war we ought never to forget the position in which France was placed at the end of the last war. With supreme heroism France fought through four years, and saw her soil ravaged and her economic life destroyed, the flower of her youth slaughtered by the million, and in the end found herself alone with no security and no assistance beyond what her impoverished and weakened manpower could give. All this comes back to mind when we read Clemenceau's speech, reminding the Allies of France's sacrifices in the war, and protesting, not against the delivery of food to Germany, but against the strange perversion of sympathy which urged that the aggressor had to be cared for before there was a guarantee that he fulfilled his obligations.

That strange perversion had its effect in our own country, too. A campaign was set afoot by humanitarian and idealist groups, who could only think about "the poor Germans" and did not realize that they were the victims of the deception engineered by German propaganda: the poor Germans existed only in their imagination, brought to life there by the Imperial and Republican German Government as creatures of their propaganda.

The deception flourished also in the United States. The Ameri-

cans were in a different position, opposed to France, and, to a somewhat less extent, opposed to Britain. President Wilson never could forget that he had had to threaten his Allies and associates with a separate peace with Germany if they did not accept the settlement he wished to make. Fear that France would become too strong (forgetting her colossal losses) and competition against England in the markets of the world, helped to explain American policy at that time. But the success of the German propaganda is well illustrated in the letter General Bliss, the Chief of Staff of the American Forces in Europe, sent to Herbert Hoover on December 30th, 1918, in which he said :

“It may offend certain governing classes, but I believe that it will rally the sentiment of the world in general to us if we now demand *in the name of good business* and in the name of common humanity a relaxation in the blockade against the Central Powers.”

Shall we make the same mistake again? Fortunately the outlook is somewhat better this time. There will be no question of surrender on conditions. Neither will there be any pretext for Germany to build up another lie about betrayal and brutal injustice. Discussions have started, and an organization has been created, which will rebut these charges in advance : the setting up of UNRRA, with an American chairman and a British vice-chairman, provides the guarantee that relief and rehabilitation will be carried on in Europe not only in a humane spirit but in accordance with the principles of justice as between aggressor and victim; and wise decisions about Germany have already been taken.

Whatever the war may bring, the facts unfolded in this booklet emphasize one imperative obligation : the United Nations must remain united if besides winning the war they want to win the peace. Germany must have no opportunity of driving a wedge between the Allies. Mr. Churchill in his speech on February 22nd, 1944, said that the term “unconditional surrender” does not mean that the German people will be enslaved or destroyed :

“It means, however, that the Allies will not be bound to them at the moment of surrender by any pact or obligation. There will be, for instance, no question of the Atlantic Charter applying to Germany as a matter of right and barring territorial transferences or adjustments in enemy countries. No such arguments will be admitted by us as were used by Germany after the last war, saying that they surrendered in consequence of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Unconditional surrender means that the victors have a free hand.”

Perseverance in that policy will give us at least some assurance that the world will not be fooled again.

London,  
May 1944.

CHARLES JARMAN.

## INTRODUCTION

THE FIRST WORLD WAR ended with an action unexampled in the previous history of humanity. Even before the last bullet had been fired a group of men in the camp of the victorious States began to organize a great work of mercy, that of feeding and clothing hundreds of millions of shivering and hungry men, women and children.

This great work was carried out in a truly humanitarian spirit, and from the very beginning the plans of these men included the clothing and feeding of men, women and children in enemy as well as in friendly countries. Their plans did not remain a mere pious hope; they were actually carried into practice. Although four years of war had disorganized international economic relations and wrought unparalleled destruction amongst the means of transport, nevertheless took only 134 days of preparation before a steady stream of foodstuffs and comforts began to pour into the ports of a country which was but yesterday the most implacable of enemies, Germany. Germany was only one of twenty countries to receive assistance in this way, but she was given almost a third of the total supplies delivered.

This is the indisputable historical truth. But how much of it has remained in the minds even of those who were its contemporaries, not to speak of the generation that came after?

All that remains of this great work of mercy in the minds of most people is a hateful legend: the legend that Germany was refused food, that her supplies were deliberately held up, and that this base action cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of German women and children long after hostilities had ceased.

This legend did not grow up of itself. At a time when day after day the food ships of the enemies of yesterday were steaming into Germany's harbours carrying bread, meat and milk to feed the hungry and relieve Germany's distress, the Foreign Minister of the new German Republic, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, remained demonstratively seated at the conference table in Versailles and declared with mock indignation:

"The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who succumbed to the blockade after November 11th were done to death with cold deliberation after the victory of our enemies had been secured and guaranteed."

That was the cue for a tremendous propaganda campaign, which was, unfortunately, greatly facilitated by the fact that neither then nor later was Count Brockdorff-Rantzau officially contradicted. His charge that "hundreds of thousands of non-combatants" had been deliberately done to death had a quarter of a century in which to sink into people's minds. His story was accepted in Germany, whilst outside uninformed idealists and humanitarians took it up

and spread it assiduously. In this way the basis was laid for a flourishing legend to nourish the revengeful spirit of Nazidom.

The present study sets out to examine and analyse this legend, the legend that the "Hunger Blockade" was deliberately prolonged after the end of hostilities. It will ask, and proposes to answer, the following two questions :

(1) Is it true that the supply of foodstuffs to Germany after the Armistice was prevented, or even delayed, through the fault, deliberate or otherwise, of the Allied and Associated Powers ?

(2) Is it true that from November 1918 to July 1919, that is to say from the signing of the Armistice to the signing of the Peace Treaty, "hundreds of thousands of non-combatants" died of starvation in Germany ?

In addition to answering these two questions our study will seek to show *that the difficulties which arose in connection with the supply of food to Germany were created and deliberately exploited by Germany's political and military leaders to stage their first act of resistance to the Allied Powers after the Armistice and thus test the unity and determination of the Allied Powers, and that "the hunger of the German people" was a move in the game, and one which Germany's leaders did not hesitate to prolong for months as part of their plans.*

After reading this study the reader may decide for himself whether we have succeeded in proving our thesis, which has, we believe, been put forward in this form for the first time.

In writing this study the author was guided primarily by the need for exposing a political manœuvre which he felt to be a classic example of the cunning tactics adopted at the end of the First World War by the defeated leaders of Imperial Germany to distract the attention both of their own people and the peoples of the world from the enormous burden of guilt which rested on their shoulders.

In particular this guilt includes responsibility for the so-called "Hunger Blockade" itself. We are not thinking only, or even primarily, of the criminal prosecution of submarine warfare by Germany's leaders, which was, as is only too often forgotten, the immediate occasion for the British declaration of the blockade in February 1915, but of a political decision taken by the rulers of Germany no less than twenty-five years before August 1914, a decision which led direct to the war and to the "Hunger Blockade".

Long before August 1914 Germany's military leaders had cold-bloodedly included blockade in their calculations. The "marriage" arranged in the 'nineties between Germany's military caste on the one hand and her heavy industrialists and big landowners on the other led to a new departure in German politics: the decision to build a powerful fleet in addition to a powerful army. That meant the launching of a policy whose ultimate aims went far beyond the framework of simple continental hegemony, and one which could

be realized only by a war on land and sea. This policy clearly reckoned with Great Britain as the main enemy. The preliminary and rather naive propaganda claim that this German fleet was being built to safeguard Germany's imports of foodstuffs in the event of war was soon abandoned, and Germany's propaganda began to refer to her new navy as "*Risikoflotte*", namely, a fleet which would not be powerful enough to keep open Germany's maritime communications in time of war, but which would nevertheless be strong enough to render an attack on her maritime positions a very risky undertaking and thus possibly to prevent it altogether.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Germany's war lords knew perfectly well—and made no bones about admitting it—as early as the beginning of the present century, that a war would mean not only costly land fighting, but hunger as well. The certainty that in the event of war Germany would be cut off from her overseas sources of foodstuffs overshadowed the whole economic policy of Imperial Germany. It was, in fact, primarily this threat which persuaded Germany's big industrialists and the German bourgeoisie in general to agree without opposition (though sometimes it went against the grain) to crushing agrarian import duties and the endless subsidies for Prussia's Junker caste, the biggest producers of grain in the Reich. Thus Germany's anti-social policy of dear bread was quite logical and understandable only within the framework of a plan which reckoned cynically with war and blockade.

Looked at from this same angle we can see the ultimate aim of the indignant campaign launched in connection with the alleged prolongation of the blockade beyond the termination of hostilities. As far as Germany's domestic politics were concerned it was nothing but a manœuvre designed to draw the attention of the German people away from the fact that the long years of undernourishment and hunger it suffered during the war had been deliberately accepted by its own leaders as part of their general plans. And with this, also, the short-sightedness of the new Republican Germany stands revealed. Its mouthpiece made himself the tool of a poisonous campaign of propaganda designed to conceal the guilt of Germany's militarists and certain other interested parties.

This study sets out to demonstrate that the difficulties which arose in connection with the supply of food to Germany were due primarily to an act of resistance on the part of Germany, but it will not conceal or ignore the fact that differences of opinion existed in the camp of the Allied and Associated Powers in this matter. The fact that such differences did exist was the preliminary condition for the German manœuvre, the basis on which it was possible to carry it out at all.

The most important of these differences came to a head in the

<sup>1</sup> Eckart Kehr, *Schlachtflottenbau und Parteipolitik* ("Naval Building and Party Politics"), Berlin, 1930, pp. 244-62.

March meeting of the Supreme War Council, when French opinion stood opposed to that of Great Britain and the United States. The point at issue was whether Germany should pay in gold for the foodstuffs she demanded, as proposed in particular by the United States, or in commodities, i.e. in labour power, as France wanted. The second Allied difference, which revolved around problems in connection with the lifting of the blockade in general, the time element, the extent to which it should be lifted, and certain other details of method, did not produce such a clear line up. Great Britain and France differed from the United States, whose desire to resume trading relations with the countries of Europe as quickly as possible was naturally greater than that of her Allies, who were still suffering heavily from the effects of the war. In addition, our study will deal, at least in passing, with other differences of opinion amongst the Allied Powers, some of them of a personal nature, such as that between Hoover and the Inter-Allied Committees concerning the organizational forms of the great relief work. These differences of opinion dragged on for months before they were finally resolved. In general it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that each of the countries concerned was playing its own hand and looking primarily to its own interests.

Neither a detailed presentation of these Inter-Allied differences, nor the passing of any judgment upon them, belongs to the matter of our investigation. In this place they need be of interest to us only in so far as they exercised any influence on the speed or the quantity of the deliveries to Germany, that is to say, if deliveries were delayed and reduced, as Germany contends, was this, in fact, in any way due, even unintentionally, to these differences amongst the Allied and Associated Powers?

It cannot be denied that during the discussions, some of them very heated, which took place concerning blockade and food questions in the spring of 1919, one group of Allies charged the other with having held up deliveries to Germany at least for the two months from January to March 1919. We hope that having read our study the reader will be able to judge for himself whether such charges have any basis in fact or not.

The decision will depend in the last resort on the fundamental attitude adopted towards political developments between the two World Wars. The fundamental question which visibly emerges from all the discussions on the blockade and Germany's food supplies is: Can a policy which permitted Germany to evade the consequences of her defeat, to sabotage her obligations, and to "extend" progressively the concessions made to her, and, step by step, to throw off the burdens imposed on her be reasonably regarded as a correct policy, as a policy conducive of future world peace? The problem of fulfilment of obligations arose for the first time in January 1919 when the new Republican Germany refused, despite the signature she had just given, to place her mercantile fleet at the disposal of the great post-war organization

to feed the peoples of Europe. In whatever sense one answers this question, one must not fail to realize that this German act of resistance was the first step on a path which led from the refusal to hand over the war criminals and the scuttling of the German Fleet at Scapa Flow, to the sabotage of reparations, re-armament, the military reoccupation of the Rhineland, the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia, and the "return" of the Polish Corridor and Dantzig.

One last word as to the methods of our investigation. Where reports of official negotiations are concerned our quotations are taken almost exclusively from official German records, and in quoting them we have avoided any material abbreviations or omissions. We have studiously upheld that most important of all the canons of legal evidence—granting the other side the utmost liberty of expression.

In this respect a special circumstance must be noted. One of the most important sources for judging the historical questions at issue in our investigation is the record of the negotiations of the Armistice Commission, at which the food-supply questions bulked very large. Now, astonishing as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that there are no official British or United States records of the Armistice negotiations extant. In both these countries anyone who seeks to form a judgment on the historical facts has nothing but incomplete and largely unofficial records at his disposal. It need hardly be said that this circumstance has greatly facilitated the invention and consolidation of the hateful legend that the "Hunger Blockade" was deliberately prolonged after the cessation of hostilities.

In quoting very liberally from the official German records of the Armistice negotiations we have aimed at providing the politically-interested reader with material which up to the present has not been available in English. With this he is given the opportunity of following the development of post-war problems from their very origin.

# I

## ARTICLE TWENTY-SIX

IN the original text of the Armistice conditions presented by the two Allied representatives, MARSHAL FOCH and ADMIRAL WEMYSS, on November 8th, 1918, to the German Armistice Delegation headed by SECRETARY OF STATE ERZBERGER, Article XXVI read as follows :

"The existing blockade conditions set up by the Allied and Associated Powers are to remain unchanged, German merchant ships found at sea remaining liable to capture."

The "Notes" made by the German Delegation as a sort of written amendment and presented to Marshal Foch, comment as follows on this point :

"The effect of Article XXVI would be a one-sided continuation of sea warfare by the Allies and the United States during the armistice which openly contradicts the purpose of an armistice.

"A discontinuance of the blockade, rather, would be much more in keeping with a total armistice. In the meantime it might be decided that the sailing of German ships during the armistice is to proceed only on the basis of special stipulations. These stipulations should in particular serve to sufficiently provision the German civil population."<sup>1</sup>

The Allied negotiators were prepared to take this objection of the German Delegation into consideration, and Marshal Foch replied :

"The Allies are of the opinion that once the armistice has been concluded the continuation of the blockade will not hinder the provisioning of Germany as shall be found necessary. To this end the following sentence is being added to the text : The Allies and the United States contemplate the provisioning of Germany during the armistice as shall be found necessary."

In the closing session of the Armistice Commission which took place at 2.15 a.m. on the morning of November 11th, 1918, a further discussion took place on Article XXVI between the British Admiral Wemyss and the German Delegates, Erzberger, Captain Vanselow and Count Oberndorff.

"CAPTAIN VANSELOW: Since the unquestionable refusal to lift the blockade has already been made in writing beforehand

<sup>1</sup> *Der Waffenstillstand 1918-1919*, Vol. I. "Der Waffenstillstandsvertrag von Compiègne und seine Verlaengerungen nebst den finanziellen Bestimmungen." Berlin, 1928, pp. 48-49.



I must not come back to it. As you know, this is an extremely important question for us because we must by all means receive provisions from overseas.

"ADMIRAL WEMYSS: We have already a commission preparing the provisioning. Germany may be included therein.

"CAPTAIN VANSELOW: Can German ships take part in sailings for the purpose of this provisioning without being exposed to the danger of being captured?

"ADMIRAL WEMYSS: It is intended to include the German ships in the present pool for the complete provisioning of the world.

"AMBASSADOR COUNT OBERNDORFF asked: But in so doing these ships are to remain German property?

"ADMIRAL WEMYSS avoided a positive reply, yet seemed rather doubtful.

"AMBASSADOR COUNT OBERNDORFF thereupon remarked that the question probably pertained to the peace negotiations, not to the armistice.

"CAPTAIN VANSELOW explained: 'Tonight we are expecting two experts for our food provisioning. I request that they be given an opportunity to discuss the preliminary necessities to-morrow morning.' He was assured of that and the discussion was referred to Admiral Hope, who arranged a conference with Captain Vanselow for 7.30 a.m.

"SECRETARY OF STATE ERZBERGER: Article XXVI signifies the continuation by the Allies of an essential part of the War during the armistice, namely, the blockade. That order has a worse effect upon Germany since our neighbouring states are directly affected by it; during peacetime vast parts of our fatherland were provisioned by those territories; for example, Berlin with milk and butter from Denmark, the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial territory with cheese, cattle, butter and margarine mainly from Holland. The German people have suffered gravely through the blockade, this starvation policy of England. The 'flu which has recently been raging particularly severely has carried away young people of both sexes in Germany on account of deficient nutrition. Now the war is to be continued during the very armistice against our women and children. The Allies will not derive any military success from that yet the German people will again most gravely be hurt. Thus a one-sided, heavy burden that could not be explained by military reasons would continue to weigh upon the German people."<sup>2</sup>

No answer was made to these observations of Erzberger. In the final text of the Armistice Agreement Article XXVI read as follows:

"The existing blockade conditions set up by the Allied and Associated Powers are to remain unchanged, German merchant ships found at sea remaining liable to capture.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

"The Allies and the United States contemplate the provisioning of Germany during the Armistice as shall be found necessary.

"The above armistice was signed on November 11th, 1918, at 5.00 a.m. French time.

(Seal of Marshal Foch, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies.)

(Signed) J. FOCH  
R. E. WEMYSS  
(Admiral)

(Signed) ERZBERGER  
A. OBERNDORFF  
VON WINTERFELDT  
VANSELOW."<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after the Agreement had been signed Secretary of State Erzberger, acting on the instructions of the German Government, made a statement in the name of the German Delegation :

"The undersigned Plenipotentiaries regard it further as their duty, whilst recalling their repeated verbal and written declarations, to point out once again with all possible urgency that the implementation of this Agreement must plunge the German people into anarchy and famine. After the assurances which preceded and led to the Armistice, conditions might have been expected which—whilst offering our opponents full military guarantees—would have put an end to the sufferings of non-combatants, of women and children."<sup>4</sup>

No reply was made to this declaration either. Marshal Foch, whose task with regard to the Armistice was a purely military one, apparently regarded it as outside his province to make any reply to the political propaganda in which the German Delegation indulged. It is interesting to note that it contained in germ the gravamen of all Germany's future charges against the Allied Powers.

What was the significance of Article XXVI, and what was the motive underlying it that it should have been so hotly debated down to the present day? So far very little attention has been paid to the fact that in its final formulation this Article represented a compromise between military and economic necessities on the one hand and humanitarian considerations on the other. The military reasons for Article XXVI have been well summed up by T. E. JESSOP :

"The blockade was continued by the Allies after the Armistice at the insistence of the military and naval advisers, who rightly pointed out that the complicated machinery that sustained it could not, if now cast aside, be quickly brought into operation again in the event of Germany's rejecting the peace terms (as she was on the point of doing in May and June)."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-3.    <sup>5</sup> T. E. Jessop, *The Treaty of Versailles*, London, 1942, p. 14.

The main economic reasons which led to the drafting of Article XXVI were, first of all, a desire to secure a just distribution of supplies, and secondly to maintain price levels. Even during the preliminary discussion of the Armistice conditions, the *British and French Foreign Offices*, in conjunction with the *Inter-Allied Food and Transport Councils*, had drawn up a statement in which they declared :

"It would in their view be disastrous if either neutral or enemy countries were able to go into the markets and purchase supplies required for the vital needs of the Allies in competition, but without co-operation with the Allies, the result of such action being necessarily the entire dislocation of the general economic position now prevailing with disastrous results to the civilian population of both Allied and neutral countries."<sup>6</sup>

Even the *Daily News*, a paper thoroughly critical of any prolongation of the blockade, expressed misgivings at the situation which might arise "if Germany were able to rush into the markets of the world, and, in the extremity of her need, offer any price that might be asked for the food she required".<sup>7</sup> Such a rush after the available world supplies would have placed the distressed countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and in particular Poland, Serbia, Roumania, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States and Russia, in a hopeless position owing to their lack of gold and shipping space. This was one of the chief reasons which made it seem desirable to maintain the blockade, because, after all, it must not be forgotten that the blockade was not merely an apparatus for suppressing trading relations, but for controlling and guiding them as well.

Now although it provided for the formal maintenance of the blockade Article XXVI expressly envisaged one exception, and that exception was, in fact, a very important one for Germany in the winter of 1918-19. It promised not merely to permit foodstuffs to enter Germany, but even to send them. This is the first of a number of important facts which, if not overlooked, have at least been sedulously ignored, by the German and non-German critics of "the prolongation of the blockade". The humanitarian impulse which moved the Allied negotiators in the Forest of Compiègne in this matter was surely worthy of more generous recognition. One can only agree with F. M. SURFACE and R. L. BLAND when in their report on the provision of foodstuffs during and after the First World War they write :

"By this article the Allied and Associated Powers expressed their conviction that it was impossible to establish peace with a section of Europe in serious want of food, even though this section contained a powerful enemy. Quite apart from its

<sup>6</sup> S. L. Bane and R. H. Lutz, *The Blockade of Germany after the Armistice, 1918-1919*, Stanford, 1942, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily News*, London and Manchester, December 16th, 1918.

political aspects, modern civilization could not permit actual, preventable starvation to take place."<sup>8</sup>

However, Article XXVI was incomplete in one respect, as we have already seen indirectly from the report of the discussion between Admiral Wemyss, Captain Vanselow and Count Oberndorff. It agreed, it even promised (though with a proviso), to provide Germany with food, but it remained silent concerning an essential preliminary measure, namely that the plan was to supply the whole of Europe from a joint shipping pool, and that Germany, like all other countries, was to place her mercantile marine at the disposal of the pool for this purpose. It is true that Admiral Wemyss informed the German Delegation of this in the preliminary discussions which took place before the signing of the Armistice, but unfortunately the Allied Powers omitted to include it in the Armistice terms as one of the conditions on which the Armistice was granted at all.

Little need be said about the world shipping tonnage position in the autumn of 1918. Almost 13 million tons had been sent to the bottom by Germany's submarines, and the result was that both Allied and neutral countries were suffering keenly from a shortage of shipping space. On the other hand Germany had at her disposal at least 2.5 million tons of shipping lying idle and undamaged in her own or neutral harbours. To include this shipping in the proposed joint pool was clearly a matter of necessity, particularly as Germany was to be the biggest single beneficiary of the relief scheme. The following cable from COLONEL HOUSE in Paris to PRESIDENT WILSON, dated November 8th, 1918, throws some light on how it came about that this matter-of-course demand for the use of Germany's tonnage was not included amongst the terms of the Armistice:

"At one of the meetings of the Supreme War Council, Mr. Balfour proposed that as a condition of the Armistice to be offered to Germany the large amount of German tonnage now in German and neutral ports be handed over during the Armistice for operation by the Allies and the United States under the general supervision and control of the Allied Maritime Transport Council now sitting in London. I advised that this be not made a condition of the Armistice, but be taken up as soon as the Armistice was signed, and Mr. Balfour acquiesced in this suggestion."<sup>9</sup>

In making this proposal Colonel House was guided by the feeling that it would be better not to associate the question of the use of Germany's tonnage with the military terms of the Armistice Agreement, but to bring it up later in connection with the general organization of food supplies. Such a course would, House

<sup>8</sup> F. M. Surface and R. L. Bland, *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period*, Stanford, 1931, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Armistices of 1918*, London, 1943, p. 62.

obviously thought, deprive the question of any bitterness for Germany, and make her government more willing to co-operate in the matter when she could, so to speak, feel that she was on the same footing in the matter as the other Powers.

There is no doubt whatever that this American intervention in the shipping question was guided by the best possible motives, but despite this the result was, as we shall see later, deplorable. The Memorandum which President Wilson presented through Colonel House in Paris and London on December 1st, 1918, points out:

"The one essential to this plan in order that all world supplies may be brought into play is that enemy tonnage shall be brought into service at the earliest possible moment. It would appear to me entirely just that the enemy shipping in consideration of relief of enemy territory should be placed in the general food service of all populations released from enemy yoke as well as enemy territory."<sup>10</sup>

However, it very soon appeared that the German Government and its negotiators had different ideas concerning what was "entirely just" from those held by President Wilson and Colonel House.

At the same time it must be added that Marshal Foch, who was eager to obtain the occupation of the Rhineland as quickly and with as little friction as possible, was not inclined to be accommodating towards such British maritime demands as he felt might provoke German resistance. An honest failure to foresee Germany's political reaction, coupled with disunity amongst the Allied Powers, resulted in the omission of all reference to Germany's mercantile tonnage in the Armistice Agreement. The omission proved costly.

The counterpart of Article XXVI was Article XVI of the Armistice Agreement, which made it an obligation on Germany to permit and co-operate in the free transit of foodstuffs to Poland. It is quite obvious that these two Articles were inter-connected both legally and morally. We shall deal with Germany's attitude towards this Article in our chapter on the deliveries to Poland.

Amongst all the thirty-six Articles of the Armistice Agreement Article XXVI was the one over which Germany was most successful with her counter-proposals. This Article was, if one takes its spirit and its clear intention rather than its formal text into consideration, a hand outstretched in a spirit of humanity to Germany. Let us see what Germany's reaction was.

Here is the first reaction. On November 11th, 1918, the whole German Press published the following telegram, generally in large type at the head of the paper, from the Wolff Telegraph Agency, the official agency of the new German Government:

"WTB Berlin (Official). The following is a summary of the Armistice Conditions: . . . Article XVI (sic). The blockade is to remain in being. German ships may still be seized as prizes."

<sup>10</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 26.

Two days later a few officious papers (not widely read by the general public) published accurate texts of Article XXVI. But the Berlin *Vorwärts*, the central organ of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, the leading political party in Germany at that time, did not publish the accurate text. And even an important newspaper like the great Liberal daily *Koelnische Zeitung* published only the first part of Article XXVI and left the continuation out without comment (cf. *Koelnische Zeitung*, November 13th, 1918).

It may therefore be stated with confidence that the overwhelming majority of the newspaper-reading German public were not informed about the Allied offer contained in Article XXVI.

## II

### THE ORGANIZATIONAL PHASE

THE task which faced the Allied and Associated Governments at the conclusion of hostilities went far beyond the question of supplying Western and Central Europe. As F. M. Surface and R. L. Bland point out :

“When the Armistice came and the curtain was lifted on this great territory of Eastern and Southern Europe, there was displayed to an astonished world a population of some 200,000,000 people on the verge of starvation.”<sup>1</sup>

And Germany's situation was by no means the worst, for as H. W. V. TEMPERLEY tells us :

“Large areas of land had been the scene of hostilities, and cultivation was far below pre-war standards. In Poland, Roumania, and Yugoslavia, the occupying armies had eaten up all supplies of food ; famine conditions prevailed over a large part of Eastern Europe.”<sup>2</sup>

As a contemporary observed, there was “a rivalry in martyrdom” between Belgium, Poland, Serbia and Armenia. This is, incidentally, the second fact which is ignored by those who charge the Allied Powers with having prolonged the blockade beyond the end of hostilities. It is clear that in such a vast field of operations and with so many priorities in distress, and quite apart from any political considerations which would have made it incumbent on the Allied Governments to look to the situation of their own allies first, Germany's food situation was only one care amongst many, and one which in view of the fact that Germany's countryside and her towns had not suffered from war devastation was far from being the most urgent.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> H. W. V. Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, London, 1920, Vol. I, p. 292.

The first two months after the conclusion of the Armistice, the period from November 11th, 1918, to January 1919, was largely taken up in the organization of a relief apparatus to feed and clothe about 200 million people in dire need. The greater part of the difficulties which had to be overcome before the tasks could be fulfilled were due to purely technical causes such as:

(1) The acute shortage of shipping space caused by U-boat sinkings;

(2) The still ever-present danger of unswept mines on shipping routes and in the neighbourhood of harbours;

(3) The disorganization of the railway system on the continent of Europe;

(4) The inadequacy of overseas foodstuff reserves to meet the full needs of the situation;

(5) The fact that the numerous political changes which had come about in Europe greatly complicated the financing of the relief scheme; and

(6) The need for transporting Allied troops back to their own countries.

Together with these technical difficulties there was the great problem of political co-ordination. The unexpectedly early German collapse in the autumn of 1918 found the Allied Powers inadequately prepared to cope with the situation, and this naturally led to differences of opinion in both political and organizational matters. The essence of these differences can be seen fairly clearly from a telegram sent by HOOVER on November 7th, 1918, to his London representative, J. C. COTTON:

"For your general advice this government will not agree to any programme that even looks like Inter-Allied control of our economic resources after peace. After peace, over one-half of the whole export food supplies of the world will come from the United States and for the buyers of these supplies to sit in majority in dictation to us to prices and distribution is wholly inconceivable."<sup>3</sup>

President Wilson adopted Hoover's standpoint, and the result was that very disagreeable organizational difficulties arose, for, as Sir Frederick Maurice points out:

". . . it happened that there was in existence an efficient and experienced Allied committee which had perfected its organization and the machinery by a process of trial and error. This body was the Allied Maritime Transport Council, composed of two ministers, nominated by France, by Italy, and by Great Britain, and of two representatives of the United States. It was provided with an adequate staff, which by the time of the Armistice with Germany had learned its job.

"The Allied Maritime Council was in direct touch with the

<sup>3</sup> Surface and Bland, pp. 23-24.

Food Council, which co-ordinated Committees on wheat, meat and fats, oil, seeds and sugar.”<sup>4</sup>

The tremendous relief work was naturally not facilitated by the fact that this experienced body was pushed to one side at Hoover's insistence. In December 1918 another body took its place, the so-called *Supreme Council of Supply and Relief*, which was under Hoover's control. Inefficiency and friction with which we need not deal in any detail here led after two months, at the beginning of February 1919, to the formation of the *Supreme Economic Council*, which then took over the control of all the existing Councils for Transport, Blockade, Food and Supplies. As Sir Frederick Maurice says, this was “in effect a body almost exactly similar to that which the British Government had proposed to set up the previous October”.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this round-about organizational route, the various supply and relief organizations very quickly got to work. For instance, Hoover left America just a week after November 11th, but not before he had made arrangements for the accumulation of 250,000 tons of foodstuffs and their shipment to European harbours. He arrived in London towards the end of November and despatched his first representative to Germany on December 11th, even nine days before a similar mission departed for the Allied capital Belgrade. Hoover's representative in Germany “asked the Germans for a complete statement of their food situation as a preliminary to the furnishing of any supplies. A special commission was appointed by the Germans, which submitted a detailed report in January 1919 showing their supplies for the three crop years 1916, 1917, and 1918, together with much other relevant data. After the receipt of this report, Mr. Hoover sent a mission consisting of Dr. A. E. Taylor and Dr. Vernon Kellog to Berlin and elsewhere in Germany to study the conditions and to determine as far as possible the accuracy of the data submitted.”<sup>6</sup>

Not unnaturally there was still some uncertainty amongst the Allied Powers as to the actual situation in Germany in the winter of 1918-19, and also some misgiving as to the reliability of Germany's rationing system, the state of public order in Germany's North Sea ports, the capacity of her railways, and other matters. Even the figures presented by the Berlin Government gave rise to doubt, and Surface and Bland write in their book :

“It is of interest to note that, in explaining certain discrepancies between the crop figures submitted and the official war-period returns for previous years, the Germans stated that the earlier crop returns had been systematically increased from 10 to 20 per cent to make it appear that Germany was self-supporting.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Maurice, pp. 63-64.    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.    <sup>6</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 189.  
<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.



Did the careful investigation made into Germany's foodstuffs situation represent exceptional treatment unfavourable to Germany, treatment which perhaps resulted, deliberately or involuntarily, in holding up supplies? No, not in the least. With the exception of Northern France and Belgium, where relief work had been going on from the very early years of the war, the same procedure was adopted whether dealing with friend or foe. At the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 there were Entente and American Commissions at work in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe needing relief. These Commissions were busily employed collecting information concerning the quantity and kind of relief required, and settling the technical details of its provision. At the same time committees were at work in Paris and London buying up, shipping, and finally, but by no means least important, paying for the enormous quantities of foodstuffs and clothing required. The performance of this task took little more than two months, hardly very long for an action of such magnitude, without precedent in the history of humanity.

And what was the German Government doing in these two months from November to January? T. E. Jessop declares bluntly:

"In the first stages of this relief work the German Government stood aloof and sulked. It complained of the hunger of its people and at the same time left it unremedied, for political purposes."<sup>8</sup>

Is Jessop's judgment in accordance with the facts of the situation?

We have already seen that at 5.26 a.m. on the morning of November 11th, 1918, before the ink on the Armistice Agreement had time to dry, the German Delegation sought to pin responsibility on the Allied Powers for "the sufferings of non-combatants, of women and children". In the following days a flood of telegrams intended to impress public opinion in the Allied countries rang the changes on this theme. In messages to CLEMENCEAU, LLOYD GEORGE and LANSING the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, SOLF, declared that "millions of men, women and children are threatened with death by starvation."<sup>9</sup> Whilst in an appeal directed through the medium of the Swedish Socialist BRANTING the Social Democratic Party of Germany exhorted the British Chairman of the Socialist International: "The day of freedom and of peace must not become the day of death for millions."<sup>10</sup> And a telegram addressed by German Catholics to the Pope requested him ". . . in the name of humanity and of the principles of a religion of love to intervene with the Allies for the right of our people to live."<sup>11</sup>

In view of the fact that German public opinion had in the meantime been whipped up to this state of excitement it is not surprising

<sup>8</sup>Jessop, p. 17.    <sup>9</sup>*Koelnische Zeitung*, December 11th, 1918.

<sup>10</sup>*Koelnische Zeitung*, December 12th, 1918.    <sup>11</sup>Bane and Lutz, p. 633.

that when negotiations began in the middle of December 1918 in Trèves for the first prolongation of the Armistice, the tone adopted by the German negotiators was noticeably sharper. In his opening declaration on December 12th Secretary of State Erzberger declared :

“With deep regret I must place on record once again that the valuable promise made in the Forest of Compiègne by means of a supplementary clause to Article XXVI alleviating the excessive severity of the Armistice conditions has not yet been kept. . . . In a very short time Germany will be faced with the exhaustion of the stocks of food she has available for distribution to her population. Be quite clear in your minds as to the responsibility you will load upon your shoulders by any further delay in the provision of foodstuffs. . . . There is still a period of interim before peace. Let me express the wish that in this period of transition the fact will be taken into consideration that by carrying out the conditions of the Armistice the German people with its 65 million souls has given itself completely into your hands. Do not let women and children go hungry any longer. We know that you are in a position to help if you wish. Do not by continuing the now quite unnecessary blockade deprive the worker any longer of the possibility of earning his bread in peaceable labour. Otherwise you will render yourself liable before the bar of history to the charge that your actions were not dictated solely by the necessities of war.”<sup>12</sup>

This speech was delivered with an eye to world public opinion. In the subsequent discussion the following day, when the practical side of the question came up for discussion—the handing over of Germany’s mercantile marine to assist in the relief action—it was German anxiety about the property rights in the ships in question which occupied the foreground, just as previously in the Forest of Compiègne :

“MARSHAL FOCH read a letter from the American Food Chief, Hoover, pointing out that Germany had 2·5 million tons of shipping at her disposal, and asked whether these ships would be placed under the control and at the disposal of the Allies for the purpose of carrying foodstuffs to Germany.

“ERZBERGER : What does control mean ?

“ADMIRAL WEMYSS : Control means that these ships will be used jointly with the ships of the Allies, and that the apportionment of the freights will take place within this pool.

“ERZBERGER : It should be regarded as a matter of course that German property rights in these ships remain untouched, and that the ships will sail with German crews.

“MARSHAL FOCH and ADMIRAL WEMYSS : Of course.

“ERZBERGER : Then I am in agreement and ask you to communicate my willingness to Mr. Hoover. At the same time

<sup>12</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, I., pp. 114-15.

I should like to ask where, when, and with whom German delegates, shipping experts and experts on the importation of foodstuffs can negotiate. Could this be done at Spa, or, if not, where?

"MARSHAL FOCH: No, the negotiations cannot take place in Spa. The Chief Commission sits in London.

"ADMIRAL WEMYSS: There are two commissions dealing with these matters; the one is in Paris and buys the foodstuffs, and the other is in London and attends to transport and distribution.

"ERZBERGER: It would be desirable to have news through Spa as soon as possible, particularly as the question is specially urgent."<sup>13</sup>

Let us underline the main result of this discussion. Upon the assurance of Foch and Wemyss that the German ships they were asking for would remain German property, Erzberger declared that he was then in agreement. We are coming very close to the core of our investigation when we point out here that the stress in Erzberger's declaration of agreement was placed on the pronoun "I", for a month later it was seen that the attitude of the German Delegate was not shared by powerful interests in Germany, in particular, the shipping magnates. These gentlemen had other plans for their ships. Even when Erzberger was declaring himself in agreement, on December 13th, negotiations were taking place on an American proposal that certain German ships should be chartered for the purpose of carrying American troops back to their own country. The obstruction carried on by Germany's shipping magnates for this and other reasons caused weeks of delay in placing Germany's ships at the disposal of the pool.

Germany's attitude in the subsequent discussions on shipping tonnage and foodstuff prices can be judged correctly only against the background of her foodstuff situation in the winter 1918-19. Was Germany really threatened with imminent famine and catastrophe, as her reckless propaganda was trying to make the world believe?

It is a fact that during the last year of the war Germany had already managed to pass the lowest level of the food supply which she had experienced during the winter of 1916-17. For the year immediately preceding November 1918, Ludendorff's total war administration had requisitioned considerable quantities of foodstuffs from the occupied territories in the East (approximately 1½ million tons of cereals from Rumania<sup>14</sup> and 1 million tons of foodstuffs from the Ukraine.<sup>15</sup> As we shall see later, these military requisitions went on until the spring of 1919 and added considerably to the famine raging in these territories. Did this same danger also apply to Germany after her defeat?

<sup>13</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, I., pp. 125-26. <sup>14</sup> C. U. Clark, *United Roumania*, 1922, p. 189. <sup>15</sup> D. T. Jack, *Studies in Economic Warfare*, London, 1940, p. 129.

The answer to this question was given a few days after the conclusion of the Armistice by an article in the *Koelnische Zeitung*, one of Germany's leading organs of economic opinion. On November 16th, 1918, concluding a detailed investigation of "Germany's Food Situation", the economic expert G. OETTELSHOFEN wrote very definitely: "Thus, actually, the danger of real famine does not exist at all in Germany, particularly such a short time after the harvest."

In arriving at this sensational conclusion Oettelshofen had based his reasoning on the preliminary estimates of the German harvest yield for 1918. Subsequent official figures published in Germany's official Statistical Annual completely confirmed his conclusions. These figures show the astonishing fact that the German harvest yield for 1918 was a particularly good one. Here are the figures for 1918 and those for the first post-war years. (All figures given refer exclusively to the post-Versailles area of Germany):

*Total German Harvest Yields*  
(In tons of 1,000 Kilos)

Year	Rye	Wheat	Potatoes	Oats	Hay
1918	8,009,000	2,458,000	29,469,000	4,680,000	21,414,000
1919	6,100,000	2,169,000	21,478,000	4,493,000	20,551,000
1920	4,971,000	2,255,000	28,248,000	4,870,000	23,669,000
1921	6,798,000	2,933,000	26,151,000	5,004,000	17,171,000 <sup>16</sup>

The sugar-beet yield for 1918 was 1.8 million tons, according to Oettelshofen, compared with a peacetime consumption in Germany of 1.2 million tons, and he observes: "In addition it is now no longer necessary to use potatoes to manufacture spirit for war purposes. Similarly it is now no longer necessary to use the greater part of this tremendous sugar-beet yield for raw materials for war purposes."<sup>17</sup>

At the time of the Armistice by far the greater part of this large harvest lay in Germany's granaries and stores untouched!

In his sensational article Oettelshofen also pointed out that there was a further important reserve of foodstuffs available to Germany in her great herds of cattle, which had never been diminished by the incursions of a hostile army. In December 1918 Germany had 17 million head of cattle and 10 million pigs. The figures for Great Britain in the same year (June 1918) were: 7.4 million head of cattle and 1.8 million pigs.<sup>18</sup> Oettelshofen contended that this tremendous wealth of cattle and pigs could easily stand a reduction. However, figures which were published later show that no very great reduction was made in the winter of 1918-19 except in pigs, the number of which was brought back to nearly the same standard three months later. Here are the figures:

<sup>16</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch*, Berlin, 1919, p. 68; 1920, p. 42; 1921-22, pp. 57-58.

<sup>17</sup> *Koelnische Zeitung*, November 16th, 1918.

<sup>18</sup> *Sunday Times*, July 13th, 1919.

Date	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep
2.9.18	18,579,244	10,911,477	5,996,721
4.12.18	17,650,265	10,270,653	5,346,684
1.3.19	17,055,841	7,371,871	6,082,731
1.6.19	17,240,895	9,120,828	6,554,247 <sup>19</sup>

The meaning of these figures is very clear; they show that in the first year after the war there was no very great change in Germany's livestock figures, whereas far-reaching changes would have taken place had Germany really been on the brink of famine as was the case in the countries of East and South-East Europe.

The actual situation in Germany in the winter of 1918-19 was that the poorer sections of the population in particular were suffering from progressive undernourishment. With the conclusion of the Armistice a great quantity of foodstuffs which up to then had been hoarded suddenly appeared on the market and there was a very definite break in prices. On December 1st the bread ration was increased, and on February 1st the meat ration also. This brought a certain improvement for the German people, but naturally still not enough.

The probable situation until the next harvest was described later by Hoover to the Supreme War Council:

"During the last four years Germany had divided its own food supplies into eleven packets, and a twelfth packet had been made up of the food stolen from the occupied territories. Since the Armistice the twelfth packet had been lost to Germany and the remaining eleven packets had, through unemployment and disintegration, been greatly reduced in size. Consequently, Germany now only possessed food sufficient to feed the country for eight months, and some time about the 1st May next food would become scarce. . . ."<sup>20</sup>

A similar limit for Germany's foodstuff reserves (varying from the beginning of April to the end of May 1919) was set in the reports of a group of high British officers who were conducting an investigation covering most parts of Germany at the instance of the British Armistice Commission.<sup>21</sup> These reports place the astonishing fact on record that the German Government took no steps whatever, even the most modest, to alleviate the food situation. The fact that the German Government did nothing to put a stop to the privileged supply of food to those in a position to pay for it, though it went on fairly openly, and the fact that it did nothing to counteract the sabotage of supplies carried on by German agrarian circles, might perhaps be ascribed to the political weakness of the Government of People's Representatives which was then in power.

A more serious matter was the special rationing of the German

<sup>19</sup> *Stat. Jahrb.*, 1919, pp. 82-83; 1920, p. 51.    <sup>20</sup> Bane and Lutz, p. 207.

<sup>21</sup> Reports by British officers on the economic conditions prevailing in Germany, December 1918-March 1919. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, London, 1919, pp. 20, 22, 29, 49, 58 and 70.

Army, and in particular of the new military units which were already being set up in the months from December to January and sent either to Germany's Eastern frontier against Poland or kept for use against the Left-wing opposition at home. The rations provided for these men were at least 50 per cent greater per head than those distributed to the civilian population, and they were obviously provided out of ample food reserves. In reply to anxious enquiries from the provinces the Central Military Quartermaster's Office declared that it was in a position "to ration all troops until the next harvest". The attempt of the British Commission in Berlin to obtain even approximate figures of those who were being specially rationed in this way was met with indignant protests from the German military chiefs. The figure of 650,000 which was finally given as the total of those men receiving special military rations is hardly worthy of credence. In any case, LT.-COL. J. H. M. CORNWALL concluded in his report dated January 16th, 1919, that there were "some 2,000,000 soldiers in Germany drawing rations".<sup>21</sup> But even if it had really been only 650,000, their rations would have made a lot of difference in any relief action, say, to feed under-nourished children.

This special provisioning of the newly-raised Free Corps, as these new units were called, lifts only one corner of the curtain which fell over the whereabouts of the vast foodstuff dumps of the German Army after the Armistice, and the British Commission of Investigation sent to Berlin was particularly interested in the problem of what had happened to them. The "military representative of the Staff of the Reich's Food Office, a typical Prussian of the unpleasant type", we are told, treated the British officers who had come to discuss the relief work "with the utmost contempt, and evidently strongly objected to our questions and our presence". He declared that to a great extent the German Army Depôts had been plundered, but that "some of it had been sent to the Eastern front".<sup>22</sup> Thus Germany's food situation in the first weeks after the Armistice was not sufficiently bad to prevent the accumulation of German war dumps in the East.

The ineffective food policy as practised by the Republic's Governments during the winter of 1918 was in fact only a continuation of a policy already in force under its imperial predecessors. As D. T. Jack remarks, there were several facts apart from the Allied blockade which contributed to the deterioration of the German food situation: excessive army stocks, inefficiency of distribution for civilians, insufficient allocation of artificial fertilisers to agriculture, the calling up of agricultural workers from rural areas, etc., and in addition—as mentioned by Oettelshofen—the use of certain food-stuffs such as sugar and potatoes for the manufacture of explosives and spirits. D. T. Jack is quite right when he says that "the Allied blockade was only a contributory cause to this shortage. In

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.    <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Germany, however, the blockade has frequently been regarded as the sole cause of the distress of the civilian population".<sup>24</sup>

And finally, it remains to be pointed out that Germany's food policy at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 has one or two still unwritten chapters necessary to complete the whole picture, but it is unlikely that light will ever be thrown on them. On more than one occasion the military caste in power behind the façade of the young Republic, and the reactionary bureaucracy which was devoted to it, manipulated the food supplies for whole towns and even districts as an instrument of political pressure to hold awkward radical-socialist movements in check, and in some cases they even cut off food supplies in order to bring about "the premature explosion" of acts of political desperation.

The general atmosphere in Germany in the period following the Armistice was not all too sentimental. Many of those who joined in the shouting about "starving women and children" did so merely as a cynical propaganda move intended for export.

### III

#### THE FIRST DELAY

NEGOTIATIONS for the second extension of the Armistice began on January 15th, 1919, in Trèves. The Note which MARSHAL FOCH caused to be read by GENERAL WEYGAND at the beginning of the discussions declared:

"The Allied Supreme Command hereby informs the German High Command that an Allied Sub-Commission will meet a German Sub-Commission in order to lay down the conditions under which the German mercantile marine is to be placed at the disposal of the Allied and Associated Governments for the purpose of co-operating in the supply of foodstuffs to Germany and to Europe in general. The results of the discussions of these Sub-Commissions will be placed before the Allied Supreme Command."

At the same time Marshal Foch announced that the Allied and American members of a Shipping Commission and of a Finance Commission had arrived to take up negotiations with the corresponding German experts.

The task allotted to the Allied Commissions was clearly laid down in a decision adopted by the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief under the chairmanship of Hoover on January 12th, 1919:

"(1) . . .

"(2) The Council has formed the opinion upon the material already in its possession (which is necessarily incomplete) that

<sup>24</sup> Jack, p. 129.

additional supply of food will be required in Germany before the next harvest is gathered. . . .

"(3) The Council recommends to the Supreme War Council that if the German cargo and passenger fleet is placed at the disposal of the Associated Governments, the Associated Governments should permit Germany to import a prescribed quantity of foodstuffs so limited as not to interfere in any way with the priority of supply which must be assured to allied, liberated and neutral countries.

"(4) Under the conditions indicated, the Council would recommend that in the first instance the following supply should be permitted: 200,000 tons of breadstuffs and 70,000 tons of pork products.

". . . It must be a condition precedent to any supply that satisfactory arrangements are made by Germany for providing the necessary payment. . . .

"(6) The Council is of the opinion that the world's position will justify further supplies if the Supreme War Council decides that these should be continued."<sup>1</sup>

Thus after two months of investigation and preparation a formal demand was made to Germany that she should now conclude a practical agreement with the Allied Powers concerning supplies and the payment for them, and that she should at the same time demonstrate her willingness to co-operate by placing her mercantile marine at the disposal of the relief organization, thereby clearing the way for the great relief scheme. What was Germany's reaction to this demand?

It will probably surprise no one to learn that Secretary of State Erzberger again opened up the proceedings on January 15th with an indictment. After repeating his earlier charges he concluded:

"Now that the German people is without weapons, it must not in all conscience be made breadless. Hunger and despair would deprive the German people of its last remnant of vitality, and the Allies, too, are interested in maintaining this. A broken people may satisfy the lust of a victor, but I tell you today with all urgency: *I warn you*. Your own people are not immune from world revolution, and its most effective pacemakers are repression, robbery, misery and starvation."<sup>2</sup>

The actual proceedings in the two Commissions were more important than this propaganda diatribe. The FINANCE COMMISSION met on January 15th under the chairmanship of the American, NORMAN H. DAVIS. The United States Government was represented by F. ABBOT GOODHUE, and the British Government was represented by J. M. KEYNES and DUDLEY WARD. Germany was represented by, amongst others, the Hamburg banker, DR. MELCHIOR of the house of M. Warburg & Co., as Chairman; a repre-

<sup>1</sup> Bane and Lutz, pp. 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, I., pp. 158-59.



sentative of the Directorate of the German Reichsbank, KAUFFMANN; and DR. GAUS of the German Foreign Office. The official German protocol records the following concerning the session :

"The AMERICAN DELEGATE then made the following declaration: The Allied War Council in Paris had decided to give Germany the immediate possibility of purchasing foodstuffs within certain limits. The preliminary condition for such purchase would be, however, that the foodstuffs should be paid for not by way of credit or by the payment of Reichsmarks, but in cash in foreign currency.

"The expression 'cash' was explained to mean liquid assets in Dollars or Pounds sterling or in some form which could be changed freely into either of these currencies, i.e. gold, neutral currency, or neutral or Entente effects. Both the American and English negotiators declared that this was the decision of the Supreme War Council.

"The American Delegate then asked what means of this kind Germany could provide for this purpose.

"Whereupon the CHAIRMAN OF THE GERMAN DELEGATION reviewed the possibilities for the financing of foodstuffs supplies. Speaking theoretically, there were three kinds of means of payment available :

"(1) The gold reserves of the Reichsbank ;

"(2) The fund of neutral currency and foreign effects in Germany's hands ; and

"(3) German accounts in hostile countries, and in particular those under compulsory administration and liquidation.

"In practice, however, there was no question of these means of payment being made available for foodstuffs purchase because, under certain circumstances, they would be required for the reconstruction of Germany's economic life, and because, particularly where German accounts in hostile countries under compulsory administration and liquidation were concerned, this was a question of the status of German private property which would have to be left for the Peace Treaty to decide. In the circumstances at present prevailing therefore Germany could purchase foodstuffs only against Reichsmarks or against credit granted by the Allied Governments.

"Thereupon the ALLIED DELEGATES definitely rejected payments in Reichsmarks and the granting of credits, and asked once again what sums Germany could make available in cash. Germany must remember that a big concession was being made to her in so far as the Allied Governments were prepared to agree to Germany's paying from her own resources for her food supplies irrespective of other obligations Germany might have towards her enemies. It would appear fruitless to negotiate concerning the question of purchasing foodstuffs or

the question of transporting the foodstuffs until some fundamental settlement of the financial side of the business had been arrived at. The GERMAN DELEGATION then declared that it must reserve its answer until after it had consulted its Government, which it would do as quickly as possible."<sup>3</sup>

(The above has been taken from the official German publication *Der Waffenstillstand 1918-19*, published in Berlin in 1928. It is in this official document that Dr. Melchior declares that the gold reserves of the Reichsbank must *under certain circumstances* remain at Germany's disposal for reconstructing her economic life.

In an official German publication issued in 1919 entitled *Deutsche Waffenstillstandskommission, Drucksachen 1-12, Berlin* we find on p. 186 what purports to be the same version, but it reads as follows :

"In practice, however, there was no question of these means of payment being made available for the purchase of foodstuffs because, *under all circumstances*, they would be required for the reconstruction of Germany's economic life."

Thus the version published in 1928 considerably tones down Dr. Melchior's declaration at least, if it does not absolutely turn it into its contrary.)

The debate on payment was continued in the afternoon session of January 15th, and it was then seen that the negative attitude of the German Delegation had met with some small success at least.

"The discussion concerning the payment for foodstuffs imports was then resumed. The AMERICAN CHAIRMAN stressed that Germany need not pay exclusively in gold or with foreign effects. Another arrangement might be possible by which Germany could pay with neutral credits and with the payments for the hire of shipping. The CHAIRMAN OF THE GERMAN DELEGATION declared that these proposals would be taken into consideration; and it ought further to be considered whether Germany could pay in part with export goods, and in particular with potash. After the German Delegation had declared that in all probability it would be in a position to communicate the decision of its Government in the matter on the following day, the discussion was adjourned until the following morning at 11 a.m."<sup>4</sup>

The report then goes on to record the proceedings at the morning session of January 16th :

"The question of payment for foodstuffs was then discussed. The GERMAN DELEGATES declared that they had received instructions from their Government according to which only very limited sums in gold and foreign currency could be available to

<sup>3</sup> *Der Waffenstillstand 1918-1919*, Berlin 1928, Vol. II, "Die Ausführungs-Verhandlungen und -Abkommen zu den Waffenstillstandsverträgen", pp. 10-12. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 18.

pay for the import of foodstuffs, and they repeated their earlier proposals. No more than 100 million Marks in gold and 25 million Marks in neutral currency came into question. Apart from that the German Government was prepared to deliver approximately 50,000 tons of potash at once for the same purpose.

"The ALLIED DELEGATES declared that they would have to report back to their Governments, particularly with regard to Germany's proposals to pay for foodstuffs imports by foreign currency credits or by a provisional payment in Marks until such time as the Peace Treaty should lay down definitive regulations. The Allied Delegates further declared that in view of the distress prevailing in some neutral and Allied countries they would at the moment be prepared to negotiate only concerning limited imports to the value of between 250 and 300 million Marks at par, and, at that, only on the basis of the conditions communicated by them at the first session of the Finance Commission. The Allied Powers had intended, for the moment, to deliver only fats and flour. Thereupon the following offer made by the GERMAN DELEGATES was formulated in English together with the Allied representatives :

"January 16th, 1919.

"The German Financial Delegates express their willingness to pay in the following terms, and to the following extent, for such commodities as the Associated Governments may be prepared to supply on terms to be arranged and the German Government is prepared to buy :

- "(1) Marks 100,000,000 in gold or their countervalue in foreign currencies.
- "(2) Marks 25,000,000 in Dutch florins, Swiss francs and Scandinavian kroners.
- "(3) The net Freight rates credits by the Associated Governments in respect of the German Mercantile Marine operated by them ; subject to arrangements between the shipping representatives of the Associated and the German Governments and the necessary reserves pending this.
- "(4) 50,000 tons of potash for immediate delivery.

"The ALLIED REPRESENTATIVES declared that they would have to reserve their decision. The Americans asked whether Germany would be prepared if necessary to place the assets in the hands of the Public Custodian at the disposal of the Allied Powers in connection with the provision of foodstuffs.

"The GERMAN DELEGATES replied that they were not in a position to give any answer to this question, and that they would first have to refer back to their Government."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 21-22.  
A.A.G.F.S.

So much for the official German records. They reveal an extraordinary state of affairs. For two months the German Government had been loudly and pathetically demanding the delivery of food supplies, and now its representatives suddenly declared that they were unable to contribute any considerable part of the gold reserves of the Reichsbank, or to make available private German property confiscated in the United States. The German offer to pay in Marks could hardly be accepted by the Allied and Associated Powers as a serious solution of the payment problem in view of the fact that the Mark rate was becoming more and more shaky. And the offer finally made by the German Government to pay in gold and commodities referred only to a preliminary delivery. For the rest, what Germany was demanding was the granting of credits, surely a strange demand just two months after the end of the war at a time when the countries from which she was demanding the credits were themselves still bleeding from the wounds struck by her during the war.

It is not necessary for us to spend much time here dealing with the reasons for Germany's attitude. For our purpose it is sufficient to place the fact on record that in January 1919 the German Government placed other considerations, hidden behind the ambiguous term "economic reconstruction", higher than care for the food requirements of the German people. At this time the gold and foreign currency reserve of the German Reichsbank amounted to 2,280 million Marks, and of this very large sum the German Government was prepared to allot only 125 million Marks for the payment of foodstuffs imports.

The refusal of the German Government to pay for food supplies in cash would in itself have been sufficient to prevent the conclusion of a final agreement concerning supplies somewhere about the middle of January, but the decisive German action which frustrated an agreement took place in the SHIPPING COMMISSION.

This Commission met on the afternoon of January 15th, 1919, under the chairmanship of EDWARD N. HURLEY, the Director of the United States Shipping Board. The list of the Allied and American representatives present at the discussions was an impressive one, and the following are some of the shipping representatives who appeared:

JOHN E. BARBER, Adviser to the United States Shipping Board;

I. A. SALTER, representative of the Allied Maritime Transport Council;

JOHN ANDERSON, representative of the British Mercantile Marine;

T. M. CHARPENTIER, representative of the French Ministry of Transport and Commerce;

R. LAURENT-VIBERT, representative of the Commissariat des Transport Maritimes et de la Marine Marchande;

G. FABRE, representative of the French navy ;  
M. GUISTI, representative of the Royal Italian Navy ;  
Professor ATTOLICO, representative of the Italian Mercantile  
Marine ; and

ADMIRAL W. S. BENSON, of the United States Navy.

And Germany's representatives ? At the very opening session of the Armistice Commission Secretary of State Erzberger declared that "the actual experts have not arrived yet", and at the end of the following session Captain Vanselow had to declare that "the German gentlemen present are not experts". Those actually present on Germany's behalf were CAPTAIN VANSELOW himself, CORVETTE CAPTAIN GARTZKE, DR. MELCHIOR and DR. VON BECKER. Thus in the most important session on relief action to that date Germany declared herself not properly represented. The following German record informs us what was at issue in this session :

"MR. HURLEY opened the session with the declaration that the Commission had met with a view to discovering whether it would be possible to secure the use of German tonnage to supply Germany with food imports under certain conditions which he proposed to summarize later. Any supply to Germany must depend on two conditions :

"The 'Relief Council' in Paris had completed its investigation into the supplying of Germany. The food stores of the world, in particular with regard to breadstuffs and fats, were sufficient to supply all countries including Germany. However, it was likely that the Allied and neutral countries would be supplied before Germany. The chief thing was the solution of the transport problem. In examining this question the 'Relief Council', together with the Allied war leaderships, had come to the definitive decision that it would be necessary to add the whole tonnage of Germany's mercantile marine to the tonnage now available for supplying the world in order to guarantee a sufficiency in transport for world supplies, including a certain supply for Germany herself. If the transport question and the question of payment were both satisfactorily settled then Germany could even reckon with quite considerable supplies. Questions of detail could be discussed once the fundamental side of the matter had been settled.

"MR. SALTER then stressed the fact that the agreement to be concluded would be of a non-military nature (civil) and independent of the Armistice Agreement and any other inter-State agreements. The tonnage was to be placed at the disposal of the shipping pool at once. Final agreements concerning the German ships could be made later. The details were laid down in writing in the 'Shipping Terms'. Before these terms were read he would like to hear whether any co-operation at all might be expected on Germany's part. Otherwise they could save themselves the trouble of carrying on private negotiations.

"CAPTAIN VANSELOW then declared that the preliminary condition for any negotiations was a satisfactory answer to three questions:

"1. Would the ships remain German property? (Answer: Yes, the agreement in question would not affect property rights in the ships.)

"2. Would the ships retain their German crews? (Answer: The question of German crews is not one which will be negated on principle; the question of manning would be settled according to practical considerations by the individual Powers entrusted with the ships. We must have a completely free hand to protect our harbours against the influx of Bolshevism. Individual ships' crews mustered for repatriation would be looked after in each case.)

"3. Would German ships be treated in the matter of freight rates in exactly the same way as all other ships chartered by Allied organizations? (Answer: Germany will not receive freight rates lower than the minimum paid to any other nation for ships of the same size and kind.)

"The 'Shipping Terms' were then read. The text is as follows:

"1. The whole of the German merchant fleet (including all passenger and cargo boats, other than those excepted by a Commission to be set up by the Allies) is to be placed immediately at the disposal of the Allies and of the United States, with a view to increasing the world tonnage from which the tonnage required for the supply of foodstuffs to Europe and Germany can be drawn.

"The Allies and the United States will take over the administration of this fleet through the agency of the Allied Maritime Transport Council or of any other organ which they may create or designate for this purpose.

"2. The German Merchant Ships shall be put at the dispositions of the Allies and of the United States in the ports and under the conditions prescribed by the Allies and the United States. They shall be handed over completely fitted out both as regards crews and stores.

"3. In the case of those vessels which, being in neutral countries, cannot get to the designated ports unaided, owing either to lack of personnel or any other cause, Germany shall hand over those vessels in the ports where they are at present, after previously notifying this handing over to the neutral Government concerned.

"4. German Merchant Ships shall put to sea flying a flag or flags of the Allied Nations.

"5. The Allies and the United States may take such measures as they may deem advisable to assure the international protection of the vessels, the safety of navigation and the supervision of the crews. They may, if necessary, place an armed guard on board. The law applicable to each vessel shall be that of the Nation which shall have taken charge of it in the name of the Allies and the United States.

"6. The Allies and the United States may proceed with the partial or total replacement of the crew. German officers and crews who are thus discharged shall be repatriated to Germany.

"7. All German Merchant Ships shall be handed over to the Allies and the United States within a period to be fixed later. The condition of boats which are unable to put to sea at the expiry of the period to be fixed shall be confirmed by a Commission of the Allies and the United States.

"8. The above clauses shall apply only to the use of boats during the armistice period and for such later period as shall be determined by the Allies and the United States.

"The above agreement shall not prejudice the ultimate disposition of these vessels."

"There was no agreement come to concerning any demands or details. CAPTAIN VANSELOW declared that the German gentlemen present were not experts, and that the German experts were still expected, but as in all probability an agreement would be arrived at concerning the use of German shipping space, it would therefore be as well to begin now with the discussion concerning the provisioning of Germany. A request was therefore made that lists of those foodstuffs Germany required should be presented at once for the discussion. This was agreed to. The further arrangements were undertaken by Dr. Melchior."<sup>6</sup>

The Shipping Agreement presented to Germany's Delegates was the step Colonel House and President Wilson had in mind when in the first days of November 1918 they intervened in favour of leaving the fate of Germany's mercantile marine outside the conditions of the Armistice Agreement. What now took place was quite *à la* Wilson. Mr. Salter expressly pointed out that the proposal was for an agreement "of a non-military nature", and both Mr. Hurley's declaration and the terms presented to the German Delegation expressly described the purpose of Germany's surrender of her ships as "the provision of Europe, including Germany, with foodstuffs".

The attitude of the German Delegation at this stage of the negotiations is therefore particularly interesting and, also, particularly instructive. The proceedings behind the scenes have never been described in detail, and they have been recorded only in the introductory remarks of subsequent sessions. We quote here once again from the official German record of the following session :

"The session began only after some delay because before the opening of the session SECRETARY OF STATE ERZBERGER and CAPTAIN VANSELOW had made an attempt to discuss the significance of the Shipping Terms presented to them the day before with the German shipping experts who arrived at the railway station at Trèves at about 4.30. It proved to be impossible to clear up the matter in the few minutes which were left."<sup>7</sup>

However, the following passage indicates that a certain "clarification" was nevertheless obtained :

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 14-17.      <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 24.

"In consequence of delay the Delegates and food and shipping experts arrived only at 4.30 instead of at one o'clock. The French and American Delegates pressed for an immediate agreement concerning the handing over of Germany's mercantile marine. Immediately after the arrival of the experts a discussion took place in the Hotel Reichshof. It was agreed that it would be impossible to work out a final and detailed arrangement in such a short space of time, but that nevertheless an agreement in principle could be reached laying down Germany's readiness to place her shipping space at the disposal of the pool."<sup>8</sup>

Who came to this agreement and what it was all about are dealt with in rather greater detail in the communication of one of those taking part. The account is added to the German official records as a footnote :

"On January 31st, 1919, the Chairman of the German Armistice Commission received a letter from GEHEIMRAT CUNO, the Director of the Hamburg-Amerika Line, requesting that the following notes should be incorporated in the records of the Armistice Commission :

" . . . In the discussion which took place immediately after my arrival I first of all rejected on principle the entering into negotiations on the Shipping Terms owing to the shortness of time, the importance of the matter, and the absence of the other two experts. Your Excellency explained that Marshal Foch awaited you at 5 o'clock English time, and that he was not prepared to agree to a prolongation of the Armistice unless the shipping question was first settled. In view of the fact that you had already agreed, according to the protocol presented and the Armistice negotiations, to the handing over of German shipping, the only possibility which appeared acceptable to you was to find a general clause which could be included in the Armistice Agreement, with the proviso that the Shipping Terms should then be discussed and agreed the following day between the experts."

"We then attempted, together with the other gentlemen, to find a formula, and I participated in the drafting of it by making proposals in so far as I regarded it as important that the German Government should play an absolutely decisive part in the London organisation, and that certain categories of ships, etc., should be excluded from the agreement. I then declared expressly that I was not in a position to agree with the formula, that I could say neither yes nor no, because I did not think myself qualified to make a declaration in a matter of such vital importance to Germany's mercantile marine in the absence in particular of General Director Heinecken. . . . (Signed) CUNO."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 24-25.



Thus hardly an hour before the concluding session of the Armistice Commission Cuno refused to commit himself on his own "in the absence of the two other experts". Thirty hours after the opening session the German experts were still not all present. This late arrival of the German experts was later the subject of two full-dress debates in the German National Assembly on February 13th and February 18th, 1919. Secretary of State Erzberger declared that the delay was due to the fact that the Allies had sent out the invitation too late. At the conclusion of the debate Deputy Stresemann once again reproached Erzberger for not having taken the experts with him from the beginning. The real explanation seems to have been a combination of technical difficulties and the unwillingness of the big shipowners to co-operate with Erzberger.

In another respect Cuno's letter is still more interesting. It is perhaps the most significant document of the whole German official record of the proceedings, and in addition it represents an important contribution to the understanding of the problem of the new Germany as a whole. The essence of the letter is contained in the passage: "In view of the fact that you had already agreed, according to the protocol presented and the Armistice negotiations, to the handing over of German shipping. . . ."

This is no less than an indictment. It places the whole responsibility on to the shoulders of the addressee, Secretary of State Erzberger. Here is the first link in the chain of charges subsequently made against Erzberger that he had, in culpable weakness, abandoned German interests and German property to the Allies, charges which three years later were to hound him before the pistols of nationalist murderers.

Cuno's letter says nothing about the motives which caused the German shipowners to oppose the handing over of German tonnage to the pool. What Cuno writes about "the shortness of time" and his inability to decide the matter alone ignores the real reasons, which were altogether different. Germany's submarine warfare had greatly reduced the total world tonnage, and German banking, industrial and shipowning interests were not slow to realize that in such circumstances the 2.5 million tons of German shipping in their hands represented an important trump card when the game of manœuvring for commercial position began after the war. Whatever the upshot of the war, they planned that the advantage this tonnage gave them should be used in an attack on Britain's commercial position. With such ambitious plans in mind the question of feeding necessitous women and children naturally appeared pure sentimentality to them. Cuno's attitude at the negotiations clearly demonstrates what he and his friends had decided in the matter. It would be wrong to suppose that he was ever reproached for his attitude; in fact, just four years later he became Chancellor of the German Republic.

And what did the representative and mouthpiece of the New

Germany say or do in a situation in which the selfish interests of big capitalists (thinly disguised as "experts") threatened to sabotage the scheme for the provision of foodstuffs to hungry Europe, including Germany? Unfortunately there can be no doubt whatever that Erzberger surrendered to the threats of these powerful interests, and agreed to manoeuvre to prevent any binding down of Germany to precise dates and undertakings in the Armistice Agreement, and thus, whilst pretending agreement, to gain time.

For that and nothing else was the sense of the "general clause" drafted with the assistance of Cuno and presented by Secretary of State Erzberger to Marshal Foch in the closing session of the Armistice Commission :

"In order to ensure the supply of foodstuffs to Germany and the rest of Europe, the German Government will take all necessary measures to place the whole German Mercantile Marine at the service of the pool during the Armistice under the control of the Allied Powers and of the United States in agreement with Germany.

"The control will in no way affect German property rights in the ships, or exclude the use of German crews. Proper hire will be paid for the use of the ships.

"All details including certain exceptions with regard to individual ships and ship categories will be regulated in a special agreement to be concluded as quickly as possible."<sup>10</sup>

The German official record of the final session shows that in reality the aim of the German Delegates was to avoid any binding undertaking :

"MARSHAL FOCH opened the proceedings by asking whether the German Delegation was prepared to agree to the incorporation of the Shipping Terms as a whole in the Armistice Agreement. The GERMAN DELEGATES replied in the negative, and when asked 'Why not?' replied that their Delegation was not in a position to accept an agreement of such a far-reaching nature other than broadly and in principle until its experts, specially called in for the purpose, had been given an opportunity of examining the matter more closely. When FOCH pointed out that Captain Vanselow was a naval expert and therefore in a position to judge the Shipping Terms, CAPTAIN VANSELOW disagreed very definitely and declared that he was not an expert where the mercantile marine was concerned, and that he would under no circumstances be prepared to take the responsibility of deciding questions of detail regarding it without calling in the aid of real experts. MARSHAL FOCH then replied that he would examine the German counter-proposal with his experts, and make a further proposal. The acceptance of this proposal would be decisive for the signing of the agreement. He pointed

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 179-80.

out that less than 12 hours remained in which to inform all service commands that the Armistice had been prolonged.

"The examination took some considerable time. After his return MARSHAL FOCH tabled a proposal which, after some alterations, received the form in which it was finally incorporated in the agreement for a prolongation of the Armistice (as Article VIII):

"In order to ensure the supply of foodstuffs to Germany and the rest of Europe the German Government will take all necessary measures to place the whole of the German Mercantile Marine throughout the period of the Armistice under the control and under the flags of the Allied Powers and of the United States, who will have a German Delegate to assist them.

"This agreement in no way affects the final decision regarding these ships. The Allied Powers and the United States can, if they regard it as necessary, relieve the crews in part or whole. The officers and men released in this fashion shall be sent back to Germany.

"Fair hire will be paid for the use of these ships, and payment will be fixed by the Allied Governments.

"All details, including those exceptions to be decided upon with regard to the various categories of ships, will be settled in a separate agreement, to be concluded without loss of time."

"This formulation (cf. the previously quoted article accepted by the German experts in view of the enforced situation) had, willy-nilly, to be agreed to by the GERMAN DELEGATES, although it was to be expected that the special commission to regulate the details and discuss the exceptions to be permitted to the surrender of the ships would permit a certain greater margin to the German standpoint.

"SECRETARY OF STATE ERZBERGER then announced that Captain Vanselow would remain in Trèves to take the chair at the negotiations over the detailed questions, and that the main session could take place the following morning at 10 o'clock."<sup>11</sup>

Strangely enough, the penultimate passage of this official German record of the proceedings embraces a political comment—and a defence. Secretary of State Erzberger excuses himself in it for having signed the "general clause" concerning the handing over of German tonnage at all, and assures the world that he did it only "willy-nilly".

Erzberger, who sought to defend himself in this way by interpolating observations into the protocol, could, of course, have defended his action much more effectively. He could have said with justification that the effect of his vague "general clause" had been to postpone the actual handing over of Germany's tonnage by weeks at least. He could, on the other hand, have gone over

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 25-27.

to the attack himself and pilloried the German shipowners. However, both these angles of defence would have fitted very badly to his previous speeches about the responsibility of the Allies for the delay in sending food supplies to Germany.

The second prolongation of the Armistice Agreement (including Article VIII) was signed on the afternoon of January 16th, 1919. As any precise statement of Germany's obligations in this Article had been prevented, the subsequent proceedings of the Shipping Commission did little more than add to the fog of confusion, and the results of the Commission's deliberations even narrowed down Germany's obligations still further.

In the evening session of the Shipping Commission which took place on January 16th the three German experts, GENERAL DIRECTOR HEINECKEN and DIRECTOR STAPELFELDT of the North-German Lloyd, and GEHEIMRAT CUNO of the Hamburg-Amerika Line, were at all present, together with the Allied and American naval representatives already mentioned. The German official record of this session is strangely brief:

"The discussion of the Shipping Terms began. The GERMAN REPRESENTATIVES sought to ensure German collaboration in determining the exceptions, in apportioning the ships to their definite services, in the question of engaging German or other crews, and in the recognition of definite jurisdiction for German personnel and German ships. In general there was no sign of any accommodation apart from such as could be enforced by the text of the Armistice Agreement. Nevertheless it was seen the next morning that a certain accommodation had, in fact, been secured by this preliminary discussion. The Shipping Terms were altered in three important points as compared with the first draft.

"An attempt after a time to turn the informal session into a formal and official session was definitely rejected by the GERMAN REPRESENTATIVES. The session ended at 12.10 at night."<sup>12</sup>

The following German record shows us why, although the experts were at last available, the German Delegation was unwilling to begin formal and official negotiations:

"On January 17th, 1919, at 9 o'clock in the morning a preliminary discussion took place between the governmental and independent experts of Germany concerning the chief demands to be made in the special agreement to be concluded within the framework of Germany's obligations under the Armistice Agreement. As a guiding line it was laid down that an effort should be made to secure the use of German crews under German jurisdiction, and that any unfavourable treatment

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 28-29.

of Germany in the matter of shipping hire or the exclusion of Germany from the determination of how German ships should be used must be prevented. All the representatives of Government Departments present were in agreement with the signing of the special agreement. Geheimrat Cuno and General Director Heineken declared that although they could quite see the enforced situation in which Germany found herself, they thought it important that they should not sign the agreement themselves, and they did not wish to be present at the final conference."<sup>13</sup>

In the second part of the letter to Secretary of State Erzberger, Cuno gave a considerably more acid account of his attitude at the preliminary discussion :

"In the session of the German negotiators which took place on the following morning at the Hotel zur Post I expressly made the following declaration :

"I find myself compelled to protest formally against the whole way in which a question of such vital importance to Germany's economic life has been dealt with, and in particular against the belated fashion in which the experts were called into consultation, and also against the haste with which decisions of the most far-reaching importance were made ; to refuse to sign the Shipping Terms myself, and to reserve to the shipping concerns represented by me all further recourse, including in particular the lodging of compensation claims against the Reich to the extent to which they may suffer damage as a result of this Armistice Agreement. At the same time I beg to be excused taking part in the session with the Allied representatives which has been fixed for 10 o'clock.

(Signed.) CUNO."<sup>14</sup>

Thus, after a short "informal" intermezzo, the German experts went on strike. Cuno's complaint about the alleged haste with which decisions were made was nothing but a pretext in view of the fact that the intention of the Allied Powers to use Germany's mercantile marine had been known since the night of November 11th at least, and that since December several meetings on the point had taken place between Erzberger and the German shipowners. The truth was that the German shipping magnates, if they did not wish to frustrate the use of Germany's tonnage altogether, wanted to use at least part of it for other and probably more profitable purposes.

And thus it came about that in the second official session of the Shipping Commission on January 17th the assembled representatives of Allied and American shipping once again found themselves faced with empty chairs. Captain Vanselow, who had by this time repeatedly declared that he was not in a position to make decisions, led a sort of German rump Delegation. However, although the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 29.    <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 25.

sabotaging German shipowners were not present in person their spirit was very much in evidence. The German objections made against individual items of the Shipping Terms all aimed at leaving open as many questions as possible to be settled in later negotiations between the German Government and the Allied Commissions. The following passage from the official German record of the discussions is typical :

“CAPTAIN VANSELOW made the following observations with regard to the ‘exceptions’ :

“ ‘As far as the handing over of Germany’s mercantile tonnage was concerned, Germany was no longer altogether free. There were, in particular, negotiations already proceeding concerning the use of German passenger vessels for American troop transports.’

“The ALLIED CHAIRMAN thereupon remarked that the Commission now in session was the sole authority with regard to the use of German tonnage for Allied purposes, and that he was not aware of any negotiations such as Captain Vanselow mentioned.”<sup>16</sup>

The German record of the proceedings makes the following footnote to Vanselow’s communication :

“This information was communicated at the express request of General Director Heineken. Since the beginning of December 1918 negotiations had been going on between big German shipping companies and American agents concerning the chartering of German passenger vessels for the return of American troops to their own country. The report of a big German shipowner to the effect that these negotiations had already taken on an official character in view of the fact that the American High Command had approached the German High Command, or the German Government, with the same request proved to be incorrect.”<sup>16</sup>

And a little further on the German record says :

“CAPTAIN VANSELOW observed that he must stress again that there would be ‘exceptions’ because Germany was, as he had already pointed out, no longer altogether free in the matter, not only because of the previously mentioned negotiations, but also because there might be negotiations with neutrals for the chartering of German shipping.”<sup>17</sup>

With such manœuvres the German negotiators sought right up to the end of the negotiations to secure a watering down of the Shipping Terms in Germany’s favour. In fact, in the end these terms were, as we have previously seen, “altered in three important points as compared with the first draft”. Article V, which provided

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 33-34.    <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 34.    <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 34.

for Allied jurisdiction on board the ships taken over, received the following addendum: "As long as a German crew remains on board ship's administration shall be regulated as far as possible according to German law." The second part of Article VIII, which provided for the possible using of German ships even beyond the period of the Armistice Agreement, was deleted.

And finally, a newly added Article X declared that "matters still outstanding" should be left to "a later meeting" for settlement, and this was, of course, a very clear revision of the agreement for the prolongation of the Armistice signed the previous day which demanded an "immediate agreement" on all questions of detail. In conclusion the agreement stated:

"The Delegates of the Associated Governments thereupon informed the German Delegates that in the first instance the importation of the following supply of food would be permitted, namely, 200,000 tons of breadstuffs-cereals and 70,000 tons of pork products (but a portion of the foodstuffs to be prescribed by the Associated Governments may be replaced by condensed milk) in such manner and from such places as the Associated Governments may prescribe and that the question of any further supplies of food would be referred to the Supreme War Council for decision.

"The German Delegates agreed that the German Government shall from time to time arrange payment in a manner to be approved by the Associated Governments for such food as the German Government may import by permission of the Associated Governments.

"Signed at Trèves this 17th day of January, 1919, by the Delegates of the Associated Governments:

HURLEY	BEALE	ATTOLICO	CHARPENTIER
SHELDON	ANDERSON		MAY
HOWARD HEINZ	SALTER		LAURENT-VIBERT

"Signed at Trèves this 17th day of January, 1919, by the Delegate of the German Government:

Vanselow

*Kapitaen zur See und Mitglied der Waffenstillstandskommission.*"<sup>18</sup>

Thus the January session resulted in an agreement, though not without pressure on the part of Marshal Foch. A certain optimism concerning the operation of the great relief action now seemed justified. Only at the end of the session did the outlines of still further difficulties become visible, namely, new and still bigger German demands:

"UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE VON BRAUN replied to questions concerning the present rationing position in Germany, and answering a question as to how long Germany could keep up her present rationing, he declared that it would be possible until the end of April 1919. He added, however, that the rations were not adequate, and that medical authorities had stated

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 37-42.

definitely that many hundreds of thousands of Germans had died as a result of undernourishment, and that this death rate would continue. If the death rate was to be lowered both bread and meat rations would have to be increased.

"From this standpoint, although according to the statements of medical authorities still more would be required to ensure the provisioning of Germany for the next eight months, up to the next harvest supplementary supplies would have to be imported of 400,000 tons of wheat and 100,000 tons of fats and meat. . . .

"The REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ALLIES declared that they would take all that had been said into consideration, and do everything possible to see to it that Germany was supplied with the necessary quantities as soon as possible, but that they were unable to make definite promises; deliveries of foodstuffs would depend on Germany's fulfilment of her obligations under the agreement."<sup>19</sup>

The communication of Under-Secretary of State von Brauns that Germany's food supplies would last until the end of April agrees with the information given to the Commission of British Officers in Berlin. It is an important contribution to an understanding of the historical questions with which we are dealing in this study. Referring to the quantities suddenly demanded by von Braun, with the additional remark that "still more" was really required, Surface and Bland observe: "This quantity was far beyond the ability of the Allied Powers to supply from available stocks, or to transport with the available shipping."<sup>20</sup>

The tactics adopted by Germany in Trèves in January 1919 were a strange combination. Her representatives created the utmost possible difficulties with regard to payment and transport, whilst at the same time putting forward impossible demands. How could anyone expect that in such circumstances really effective assistance could be organized?

#### IV

### THE SECOND DELAY

AN absolutely essential condition for the commencement of the great relief action was the pooling of world tonnage. The necessary arrangements to this end had been put in hand early, and on January 16th Marshal Foch declared in Trèves:

"The Allied Powers have already done this, and the neutral Powers as well, or they will do it within the next few days."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 35, 36. <sup>20</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 194. <sup>21</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, I, p. 180.



After much wriggling Germany signed an agreement on January 17th in which at last she undertook to place her own tonnage at the disposal of the scheme.

In other respects, too, the Allied and Associated Powers had lost no time. As early as January 20th the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief in Paris was able to inform the German Government

"... a certain quantity of foodstuffs has been consigned to Rotterdam in anticipation of a settlement of the financial question by the Germans."

And finally, at the economic conference in Spa at the beginning of February the German Delegation was officially informed by the assembled representatives of the Supreme Council of Supply and Relief and of the Inter-Allied Maritime Council that the Allied and Associated Powers were prepared to send supplies to the value of the current German offer of payment. It was then agreed that these supplies should consist of 30,000 tons of pork products and 250,000 cases of condensed milk. However, the preliminary condition for such deliveries was, "it must be clearly understood that the execution of any arrangement . . . should be conditional on the due execution of the conditions accepted by the German Government, whether by the terms of the Armistice and of the Trèves Agreement of January 17th, 1919, or at this conference."<sup>3</sup>

The facts of the situation were thus no longer in doubt. The implementation of the first measure (the handing over of German tonnage) and of the second measure (provision for payment) would immediately result in the implementation by the Allied and Associated Powers of their part of the bargain (the supply of foodstuffs). However, when Allied and German negotiators met in the middle of February 1919 to discuss the third prolongation of the Armistice, another fact was equally clear: *German tonnage had not been handed over.*

The contradiction between Germany's propagandist protests and her delaying arguments and manœuvres in these negotiations was particularly striking. In the opening session on February 14th, 1919, the leader of the German Delegation, ERZBERGER, who had in the meantime been appointed Reich's Minister, declared:

"Gentlemen, the German people can no longer live on promises, or on long-drawn-out negotiations in which more or less imposing figures are mentioned to make its mouth water. At this point too, I must demand deeds at last. The German people is tired of giving and giving from its own resources, and now it wants to see some return. In wide circles of the German people I am asked quite rightly: What is it the Allies want of us? We are making sacrifice after sacrifice, and in the surrender of our resources we are going even to the length

<sup>3</sup> Bane and Lutz, p. 50.      <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

of impoverishment. We do not want you to give us the food-stuffs we need, we are ready to pay for them. Despite this deliveries have been postponed again and again, and we are going hungry. If the Entente wishes to destroy us it should at least not expect us to dig our own graves."<sup>4</sup>

In the discussion which followed a new German objection was suddenly raised, a new reason for delay :

"ADMIRAL BROWNING asked for the floor and then informed the meeting that he had received a despatch from Hamburg according to which German ships allotted for the carrying of foodstuffs to Germany were not putting to sea. Was that correct ?

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER : The German Government has adopted a very clear attitude. The shipping, food and finance agreements represent a united whole for Germany. Only when all three agreements have been concluded can shipping be provided ; not before, for perhaps it would be impossible to reach agreement on the finance issue. In that case the ships would have left and the purpose of the agreement would not have been reached. If the putting to sea of the ships has been delayed it is the fault of the Allies. Even now they have not communicated the Charter and Pool conditions. On the contrary they have demanded that not only seaworthy vessels should put out, but that later ships still on the stocks should put out too. The exceptions are to be only provisional, and capable of withdrawal at any time. They are also unwilling to leave the German crews on board. All this contradicts the agreed terms of the Armistice.

"ADMIRAL BROWNING : There can be no question of any agreement, seeing that the Allied Governments are to fix payment for the ships placed at their disposal.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER : That is correct, but in the same agreement there is a passage concerning a special arrangement between the Allied Powers and Germany, and the first clause declares that we have the right to appoint a German Delegate who is to enjoy equal rights in the taking of all decisions affecting the fate of the German Mercantile Marine.

"MARSHAL FOCH : But the express word used in the agreement is 'assisté'.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER : That is just the term applied in the Armistice Agreement to Admiral Wemyss, who is also the 'assisté' of Foch. In all naval affairs Wemyss alone has dealt with us. And that must be the position of the German Delegate in the Pool Commission.

"MARSHAL FOCH : But I have greater authority than Wemyss.

<sup>4</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, I., p. 218.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER: That may be, but in naval matters Wemyss has always decided on his own. We are not demanding that the German Delegate should decide matters relating to British, American and French ships, but only those relating to German ships, and that he must be given equal rights.

"MARSHAL FOCH: Detailed questions must be decided in Spa. Control is in London.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER: Just for that reason, however, the German Delegate must have equal rights.

"MARSHAL FOCH and ADMIRAL BROWNING: We have made our opinion clear in the Note which we handed over today.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER: I will give the answer on the basis of the agreement.

"MARSHAL FOCH: I must have a definite answer by Sunday at midday.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER: I must leave the matter open whether I give an answer this evening, or whether I give a provisional answer today or tomorrow, or whether I must first go back to Weimar. I must leave everything open."<sup>5</sup>

Under pressure of large-scale capitalist interests, voiced with vitriolic malice in the two sessions of the German National Assembly already mentioned, Erzberger became more recalcitrant in matters of technical detail as well; it was a thankless effort on his part to persuade his inner-political opponents to overlook the fact that in December he had declared his "agreement" to the Allies. The immediate occasion of the dispute between the Allied and German negotiators, which had now taken on a sharper tone, was an Allied Note presented on the eve of the conference, demanding the handing over of the whole of the German Mercantile Marine, including ships which were to be completed within the next few months, and declaring the position of the German Delegate in the Shipping Pool to be that of "information and liaison agent".

In a letter addressed to Marshal Foch the next day Reich's Minister Erzberger went beyond these two points. After having declared that an agreement had been made impossible "in consequence of the attitude of the British Admiral Browning" he gave Germany's reasons for withholding her ships in the following six points:

(1) First of all definite agreement must be reached concerning the quantities and prices of the foodstuffs to be delivered, and concerning the method of payment. "The German Government thus regards the food, finance and tonnage agreements as a united and indissoluble whole."

(2) The demand for ships which would be completed only within the coming months contradicted the formulation "the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 223-25.

whole of the German mercantile marine", and meant "an arbitrary extension of Germany's obligations".

(3) The German Delegate must enjoy "equal rights in all respects" with the Allied Delegates; to regard him as an "information and liaison agent" ran counter to the agreement.

(4) Even if payment for the use of German ships was to be fixed by the Allied Powers, the fact that they had up to the present not announced either the chartering or pooling conditions was "in opposition to all business customs".

(5) All agreements should be valid for the period of the Armistice only.

(6) Germany must receive "binding promises" that "the manning of the ships would be done with German crews".<sup>6</sup>

It is no part of our present task to enter into any examination of the legal justification of these German objections. For our purpose, i.e., for the fixing of responsibility for the delaying of the relief action, it is sufficient to judge the tactical attitude of the German Delegation. Four weeks previously this attitude had been to agree to a "general clause" in the Armistice Agreement, whilst leaving open as many questions as possible for subsequent discussion. Now the leader of the German Delegation declared that all the various agreements must be concluded and all minor details settled first before Germany would be prepared to take the first step on her part.

However, this new delaying manœuvre of the German Delegation did meet with Allied protest—the first for three months. It is true that Marshal Foch maintained his general attitude of receiving German propaganda declarations without making any reply, but in the session of the special committee which met on February 15th the newly-appointed British representative, Admiral Browning, adopted an energetic tone :

"ADMIRAL BROWNING: The third point was the question of the German Mercantile Marine. Yesterday Reich's Minister Erzberger had delivered himself of a long plaint about Germany's bad food situation. Nevertheless the Germans were unwilling to let ships put to sea to fetch foodstuffs. By this deliveries were naturally delayed. The question of payment could not play any role because it was already settled in the agreement. Marshal Foch and he did not understand this attitude of the Germans, and they could only assume that the food shortage in Germany was not at all so bad as they had been led to believe.

"CAPTAIN VANSELOW declared himself not competent in the matter. He wanted personally to draw attention to two points; first of all the reasons for the German attitude had been clearly set out in the Note presented on February 10th in Spa.

"ADMIRAL BROWNING declared that he had not received this Note.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 234-37.

"CAPTAIN VANSELOW: Further he was convinced that the question of payment would be settled fairly, but at the same time the shipowners must know the pool conditions, for their ships would have to sail under them. The *most serious* difference (underlined in the official German Report of the proceedings) was that Germany had up to the present been given no guarantee that she would actually receive food."<sup>7</sup>

In view of the fact that food supplies for Germany were already in depôt at Rotterdam, that a great relief apparatus was already in being, that numerous emphatic declarations had already been made by leading Allied statesmen, and finally, and significantly, that public opinion in the Allied countries was already becoming restive at the delay, to suggest as Captain Vanselow did that "Germany had up to the present been given no guarantee that she would actually receive food" was the strangest of all Germany's pretexts and excuses.

Admiral Browning was not the only one to criticize Germany's attitude. The words of the British and French representatives in the FINANCE AND FOOD COMMISSIONS then meeting were even more serious. The German Delegates renewed their unsuccessful attempt of four weeks earlier to obtain Allied credits for the supply of foodstuffs. In addition a new German demand was suddenly made, a demand that a full delivery plan up to the next harvest should be guaranteed her.

The fact that the Allied representatives refused to bind themselves on this second point must not be taken to indicate that all they had in mind was a single and inadequate delivery to Germany. As we have already pointed out, as early as January the SUPREME COUNCIL OF SUPPLY suggested "further supplies". And on February 11th in its observations to the Trèves report it declared expressly:

"It is the view of the committee that the quantities indicated at Trèves may be furnished as a regular monthly supply, but no definite agreement to that effect shall be made with the German representatives without further reference to the Council."<sup>8</sup>

The reserve of the Council with regard to the laying down of a monthly delivery programme was due, as was expressly stressed in another report, to the inadequacy of Germany's proposals for payment, which made it seem inadvisable to heighten the difficulties by extending the delivery programme.<sup>9</sup> For the German Delegation in Trèves, and later in Spa, this reserve on the part of the Allied Powers was made the occasion for a further drive in the tonnage question, this time with altogether new arguments.

The official German record of the proceedings at the session

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 245.

<sup>8</sup> Bane and Lutz, p. 101.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

of the Finance and Foodstuffs Commission on February 14th, 1919, contains the following :

“On their part the ALLIED DELEGATES declared that these negotiations did not form part of the actual Armistice negotiations. For the rest, they were not empowered to discuss foodstuffs, prices and the delivery programme for Germany from March to August. All that was in question was to agree on the financing of the foodstuffs to be purchased under the Shipping Agreement of January 17th and the Food Agreement of February 8th. In accordance with these agreements 200,000 tons of breadstuffs and 70,000 tons of pork products were under consideration for export to Germany, but a part of these goods might be substituted by condensed milk. The Allied Powers were therefore prepared to supply :

70,000 tons of pork meat and pork fat,  
150,000 tons of wheaten flour,  
10,000 tons of condensed milk.

---

230,000 tons of foodstuffs in all.

“The purchase price for this quantity of goods would amount to approximately 17.5 million pounds sterling.”<sup>10</sup>

In answer to this communication the German Delegation presented a so-called “Preliminary estimate for the financing of foodstuffs supplies”, which met with vigorous protest from the Allied Delegates. It began :

“(1) The Allied and Associated Governments have declared themselves prepared to supply Germany with foodstuffs during the months from March to August.

“(2) Germany is not in a position to pay for the supplies in cash at once, except in German currency, as she has not the necessary means of payment available. Germany urgently needs these foodstuffs to feed her population, and therefore reckons with the agreement of the Allied Supreme Council of Supply and Relief to an arrangement whereby purveyors would accept payment by instalments. Germany will then pay off the sum in so far and as soon as circumstances permit.”<sup>11</sup>

As a result of the protests of the Allied Delegates the German Delegation finally withdrew this “Preliminary Estimate”, and the next day, February 15th, it handed over the following Memorandum, which may be regarded as Germany’s most important statement both on the so-called delivery programme and on the question of payment :

“1. In the Memorandum of February 8th concerning the delivery of foodstuffs to Germany, the German Delegation explained that in

<sup>10</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, II, pp. 46-47.      <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 47.

addition to the 200,000 tons of breadstuffs and the 70,000 tons of pork meat products mentioned in the Trèves Shipping Agreement of January 17th, Germany would need:

400,000 tons of wheat, and } Monthly from March to August  
100,000 tons of meat and fats } 1919 inclusive

1,000,000 tons of maize for the period March to August, 1919.

According to the prices known at present the value of the total deliveries would be at least 150 million pounds or 750 million dollars.

2. The German Delegation will present a list showing the gold in possession of the Reichsbank and the foreign effects in German hands. No very great use can be made of the gold reserves in the hands of the Reichsbank without the complete ruination of Germany's currency. Foreign effects and accounts in German hands are the last German reserve for the maintenance of the absolutely necessary transfer relations with foreign countries. If Germany is to be supplied with foodstuffs without causing the complete collapse of the country then these active assets must not be drawn upon for the payment of these food exports.

In consequence, the following sources remain:

(a) Commodity exports from Germany, and in particular potash and chemical products. A list of commodities for export will be presented (total value over a milliard marks);

(b) Use of net shipping hire which can be written to Germany's account in connection with the Shipping Agreement;

(c) Use of the revenue from the sale of cargoes now waiting to be unloaded in neutral ports;

(d) Transfers or currency transactions of other kinds.

The revenue from (d) can hardly be of much significance before the conclusion of the Peace Treaty. If it be assumed that the revenue from sources (a) to (d) inclusive will amount to 25 million pounds or 125 million dollars, then a credit of 125 million pounds or 625 million dollars will be necessary.

3. It is proposed that the credit should be spread over a period of from three to five years at a rate of interest to be fixed. The Associated Governments would be entitled to demand the issue of Reich's Treasury Bonds to the value of the credit with the corresponding period of validity and at the agreed rate of interest.

4. As security for the credit the following could be offered:

(a) Primarily the railway, naval and military material handed over to the Associated Governments under the Armistice Agreement to the values of 2.5 milliard marks, 1.5 milliard marks and 560 million marks making a sum total of 4.6 milliard marks at par;

(b) German fiscal property (railways, Crown lands, forests and mines according to detailed agreement). Preliminary estimate of value: railways 30 milliard marks; Crown lands, forests and mines at least 10 milliard marks at par. Should these securities be impounded under the Peace Treaty for other credit operations (compensation, currency loans, etc.) then an amalgamation with the foodstuffs credit should take place.

5. A considerable reduction in the amount of credit required would be possible if the United States Government would communicate the names of the owners and the individual sums making up the fund formed from the confiscation of German private property which is now being administered by the Public Custodian, in order to give Germany an opportunity of getting into touch with the owners and making a considerable part of this fund available."<sup>12</sup>

These were Germany's proposals on February 15th, 1919, after three months of excited protests about the non-delivery of urgently needed foodstuffs. What Germany demanded was a delivery programme of goods for human and animal consumption in quantities which went far beyond the delivery possibilities of the spring of 1919. And despite the fact that the Allied Powers had already refused on several occasions, Germany made far-reaching credit demands for credit against "securities" which, in part at least, would hardly bear serious examination. And that all took place with the express reservation that not a single German shilling would put out until these two complicated agreements concerning delivery and payments were finally settled.

It is not to be wondered at that such an attitude on the part of the German Delegation provoked protests from the Allied Delegates who had come together for the purpose of assisting her. Replying to the German Memorandum the British expert, J. M. KEYNES, voiced a serious warning :

"After the presentation of the Notes the British Delegate declared that obviously the German Delegates were nursing an illusion when they persisted in trying to obtain credits to finance the foodstuffs deliveries. In order to avoid any unnecessary delay in the discussion he would permit himself, without prejudice, to draw on his experiences as a member of the British Treasury and give a short description of the situation in other countries and of the general world feeling against Germany. . . .

"A Bill had been presented to the United States Congress providing that a credit sum of up to 100 million dollars should be set aside to finance the purchase of foodstuffs by foreign countries, including Austria and Bulgaria, but excluding Germany. During the preliminary debates the proposal to grant credits to Austria and Bulgaria had aroused such a storm of public indignation that the United States Government had been compelled to abandon it. The United States Government had then solemnly pledged itself to Congress that it would under no circumstances grant credits to enemy Powers. For this reason alone it would be quite impossible for many months to envisage any supplies to Germany on credit. The greater part

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 54-55.



of the deliveries would come from the United States. Did the German delegates imagine that when the United States refused to deliver on credit, France, Italy and Great Britain would then take up a loan in the United States to finance the deliveries to Germany? Public opinion in these countries was even more opposed to the granting of credits. In addition, distress was general in Allied and friendly countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia). Although humanitarian considerations would not be left out of account in Germany's case, there were just as urgent appeals for assistance from other countries. No Allied Government could hope to remain in power if it delivered food-stuffs to Germany on credit and placed these other countries at a disadvantage.

"On the basis of his experience in the Treasury, where he had to examine requests from all sides, he could say that it would not be possible for England to meet all such requests. She had even to go against the wishes of her Allies to some extent owing to her inability to meet them. It was therefore quite impossible to take Germany into consideration.

"Much discussion was taking place amongst the Allies concerning Germany's resources. Perhaps Germany was on the verge of bankruptcy, but the Allies were convinced that her resources were not so small as German sources had declared up to the present. When later on perhaps the time came for Germany to be granted a loan, this could be done only if there were an honest and open statement of Germany's resources and a voluntary offer to place them at the disposal of the Allied and Associated Governments.

"The German Delegates underestimated the degree of accommodation in the eyes of the Allied peoples represented by the mere offer to *sell* foodstuffs in view of the distress existing in Allied countries.

"After the last food conference in Spa a telegram had been published from Berlin with incorrect statements, and it had caused great indignation in Allied countries and led to severe criticism of the Supreme Council for making such far-reaching concessions. Germany would do well to remember the hostility of public opinion towards her in other countries, and to remember always how limited were present-day financial possibilities."<sup>13</sup>

The French finance delegate, M. MARTIN, spoke in the same strain; he dealt in particular with the contention that Germany was too poor to pay for the foodstuffs she demanded:

"The French Delegate pointed out that the German Delegates had always described the situation in Germany as being extremely critical. The situation was undoubtedly worse than before the war, but Germany was still rich in comparison with other

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 56-57.

countries. Whoever knew the state of Northern France and Belgium today was astonished at the resources still available in Germany. Germany's industry still existed and real property had remained untouched. Reserves to the value of milliards were available in securities and gold, and nevertheless Germany declared that she had not a few hundred million available for the payment of the foodstuffs she demanded."<sup>14</sup>

These two declarations were a warning to the German Delegates to abandon the fruitless policy of unreasonable demands. The answer to the warnings were a threat. It was made in an official German declaration read by UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE VON BRAUN, and its aggressive and arrogant tone may be judged by the following sarcastic comment on the speech made by J. M. Keynes: "I believe I have understood these remarks correctly when I interpret them to mean that although humanitarian considerations will be noted by you they cannot be taken into consideration in the making of your decisions." For the rest, the declaration continued:

"After a careful examination of Germany's financial position we have come to the conclusion that it will be impossible to finance her food requirements to any great extent except by way of credits. Mr. Keynes has explained the psychological and financial reasons which make any granting of credit to Germany by America and the Entente impossible. However, we proceed from the assumption that the supply of foodstuffs to Germany is one of the terms of the Armistice. . . .

"If the situation is that the German Delegates on the one hand are convinced that the financing of Germany's food supplies is impossible without the granting of credits, whilst, on the other hand, the experts of the Allied and Associated Governments are convinced that the financing of supplies in this way is impossible, then we must request that our ships be left to us in order that we can use them to get our supplies from other countries. Whilst making this declaration here I am well aware that you are not authorized to accept it, but I had to acquaint you with our attitude as it has already been communicated to Marshal Foch.

"I may add that in view of the development of these negotiations the German people expects its food supplies to be ensured up to the next harvest before it will agree to the temporary surrender of its mercantile marine, seeing that its shipping is the only means by which it could secure food supplies.

"Any earlier surrender of our ships would be impossible also because it would still further increase the unrest caused amongst our seafaring population by the severe conditions of the Entente, and give the Bolshevist movement in our harbour towns still further encouragement. . . .

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 59-60.

"We therefore feel that we have the right to relieve Germany's distress otherwise if you now believe that, for financial reasons, you are not in a position to supply us with foodstuffs. A number of solemn declarations have been made, both during the war and after the conclusion of the Armistice, to the effect that the Allied and Associated Powers do not wish to wage war against the German people. Thus if no other present way offers itself of relieving Germany's distress, the raising of the blockade must make it possible for us to get our food supplies from neutral countries, where there are ample supplies, and where, we are convinced, we could arrange acceptable financial arrangements. . . .

"I should like once again to stress an angle of the matter which will appeal not so much to your humanitarian instincts as to the political conscience of the world. We are firmly convinced that the collapse of Germany and the flooding of the whole of Europe by Bolshevism will be unavoidable if we leave these negotiations with no more result than that indicated in your previous declarations. . . ."<sup>15</sup>

That was really a kind of German ultimatum. This official declaration was a threat to withhold German shipping from the world pool necessary to carry out the great relief action. In clear violation of the signature given four weeks previously under Article VIII of the second prolongation of the Armistice Agreement, Germany now contended that she had a "right" to carry out her own provisioning by means of her own mercantile marine. The results that such a step would have for the hungry countries of the Baltic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Yugoslavia, none of which had shipping, was not mentioned in the German declaration.

After the bombshell hurled by von Braun the subsequent sessions of the Finance and Food Commission on February 15th and 16th were of no very great importance. There was no Allied reply to the German declaration, for that was a matter for the Allied Governments. The statement by the German Delegate Kauffmann, of the Reichsbank, that the Government had no lists of foreign assets in the hands of German firms or of commodity depots abroad, and his further statement that the German Government was not legally in a position to use foreign assets in German hands for the payment of Germany's food imports, provoked sharp criticism from the Allied representatives.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, as a matter of routine, two supplementary agreements to the agreements of Trèves and Spa were signed. The one contained a detailed list of goods to make up the agreed 270,000 tons, and in the other the German Government undertook to transfer the

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 57-59.

<sup>16</sup> During the war, decrees had been issued in Germany providing for the registration and the surrender of all foreign securities, etc., and the German Government disposed of such property in Switzerland, Holland and Sweden, and even in the United States before the latter entered the war.

agreed 25 million marks in foreign currency by February 20th, and the agreed 100 million marks in gold in four weekly instalments from March 1st on, an undertaking which, incidentally, the German Government did not carry out.

The official German record of the proceedings reports as follows on the conclusion of the finance and food discussions :

In conclusion the CHAIRMAN OF THE GERMAN DELEGATION asked where and when the next session was to take place. . . . The ENGLISH DELEGATE replied that for the moment there was no need for any further discussion until Germany made new and quite definite proposals for providing further means of payment."<sup>17</sup>

In the concluding session of the Armistice Commission which took place in the late afternoon of February 16th, 1919, in which an agreement was signed extending the Armistice "indefinitely" Marshal Foch showed himself a little more accommodating than Mr. Keynes :

"MARSHAL FOCH : The German Mercantile Marine has not yet been handed over. It is in the general interests that these German ships should be placed at the disposal of the Allies as soon as possible. In order to bring this about I propose that the Food and Shipping Commissions should meet without loss of time in Spa.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER : The Finance Commission as well, of course.

"MARSHAL FOCH : Naturally, in order that final arrangements can be made.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER : I am very pleased at this attitude of Marshal Foch. I am in complete agreement with him that the Shipping, Finance and Food questions represent a united whole, and that these questions should not be settled separately. I can also say that the German Delegates will be in Spa tomorrow in order to take up negotiations in these matters. When will the Allied Delegates arrive ?

"MARSHAL FOCH : The Chief of the General Staff, Weygand, is going to Paris today, and tomorrow morning the Delegates of the Allies will be instructed to leave for Spa immediately.

"REICH'S MINISTER ERZBERGER : What does 'immediately' mean ? I may assume, I take it, that the negotiations in Spa will begin during the course of this week, that is to say, on Wednesday or Thursday. We are willing to carry out the conditions which have been imposed on us, but we shall not surrender our ships without an absolute guarantee that we shall receive foodstuffs. May I therefore assume that the negotiations will begin this week ?

"MARSHAL FOCH : Yes."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 78.    <sup>18</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, I, pp. 258-59.

To judge from Erzberger's insistence on the urgency of speedy negotiations one would never have suspected that Germany's attitude in the matter was about to stiffen still further, though this insistence that the negotiations in Spa should begin as soon as possible did not, in fact, run counter to German intentions. For reasons we shall set out later, the German Government had come to the conclusion that the time was ripe for a well-prepared and well-timed thunderbolt. But, first of all we must deal with another important angle of the previous negotiations, namely, the question of supplying food to Poland.

## V

### THE FOOD TRANSPORTS TO POLAND

So far we have not dealt with the long discussions which took place concerning the provisioning of Poland. These discussions did not only go on side by side with the discussion of questions relating to Germany, but from time to time they were intimately connected. There was a sort of legal and moral relation between the attitude of Germany to her new Eastern neighbour, and the demands made by her to the Western Powers.

In the Armistice Agreement of November 11th, 1919, Article XXVI, on the provisioning of Germany, had its counterpart in Article XVI, which read as follows:

"The Allies shall have free passage to the districts evacuated by the Germans on their eastern borders, both *via* Dantzic and over the Vistula, in order to provision the peoples of these districts and to maintain public order."

For an understanding of this Article it must be remembered that up to the time of the Versailles Treaty the new State of Poland had no direct access to the sea, and was therefore dependent for the time being on transports over German territory for assistance from the west. A tentative German rejection of this demand on the astonishing ground that "the Vistula is not a navigable river", was rejected by Marshal Foch.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the two months' period of organization necessary to prepare the great work of relief, definite arrangements were made with Germany concerning transit traffic to Poland, and the official German record of the proceedings reports (with an express apology):

"In the plenary session of the Armistice Commission at Spa on January 21st, 1919, the French presented a Note requesting the German Government to undertake the daily transport of foodstuffs amounting to at least 3,000 tons from Danzig to the Polish frontier.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 38-39.

"Under the terms of the Armistice, Germany was obliged to grant this request. As German rolling stock was necessary for the transports discussions took place on January 29th between German railway officials in Dantzig, the American Commissariat in Warsaw and the Poles. An agreement was signed according to which from February 8th, 1919, 200 waggons of foodstuffs should be forwarded daily for a period of five months.<sup>2</sup>

It was on the basis of this agreement that at the end of January the Supreme Council of Supply decided to make a start with the transport of foodstuffs to Poland. COLONEL GROVE was sent to Dantzig as representative and observer of the Allied Governments. However, early in February, that is to say almost immediately after the signing of the agreement, Germany began to make the first difficulties, and her railway authorities refused to supply the necessary rolling stock. Informed of the position by a letter from GENERAL WEYGAND, the Council of Supply adopted the following decision on February 5th :

"It was agreed that the Allied Delegates to Spa should inform the German Representatives :

(a) Of the difficulties that have been raised regarding this matter and that the Supreme Council expect Germany to co-operate in the provision of the necessary railway transport and in handling these supplies.

(b) That while the Supreme Council does not propose to make the above a condition for the first allotment of food to Germany they will find it necessary to revise the whole situation of German foodstuffs in the event of any difficulty being experienced in furnishing food to Poland or to any other adjacent country which can be approached by transport through Germany."<sup>3</sup>

Before this solemn warning could be handed to the German Delegation in Spa, telegrams from the American representative reported new difficulties. A cable dated February 8th read :

"Germans claim prohibition of north-coast traffic by water may prevent them supplying Dantzig with sufficient coal to move trains carrying food to Poland. As coal required is very small amount because short distance of hauling, this is probably mostly white but may need attention Armistice Commission. At any rate Germans should be inexcusable. No excuse for not meeting all necessities of Polish supply will be accepted. . . . Gherardi."<sup>4</sup>

And the following complaint sent by cable from Warsaw by Colonel Grove on February 6th was even more serious :

<sup>2</sup> *Der Waffenstillstand 1918-1919*, Vol. III. "Die Deutsche Waffenstillstands-Kommission", Berlin 1928, p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Bane and Lutz, p. 90. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

“Urgent . . . For Hoover and Grew.

“Have received numerous reports that Germans are making considerable requisitions of food in Bialystok and Grodno territories for transportation to Germany. Today, tried to visit Bialystok and Grodno to investigate report of serious local conditions also general food conditions in section coming under terms. Commanding Officer German troops Bialystok has declined to discuss the matter or give reason. Poles and people of other nationalities permitted passage. Believe reason for refusal our mission passage is that food is being taken from that section to Germany in violation Armistice terms. Recommend that armistice authorities immediately require Germans to permit Allied mission to pass line before Germans complete evacuation to Bialystok on February 15th and that American Commission be appointed to investigate condition in territory abovementioned . . . Grove.”<sup>6</sup>

— The protest of Colonel Grove went to the heart of Poland's difficulties since the Armistice. For four years her territory had been an arena of hostilities, and had suffered heavily from military requisitions. The fact that conditions of real famine prevailed in great stretches of Poland after the Armistice was largely due to requisitioning carried out in a wholesale and ruthless fashion by German troops when evacuating the countryside. Whole districts were plundered and swept bare after the Armistice.

All these Allied and Polish complaints were made the basis of stern reproaches to the German Delegation at the February conference in Spa. The British Chairman of the conference, E. F. WISE, reports as follows on the matter :

“In the discussion on the use of German ports the German Delegates were reminded that they would find the Allied Governments and Allied public opinion very unwilling to assist them unless they gave all possible facilities for foodstuffs through Dantzic to the Poles. They undertook all they possibly could but replied that the real difficulty consisted not so much in the intentions of the German Government as in its ability to get its orders carried out in the present circumstances on the Polish frontier. They also complained of difficulties about railway engines not being returned and other similar matters which are set out in their memorandum to the International Armistice Commission.”<sup>6</sup>

The German contention that the difficulties in Dantzic were owing to the fact that orders of the German Government had not been carried out was nothing but an excuse. During the months in question the Weimar Government was staging a violent anti-Polish campaign in the German Press, and the actions of “subordinate bodies” was nothing but the result of this campaign. The real aim

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.      <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

in creating these difficulties can be seen from the following passage in the Wise report :

“In respect of Dantzig, the Germans urged that difficulties in transporting supplies to Poland were inevitable unless some supplies were also sent for Germany through that port. They thought that 2,000 tons would suffice for the present for this purpose.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus the German Delegation attached a condition to the smooth transit of food supplies to Poland through German territory, namely, a simultaneous, if not preliminary, despatch of foodstuffs for German consumption. That was nothing more nor less than a piece of blackmail, using the distress of a neighbouring country, and it is surprising that it did not meet with more energetic protest.

The sort of spirit which prevailed in the New Germany towards Poland from the very beginning can be seen from the following passage in the official German record of the proceedings :

“The transports of foodstuffs to Poland were supplemented by transports of medical supplies, cotton, etc. In view of the elasticity of Article XVI, which reads in its French text : ‘*Afin de pouvoir ravitailler les populations*’, and provides for the provisioning of the populations with the most necessary means of life, these transports could not be prevented.”<sup>8</sup>

Thus it is quite clear that it was thanks only to the power in the hands of Marshal Foch which made it possible for sick and ill-clothed Poles to receive medical supplies and clothing in the spring of 1919.

Despite the protests and the warnings of the Allied Delegates in Spa and, rather later, in Trèves, the question of transit traffic of supplies to Poland was never entirely and satisfactorily settled. Even at the end of March 1919 the Supreme Blockade Council had to deal with the danger of a “diversion to Germany of cargoes intended for Poland”.<sup>9</sup>

As Surface and Bland point out in their report, “considerable diplomacy” was necessary, and “some threats from the Supreme War Council, to get this provision actually carried out”.<sup>10</sup> The report of the German Armistice Commission speaks of “isolated and unimportant incidents”, but this is a piece of subsequent white-washing.<sup>11</sup> It was not the “incidents” which were important, but the persistent bureaucratic sabotage of the transit traffic by the German authorities. This sabotage seriously hindered the relief work for Poland, at least in the first difficult months.

With this we have gone ahead of our description of the general negotiations, which we left in the middle of February in Trèves. These negotiations were working up to a dramatic peak. After postponing a decision on two occasions, Germany now adopted a

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104. <sup>8</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, III, pp. 248-49. <sup>9</sup> *Banc and Lutz*, p. 293.

<sup>10</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 223. <sup>11</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, III, p. 248.



third manœuvre—an indignant and demonstrative breaking off of negotiations.

## VI

### THE BREACH

WHAT was Germany's position in March 1919 on the eve of the final decision concerning the great relief scheme? Seen from outside, the situation of the German Government, which had now transferred to Weimar, was extremely critical. There were disturbances in Bavaria, in the North Sea ports and even in Berlin itself. To believe the reports of one or two alarmed observers, Germany was on the brink of Bolshevism. In reality these disturbances were nothing but isolated rearguard actions of a radical minority of Soviet supporters, when they were not actually carefully prepared and deliberately provoked actions on the part of the military wire-pullers in the background, who felt that the moment had come to make themselves indispensable by liquidating the German political Left and drowning it in blood. In reality the position of the Weimar Government, allied as it was with the military caste, was stronger in March 1919 than it had been at any time since November 1918. The fact that, not without the assistance of German propaganda, it seemed in a weaker position than before served a useful foreign-political purpose: to frighten the Allies, and in particular the Americans, by waving the red flag.

In addition there was a second circumstance. The differences of opinion between the Americans, the British and the French in Paris, which were particularly rife at this period, were, of course, not unknown to the Germans. They were also informed that the various Councils for Food, Transport and Finances were riddled with deep-seated differences concerning the rate at which the blockade should be lifted, the way in which German gold should be employed, and the methods of mobilizing world tonnage. Not only did Berlin know about this, but it showed that it knew. The American J. A. LOGAN reports to Hoover a conversation he had in Spa with the German Delegate DR. RICHARD MERTON of the Frankfurter Metallgesellschaft, who was on General Groener's staff during the war:

"It was easily gathered from our conversation with Mirton (Merton) that the Germans were completely informed as to the situation in Paris. In the course of our conversation, he illuminated me personally on many points as to happenings in Paris, which I subsequently verified in conversation with our other representatives who were at Spa. It was rather curious that Mirton was informed of Sir John Beale's resignation as well as some of the underlying reasons for this resignation."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bane and Lutz*, p. 186.

This information passed on to an American represented a deliberate hint to the other side. It tells us that the German Delegation which went to the Spa Conference at the beginning of March 1919 was *well aware that the sharp words to be expected at the conference need not be regarded as definite and final*. It suggests also that the German Delegation considered the time ripe for delivering itself of a loud and clear "No".

This was done at the very opening session of the conference in the evening of March 4th, Under-Secretary von Braun was Chairman of the German Delegation, and the official German record of the proceedings reports:

"The Chairman of the opposing commission, ADMIRAL HOPE, opened these negotiations in Spa on March 4th, 1919, with the declaration that he was empowered to demand from the German Delegates a guarantee that they would do everything necessary to hand over at once such ships as were ready and place the whole German Mercantile Marine under the control of the Allied and Associated Governments in accordance with the agreement of January 16th, 1919, and with the Trier Agreement of February 16th, 1919, and that, for the rest, they were empowered to negotiate only concerning the supply of a single delivery of 230,000 tons and a contract with the Argentine for the supply of 100,000 tons of wheat.

"The GERMAN CHAIRMAN declared in reply that before placing its mercantile marine at the disposal of the Pool the German Government must demand a guarantee of Germany's supplies. Germany's supplies could be regarded as guaranteed only after an agreement had been concluded between Germany and the Associated Governments laying down the quantities, the conditions for payment and the prices of the foodstuffs required by Germany for the remainder of the harvest year.

"ADMIRAL HOPE refused to agree to the formation of sub-commissions in which questions of detail could have been discussed and a *rapprochement* more easily attempted. On the contrary, he declared that he was not in a position to continue the discussion until he had received a definite answer from Germany that the German Government was prepared to hand over the ships at once."<sup>2</sup>

The adjournment of the conference which then took place was agreed to for the express purpose of giving the German Delegates an opportunity of getting into touch with their Government, informing it of the final proposal of the Allies, and obtaining its own final answer. The next day Herr von Braun surprised the conference with a new German "compromise proposal":

"At the reopening of the negotiations at four o'clock in the afternoon of March 5th, the GERMAN CHAIRMAN handed over a

<sup>2</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, II, p. 81.

detailed declaration stressing that in accordance with its undertakings the German Government was quite prepared to hand over the German Mercantile Marine as soon as possible in order to increase the amount of world tonnage available for the transport of foodstuffs, and to speed up the return of Allied and American troops to their homes. The necessary preparations had already been made, and their execution depended only on the promised guaranteeing of Germany's food supplies. In order to meet the requirements of their opponents as far as possible, and to find an acceptable way for the continuation of the negotiations the German Delegates would be prepared to agree to the immediate handing over of a part of the German mercantile marine bearing an approximate relation to the amount of foodstuffs promised."<sup>3</sup>

A surrender of part of Germany's tonnage as proposed by the German Delegates would have made any future planning of that relief action impossible, a fact too obvious to need detailed argument. It is therefore not surprising that the Allied Delegates rejected all temptations to dally on this side track. They made a solemn declaration which should have removed all possible future doubt as to their motives and intentions :

"After a private discussion amongst the opposing Delegates, ADMIRAL HOPE presented the following written declaration :

" 'In answer to the representations made in the name of the German Government to the representatives of the Associated Governments, the latter desire to place on record that, subject to the immediate handing over of Germany's Mercantile Marine, it is the intention of the Associated Governments to facilitate the provisioning of Germany from month to month, subject to the decision of the Supreme War Council as to quantities and conditions, and that, further, they are already authorized to settle finally the conditions for the first instalment. Further, they desire to make a formal repetition of the declaration they have already made on behalf of their Governments, namely that the object of the handing over of Germany's mercantile marine is the provisioning of Germany and the rest of Europe with foodstuffs, that foodstuffs to the amount of 270,000 tons will be sent as a first instalment, and that the question of further supplies will be referred to the Supreme War Council for decision, and that further the Supreme Economic Council is prepared, subject to the approval of the Associated Governments, to consider the request made by the German representatives regarding further deliveries of foodstuffs in the immediate future, provided that satisfactory financial arrangements are come to between the German representatives and the finance representatives of the Associated Governments.' "

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 81, 82.  
A.A.G.F.S.

"The GERMAN COMMISSION was unable to regard this declaration as guaranteeing the foodstuffs supply of the German people. On the contrary, the acceptance of this declaration would have meant nothing more or less than that Germany placed herself completely at the mercy of her enemies in the matter of food supplies as well, and that she surrendered the last means of helping herself when peace came about." <sup>4</sup>

Out of the selection of Germany's repeatedly presented demands the Allied declaration had now accepted a further one, namely, the provisioning of Germany "from month to month". Together with the question of credits this was the cardinal German counter to the Allied demands. Thus the Allies had shown themselves willing to meet Germany's objections at least half-way. However, the German Delegation stood by its refusal. In consequence the conference was once again adjourned, and once again the German Delegation promised to obtain its Government's decision, so to speak, its final last word.

At ten o'clock in the evening of February 5th, ADMIRAL HOPE then received the following letter :

"I have the honour to report that a telephone communication I have just had with Weimar has once more asserted to me that they cannot alter their standpoint, because they cannot consider themselves justified to put the German Mercantile Marine fleet at the moment under the control of the Associated Governments without the food supply to Germany being assured to her at the same time. I would much regret if the representatives of the Associated Governments were to consider it necessary to break off the present negotiations and beg that you shall once more consider whether the method suggested by us for a partial delivery of the Mercantile Marine in proportion to the deliveries of food already settled does not offer the possibility of a continuance of the negotiations. I can assure you that the German representatives are ready to meet you as far as possible with regard to the appointment of numbers and nature of the ships which are to be handed over now.

"If this proposed solution is not at the moment practicable for the representatives of the Associated Governments, the re-assembly of the conference would serve no useful purpose.

"I hasten to inform you of this decision tonight.

"(Signed) VON BRAUN."<sup>5</sup>

That was a definite rejection. The Allied and American representatives thereupon decided to return to Paris at once to report to their Governments.

It is easier to judge the attitude of the German Delegation at the March conference in Spa when it is remembered that negotiations

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 81. <sup>5</sup> Bane and Lutz, pp. 193-94.

were broken off as soon as the indefinite prolongation of the Armistice removed the Damocles Sword which up to then had hung over the heads of the German Delegation. For instance, in the January negotiations, Marshal Foch's refusal to prolong the Armistice unless the Germans came to heel in the matter of a naval agreement had settled the matter. As soon as this most effective means of exercising pressure was removed, Erzberger's "agreement" was marvellously transformed into von Braun's truculent "No."

In other respects, too, the moment chosen for the breach was not accidental. The delay in handing over the German Mercantile Marine, which had dragged on for months already, had intensified the world tonnage situation, already tense for other reasons, to the point of catastrophe. In his report on the Allied Maritime Transport Council, J. A. SALTER speaks of a "stringent tonnage situation in March 1919, comparable in its actual difficulties . . . to the worst period of the war".<sup>6</sup> The consequences of this unfortunate situation made themselves felt immediately in the organization of the great relief work:

"By February 1919 the freight market had tightened so that it was only with great difficulty that the Grain Corporation was able to secure the required shipping for relief work. In many instances serious delays in forwarding supplies were caused by this factor."<sup>7</sup>

The breaking-off of negotiations in the tonnage question was thus a perfectly timed jab below the belt.<sup>8</sup>

An argument used during the negotiations is interesting. It comes from the discussion between Messrs. Wise and Logan with the German Merton, in which the latter, obviously under orders, did his best to scare his auditors. Logan reported to Hoover:

<sup>6</sup> J. A. Salter, *Allied Shipping Control*, Oxford, 1921, p. 218.

<sup>7</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> It is hardly understandable that Mr. Herbert Hoover—as reported in a new publication by S. L. Bane and R. H. Lutz: *Organization of American Relief in Europe 1918-1919*, Stanford, 1943 (pp. 258-59)—informed the American Peace Commission in his memorandum of February 19th, 1919, about the situation as follows:

"The Supreme War Council passed my recommendation of a monthly ration to Germany of 200,000 tons of cereals and 70,000 tons of fats, as basic consideration for the use of her—Germany's—commercial marine. All these things were agreed to some months ago, and the ships are now coming out. Up to date, not a single pound of food has been delivered to Germany. . . ."

And again the same memorandum states:

"It will be recollected that the German mercantile shipping was taken over from them on a positive assurance that Germany should have food. It is a bargain upon which the United States is in record, and as yet this bargain is unfulfilled . . . the time has arrived when we should make some public declaration that will save the honour of the United States in this situation."

Now, on February 19th, 1919, no German ship had come out nor were any taken over—to the contrary: on March 6th, Germany refused to put the ships at the disposal of the Associated Governments and broke off the negotiations.

"Mirton (Merton) . . . was seemingly frank in his remarks about the attitude of the German steamship company representatives, who were present in force at the conference, and also as to the attitude of Muchler, the German Labour leader of Hamburg, who was also present. He said that these two factions were in accord, and decidedly of the view that the German Government should under no consideration whatsoever turn over the German shipping, which shipping was necessary in their opinion to the economic existence of Germany, and which shipping constituted the only economic weapon Germany had left. These people, according to Mirton's statements, in their endeavour to protect the shipowner and the sailor, were willing to wreck Germany before giving in on this point."<sup>9</sup>

The united front in this question between German shipowners and German seamen found visible expression in the meetings organized in Germany's harbour towns to protest against the handing over of German shipping. Not the least of von Brauns' arguments was that he had the German people almost unanimously behind him.

Amongst the ulterior considerations which prompted the German Government in breaking off the negotiations, we have already mentioned the fact that it was aware of the differences in the camp of its opponents. It had, or felt it had, good reason to believe that to explode a mine in the shape of breaking off of negotiations would play into the hands of those groups in the camp of the Allied and Associated Powers who were in favour of showing greater accommodation to the beaten enemy of yesterday.

And a motive which went far beyond the narrower confines of the question at issue was the German Government's deliberate intention to test how far the Allied Powers would be prepared to go to enforce the carrying out of the conditions they had imposed on Germany. What was the result of this test?

## VII

### THE DECISION OF THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL

THE report made by Admiral Hope on the breakdown of the Spa Conference was presented to the SUPREME ECONOMIC COUNCIL under the chairmanship of Lord Robert Cecil on March 7th, 1919. The result of the preliminary discussion was that the Council declared itself unable to reach a unanimous decision on its future attitude to Germany, and decided to pass the matter on to the Supreme War Council.

The differences which showed themselves, not for the first

<sup>9</sup> Banc and Lutz, p. 186.

time, inside the Supreme Economic Council can be seen more or less clearly from the various resolutions which were tabled. The first was that of Lord Robert Cecil, which declared :

"We are prepared to deliver immediately the food now stored at Rotterdam for which payment has been arranged as soon as twenty German ships have left harbour on their way to be handed over to the Associated Governments. Further, we will deliver the rest of the 270,000 tons agreed on as soon as one hundred German ships have left harbour similarly.

"Finally the Associated Governments undertake to deliver 400,000 tons of food per month until harvest upon financial terms to be arranged, provided that the rest of the German Mercantile Marine is handed over within one month from the date of the acceptance of this offer.

"A conference to meet immediately to arrange the financial terms referred to."<sup>1</sup>

Then followed Hoover's resolution, introduced by a preamble declaring "Germany will collapse and peace be impossible" unless an immediate arrangement was made :

"(1) It is agreed that Germany must receive a regular monthly import of food until next harvest for humanitarian reasons and if order and stability of government are to be maintained, peace effected and reparation secured.

"(2) It is agreed that Germany must place her mercantile fleet in the service if she is to receive food, as this fleet must be used to effect the general provisioning of Europe as well as Germany.

"(3) It is agreed that Germany must pay for this food. She can pay (a) by exporting commodities ; (b) by neutral credits ; (c) by other liquid assets.

"(4) It is agreed that Germany needs approximately 300,000 tons of food per month. This will require the use of 7-800,000 tons of shipping in constant employment, or say one third (?) of her total tonnage.

"(5) It is agreed that Germany should be assured :

"(a) That one-third of the shipping handed over shall be used in transport of food to Germany between now and next harvest ;

"(b) That Germany can export commodities (except a black list) ; the proceeds from the sale of such commodities to be used for food purchases ;

"(c) That she can use the outward voyage of the one-third of her shipping for the export of commodities as well as exports to surrounding neutrals and Allies ;

"(d) That she can use such credits as she can set up with neutrals or elsewhere to buy food ;

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

“(e) That she can convert into food purchases any currency she obtains from sale of commodities ;

“(f) That she can use hire of ships to buy food ;

“(g) In order to give immediate delivery of food before the above plan begins to materialize, part of the first 300,000 tons which Allies or neutrals can provide will be delivered in ratio to ships sent out under the present plan of finance.”<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental purport of these two resolutions was then summarized in an Anglo-American resolution, which declared :

“(I) That Germany should be informed that she is bound by the terms of the Armistice to hand over the whole of her mercantile fleet forthwith.

“(II) On the grounds of humanity, the Associated Governments will deliver the 270,000 tons of food already agreed on as soon as the German Government shows their genuine intention to carry out their obligations referred to in the first paragraph, by sending to sea for that purpose not less than — ships, to be selected by the Associated Governments, and to comply with such financial arrangements as have already been made.

“(IIIa) It is recommended to the Supreme War Council that it authorize and direct the acceptance by the Supreme Economic Council ;

“(1) Of the principles of Lord Robert Cecil's proposition or as such prompt delivery of ships can be arranged ;

“(2) Enlarged by the acceptance of the general principles of methods outlined in Mr. Hoover's resolution ;

“(3) Full powers to be given to a small committee to be appointed by the Supreme Economic Council to carry out these decisions.”<sup>3</sup>

And finally there was a French resolution which took over Points I and II of the Anglo-American resolution as they stood, but substituted the following Point IIIb for Point IIIa :

“(IIIb) That in order to establish a general supply programme for Germany the Associated Governments are prepared to study the matter with German Delegates.”<sup>4</sup>

What is the meaning of these resolutions ? It is obvious that the joint Anglo-American proposals represented quite a considerable approach towards meeting the demands put forward by Germany at Trèves and Spa. For instance, Lord Robert Cecil's recommendations accepted the German proposal for the handing over of Germany's Mercantile Marine by instalments, whilst Hoover's recommendations involved a quite considerable lifting of the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-97.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 195-96.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.



blockade beyond the question of food imports. <sup>What, however?</sup> She demands for a delivery plan up to the following harvest, <sup>which</sup> her dependence of ship sailings on the conclusion of such <sup>negotiations</sup> were being also accepted. Only one German demand remained, <sup>namely</sup> that of a loan to pay for at least part of the <sup>debt</sup> incurred, and view of such recommendations, Point I of the Anglo-American <sup>resolution</sup> as the resolution was an empty phrase, a meaningless flourish despite the firm tone.

The French resolution, on the other hand, set its face sternly against any surrender to Germany's manœuvre in breaking off negotiations. It is desirable to stress at once, even before we come to the discussions in the Supreme War Council, that this French attitude was not in any way due to an objection in principle to supplying Germany with foodstuffs. All the Minutes and documents of the great relief action show clearly that the charge repeatedly made by German propagandists that France was toying with the idea of starving out Germany was a deliberate and malicious invention.

What separated France from her Allies, Great Britain and the United States, in this matter was not any question of humanitarian principle, but a difference of opinion as to political tactics. Even the not unimportant differences with regard to the financial side of the affair, and in particular the demand for the preliminary handing over of Germany's gold and other values (in which France saw one possible guarantee for the future payment of reparations on Germany's part), were only subordinate matters. The decisive and fundamental difference between France and her Allies was that France was unwilling to take the first step along a very dangerous path to meet Germany's refusal to fulfil her obligations and her succession of ever-increasing demands by progressively increasing Allied compliance.

This was the fundamental issue at the session of the SUPREME WAR COUNCIL which met at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris on March 8th, 1919. The list of those present was an imposing one:

#### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. Lansing  
E. M. House

*Secretaries:*  
A. H. Frazier  
L. Harrison  
G. Auchincloss

*Also Present:*  
General T. H. Bliss  
Hoover  
Baruch  
Davis  
Strauss  
Lamont  
Haskins  
McCormick  
Robinson

## BRITISH EMPIRE

“(e) That  
she obtains 1/2 ton. David Lloyd

“(f) The

“(g) If

above *Etaries* :

wh. - Col. Sir M. P. A.

Hankey, K.C.B.

Sir P. Loraine, Bart.

*Also Present :*

The Rt. Hon. Lord Robert  
Cecil

Sir Eyre Crowe, K.C.B.,  
K.C.M.G.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W.  
Hope, C.B.

Sir W. Beveridge

J. M. Keynes, C.B.

## FRANCE

M. Clémenceau

M. Pichon

*Also Present :*

Marshal Foch

General Alby

General Weygand

Admiral de Bon

M. Klotz      M. Loucheur

M. Clémentel   M. Cambon

M. Leygues    M. Tardieu

It would go beyond the scope of this study to present each argument and counter-argument brought forward by Lord Robert Cecil, M. Clémentel and others concerning the individual points of the above resolutions. The decisive differences were expressed in the speeches of the two leading statesmen of Great Britain and France :

“MR. LLOYD GEORGE said . . . he wished to urge with all his might that steps should at once be taken to revictual Germany. The honour of the Allies was involved. Under the terms of the Armistice the Allies did imply that they meant to let food into Germany. The Germans had accepted our armistice conditions, which were sufficiently severe, and they had complied with the majority of those conditions. But so far, not a single ton of food had been sent into Germany. The fishing fleet had even been prevented from going out to catch a few herrings. The Allies were now on top, but the memories of starvation might one day turn against them. The Germans were being allowed to starve whilst at the same time hundreds of thousands of tons of food were lying at Rotterdam, waiting to be taken up the waterways into Germany. These incidents constituted far more formidable weapons for use against the Allies than any of the armaments it was sought to limit. The Allies were sowing hatred for the future: they were piling up agony, not for the Germans but for themselves. The British troops were indignant about our refusal to revictual Germany. General Plumer had said that he could not be responsible for his troops:

if children were allowed to wander about the streets, half starving. The British soldiers would not stand that, they were beginning to make complaints, and the most urgent demands were being received from them. Furthermore, British officers who had been in Germany said that Bolshevism was being created, and the determining factor was going to be food. As long as the people were starving they would listen to the arguments of the Spartacists, and the Allies by their action were simply encouraging elements of disruption and anarchism. It was like stirring up an influenza puddle, just next door to one's self. . . . Meanwhile, the conference continued to haggle. Six weeks ago the same arguments about gold and foreign securities had been raised, and it had then been decided that Germany should be given food. He begged the Conference to reaffirm that decision in the most unequivocal terms; unless this people were fed, if, as a result of a process of starvation enforced by the Allies, the people of Germany were allowed to run riot, a state of revolution among the working classes of all countries would ensue with which it would be impossible to cope."<sup>5</sup>

"M. CLÉMENCEAU expressed his desire to make a few observations in reply to Mr. Lloyd George's statement; and he would preface his remarks with the affirmation that his conclusions agreed with that of Mr. Lloyd George, namely, that Germany must be fed as soon as possible. . . . On the other hand, his information tended to show that the Germans were using Bolshevism as a bogey with which to frighten the Allies. If the Germans were starving, as General Plumer and others said they were, why did they continue to refuse to surrender their fleet? The Germans certainly did not act as if they were in a hurry, and it was curious that a people who was said to be so hard up for food should appear to be in no hurry to assist in obtaining it by giving up their ships. No doubt very pitiable reports were being received from certain parts of Germany in regard to food conditions; but those reports did not apparently apply to all parts of Germany. For instance, General Mangin had told him that there was more food in Mayence than in Paris. In his opinion, the food hardship was probably due to bad distribution. Mr. Lloyd George had said that the Germans must be made to observe the conditions of the Armistice. But the Germans had promised to surrender their mercantile fleet, and so far they had not done so. In his opinion, the Germans were simply trying to see how far they could go; they were simply attempting to blackmail the Allies. To yield today would simply mean constant yielding in the future. . . . In regard to the manner of payment, he would be prepared to waive his objection to the earmarking of gold for the purpose, provided he knew that the Germans would work for their food. This was not an unreasonable request, and it would be found to

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207-9.

be in agreement with the teaching of Christianity. In conclusion, he could not too strongly urge his view that the Germans should be made thoroughly to understand that the Allies would allow no nonsense in regard to the minute observance of the terms of the clauses of the Armistice. As soon as the Germans recognized this fact, he felt sure his colleagues, M. Loucheur, M. Klotz and M. Clémentel, who were ever ready to be guided by feelings of humanity, would easily arrive at an agreement in regard to the supply of food to Germany, and the payment therefor.”<sup>6</sup>

Was any compromise possible between these two differing standpoints? In long discussion the Supreme War Council did its best to arrive at one. Point I of the resolution received a new formulation, proposed by Lloyd George, “On condition that Germany formally acknowledges her obligations”, whereupon there was an addendum proposed by Marshal Foch, “. . . and undertakes to execute . . .” It was then decided that this resolution should be presented by Admiral Wemyss to the German Delegation at a conference in Brussels as the official declaration of the Allied and Associated Powers.

A particularly lively discussion took place concerning the clauses referring to payment for deliveries. Payment by means of commodity deliveries and shipping hire was unanimously agreed to. For the reasons already mentioned, the French representative raised an objection to the proposed use of 2 milliard marks in German gold as an earnest of payment. M. Clémentel repeated his earlier proposal that not more than 450 million francs should go out, and that after the passage of two months the matter should come up for discussion again. At this there was once again an exchange between the leaders present :

“MR. LLOYD GEORGE appealed to M. Clémenceau to intervene in the matter. . . . He would not have raised the matter, but for the fact that during the past two months, in spite of the decision reached by the Supreme War Council in January last, obstacles had continually been put in his way, with the result that nothing had been done. He appealed to M. Clémenceau to put a stop to these obstructive tactics. . . .

“MR. HOUSE said that it always made him unhappy to take sides against France. But the American Delegates had told him that they had gone to the utmost limits to meet the wishes of the French and unless Clause 4 were accepted practically as as it stood, it would have no value.

“M. CLÉMENTEAU exclaimed that his country had been ruined and ravaged; towns had been destroyed; over two million men had lost their lives; mines had been rendered unworkable; and yet what guarantees had France that anything

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209-21.

would be received in payment for all this destruction? She merely possessed a few pieces of gold, a few securities, which it was now proposed to take away in order to pay those who would supply food to Germany; and that food would certainly not come from France. In a word, he was being asked to betray his country, and that he refused to do.”<sup>7</sup>

These differences, too, were composed, and Lord Robert Cecil read a new formulation of the clause in dispute, which now read: “Gold may also be used as collateral of loans to be realized as other means of payment provide means of liquidating such loans. The outright sale of gold can be permitted only in the event of its being agreed by the Associated Powers that the other means of payment are inadequate.” A compromise proposal put forward by M. Loucheur to fix credit against gold at one milliard to begin with was accepted. The final text of all the decisions was agreed to, with the alterations, and Marshal Foch promised to arrange for the visitation of the German Delegation.

With this the Supreme War Council had taken its decision: a new conference was to be held and a new offer made to Germany.

## VIII

### THE BRUSSELS AGREEMENT

THE last of the long series of conferences on the food relief action began on March 13th, 1919, four months after the conclusion of the Armistice Agreement, and two months after Germany had signed an undertaking to deliver up her mercantile marine for use in the Pool. The procedure to be adopted at the negotiations was precisely laid down in the decision of the Supreme War Council, but the actual proceedings in Brussels had little of the expected solemnity and finality. The official German record of the proceedings reports as follows concerning the opening session:

“ADMIRAL WEMYSS: The Allied and Associated Governments have instructed me to present you their proposals for the supply of foodstuffs to Germany. However, before I read the conditions I must ask you whether the German Government is prepared to fulfil its obligations under Article VIII of the Armistice Agreement of January 16th, 1919.

“UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE VON BRAUN: I declare in the name of the German Government that it always was, and still is, prepared to fulfil all obligations devolving on it under that agreement.

“ADMIRAL WEMYSS: I am now prepared to read the conditions to the German Delegates.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19. <sup>1</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, II, p. 84.

That was all. The following is the text of the conditions which were then read out :

“(1) The Associated Governments reiterate their decision to deliver to Germany the food now available in Europe for which payment has been arranged as soon as Germany shows her genuine intention to carry out her obligations, by sending to sea for that purpose the ships to be selected by the Associated Governments. The Associated Governments will themselves provide (as quickly as transportation can be arranged) or will give permits for import from neighbouring neutrals for the balance of the 270,000 tons agreed on, as soon as the ships already named by the Germans as being ready have been sent to sea and as soon as payment for such food has been arranged.

“(2) She shall have the right to purchase and import up to (300,000) tons of breadstuffs or their equivalent in other human foodstuffs, and (70,000) tons of fats including Pork products, vegetable oils and condensed milk monthly until September 1st.

“(3) She must pay for this food and may pay in any of the following ways :

“(a) By the export of commodities and the sale of cargoes of German ships now in neutral countries.

“(b) By credits in neutral countries.

“(c) By the outright sale of foreign securities or properties.

“(d) By the arrangement of advances against the use of foreign securities or properties as collateral.

“(e) By the hire of ships.

“(f) Further gold may also be used as collateral for loans to be released as other means of payment provide means of liquidating such loans. The outright sale of gold can only be permitted in the event of its being agreed by the Associated Powers that the above-named means of payment are inadequate.

“(4) She may export commodities (except those that will be enumerated in a prohibited list) to any neutral or other approved destination. The proceeds from these exports must, however, be converted into payments for foodstuffs.

“(5) When the German ships are delivered, and subject to the continuous performance by Germany of the whole of her obligations in relation to the subject matter of this memorandum, the carriage of German supplies, up to the amount specified above for the period to September 1st, will be a first charge upon their use.

“(6) She may purchase and import foodstuffs within the limits above stated from neutrals who will, when necessary, be allowed to reimport equivalent quantities.

“(7) It is understood that the declaration of the Associated Powers under this communication will be null and void, should Germany break the terms of the Armistice, or in any way fail

to carry out her obligations as respects the delivery of her mercantile marine.<sup>2</sup>

The discussion of this declaration of the Allied and Associated Powers took up the sessions on March 13th and 14th. The conference broke up into sub-commissions which discussed technical details for the implementation of the conditions tabled by the Allies, and the German Delegates brought forward a host of objections, the most important of which we will deal with here.

Right at the beginning a discussion took place between the leaders of the two Delegations concerning the quantities of foodstuffs proposed :

"UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE VON BRAUN: Point II lays down the maximum quantities Germany is to be permitted to import monthly. They are considerably lower than the requests made by us in former negotiations, and in particular during the negotiations in Spa in February of this year, when we gave our minimum requirements as 400,000 tons of breadstuffs and 100,000 tons of meat and fats monthly and 1 million tons of maize for the whole of the delivery period. May I recall in this connection that according to a detailed report of the best medical authorities in Germany we actually need a still greater volume of imports than originally asked for by us. This report proceeds on the assumption that the population of Germany requires not merely nourishment on the basis of its present rations, but a special auxiliary ration in addition to make good the effects of under-nourishment during the period of the war and the Armistice. . . ."

"ADMIRAL WEMYSS: I should like to make only a few observations on the matters you have brought forward. As far as Point I is concerned, you must remember that it is not merely Germany which must be supplied with foodstuffs, but the rest of Europe as well. . . ."

In strange contradiction to this demand for still greater deliveries, the German Delegation in the Finance Commission repeated its old demand for assistance in the shape of loans on the ground that Germany was not in a position to pay for the quantities which had been offered by the Allies. A German Memorandum presented to the Finance Commission declared: "We must pay, and in advance at that, a round sum of 127 million pounds. We have, at an estimate, about 69.5 million pounds available. . . . We are thus 58 million pounds short of the required sum, and we are unable to raise it. Thus in this case about half the promised quantities of foodstuffs will not be delivered unless conditions can be agreed for payment other than those which have been communicated up to the present."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Surface and Bland, pp. 194-95.    <sup>3</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, II, pp. 85-87.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 165.

In the Shipping Commission two interesting German objections were raised against the handing over of all German ships :

“BOEGER : Mr. Anderson takes no note of the serious misgivings which have been expressed by us against handing over all ships of over 1,600 tons for the transport of foodstuffs. . . . We shall not be in a position to keep our iron industry going satisfactorily unless we are able to import iron ore from Sweden.”<sup>6</sup>

And the second objection :

“LOHMANN : In list 4 a number of ships have been named which, in German opinion, must unquestionably be kept for government purposes. The question here is primarily the necessity of maintaining our Eastern front. I recognize the standpoint of the Allies that all ships must be placed at the disposal of the Pool for the transport of foodstuffs as fully justified, but, on the other hand, the Allies must understand that in view of the complete disorganization of our railway system and of the disturbances in our country, we are dependent on our seaways to maintain a front against 800,000 enemies.”<sup>8</sup>

A German estimate of the tonnage required for the transport of iron ore from Sweden was “a minimum of between 400,000 and 500,000 tons”.<sup>7</sup> In the old dispute concerning the handing over of ships to be ready for sea at a later date the German Delegation secured an accommodation.

A discussion in the Food Commission on *the supplying of foodstuffs to the Rhineland* offered a belated commentary on the debate in the Supreme War Council. A proposal that part of the foodstuffs waiting at Rotterdam should be sent into the Rhineland at once and distributed there by the military occupation authorities met with violent German disagreement. A compromise proposal according to which the foodstuffs should be distributed in the Rhineland by the German authorities under the control and supervision of the military occupation authorities led to the following debate quoted from the German report :

“UNDER-SECRETARY VON BRAUN : What we are being asked to agree to here is that the final decision concerning the distribution of imported foodstuffs should rest with the Allied Governments. Our standpoint is that a decision must envisage equal distribution over the whole of Germany.

“HOOVER : It is possible that we shall send further supplies in excess of the quantities laid down to the left bank of the Rhine.

“UNDER-SECRETARY VON BRAUN : But that would not be in accordance with the Armistice Agreement. I could not give my consent to such a thing. It is a purely political question which

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 121.    <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 124-25.    <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 151.



must be settled according to the provisions of the Armistice Agreement. The military authorities of occupation would be given further power, and I am not in a position to agree to that.

"HOOVER: Then the matter will have to be handed over to the Armistice Commission for settlement. The military authorities insist that they should allot the foodstuff imports and distribute them as they think fit.

"UNDER-SECRETARY VON BRAUN: The distrust evinced by the military occupation authorities is due to the fact that for a time the left bank of the Rhine was less well provided than the right bank. That was not our fault; it was caused by strikes, etc., which hampered traffic, and by the fact that potatoes could not be transported. All preparations have now been made for supplies to be sent as soon as the weather permits. I have recently negotiated with the mayors of the towns concerned, and they have confirmed this. I am in a position to give a binding assurance that in future the left bank of the Rhine will be just as well provided with foodstuffs as the right bank."<sup>8</sup>

These statements of the leader of the German Delegation are interesting. He confirms at least one point of the famous telegram of the British General Plumer to Lloyd George concerning "the failure of supplies from Germany", and admits, so to speak, officially, that "for a time the left bank of the Rhine was less well provided" than the rest of Germany. As an excuse he pleads strikes and inclement weather, though both these factors must have operated equally against the provisioning of other parts of the Reich as well.

A glance back at the previous discussion of these matters throws some light on the attitude of the German Government on the question of provisioning the occupied Rhineland and also on the real significance of the Plumer telegram, which played such an important role.<sup>9</sup> As early as January 28th, 1919, the Supreme Council of Supply had discussed the food situation in the occupied areas on the basis of a Memorandum from the French General Payot, and come to the conclusion that "it must be treated as a separate problem". On February 1st the Council decided on "provisional measures to cope with the urgent need for food", namely, a separate supply to the districts concerned direct from Rotterdam to be distributed under the supervision of the military authorities of occupation. It is noteworthy that on the eve of this decision Marshal Foch received a telegram assuring him that the German Government had now given all the necessary instructions that the occupied areas should be provisioned as quickly as possible. The official Minutes of the Council observe: "The purport of the Cable was not understood."

The first German drive against the Allied plans for a special

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> References for the forthcoming matter are Bane and Lutz, pp. 63, 79, 99.

provisioning of the Rhineland was launched at the Spa Conference at the beginning of February. When the British representatives declared on the basis of the reports of the military authorities that "a full share of supplies is not coming from the rest of Germany", the German Delegates answered, unlike Under-Secretary von Braun at Brussels, that the reason was to be found in bureaucratic measures on the part of the military occupation authorities. Replying to the proposal that the Rhineland should be provisioned direct from Rotterdam, the German Delegation declared bluntly :

"If special supplies were given to the occupied towns, the German Authorities would correspondingly reduce the share received by these towns through the Food Control Offices at Berlin. They would strongly object to the occupied towns getting a larger share of food than the rest of Germany."<sup>10</sup>

Under-Secretary von Braun's protest against a temporary better provisioning of the occupied Rhineland is all the more noteworthy because the excess would have come from additional supplies over and above the German quota, a fact Hoover made quite clear in his remarks. German anxiety about the feeding and the health of the population of the Rhineland obviously ended where "higher political interests" began. With their objection the Germans finally succeeded in obtaining a compromise by means of which the Allied military occupation authorities promised to take the German distribution plan into consideration when arranging their own distribution of foodstuffs.

Was the unfair treatment of the Rhineland in the matter of food supplies really due to technical hindrances as Under-Secretary von Braun pleaded? As we have already pointed out, in those months of 1919 the charge was made more than once against the German authorities that they manipulated the distribution of foodstuffs to serve their political ends. There is no tangible proof that this was the case where the Rhineland was concerned, but it remains a significant fact that the admittedly unfair treatment accorded to the Rhineland affected the whole question of German supplies—in Germany's favour.

The famous telegram of General Plumer and the protests of British soldiers against the food situation in the occupied areas is not mentioned in the concluding report of the German Armistice Commission, and the attitude of the British Army of Occupation is dismissed briefly in these words: "There have been complaints concerning drunkenness, the exceeding of their authority by British officers, and, for the rest, chicanery in traffic and business affairs in the area occupied by British troops, whose centre is in Cologne."<sup>11</sup>

A further German objection can be seen from the following passage from the Minutes of the Food Commission: "The German Government will give all facilities and protection to shipments

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>11</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, III, p. 166.

through German ports and inland routes to Czechoslovakia and Austria. The German Delegates, however, consider that shipments must arrive for German account before such transportation begins."<sup>12</sup>

After the Sub-Commissions had dealt with various matters and settled details concerning payments, German purchases in neutral countries, fish imports from Scandinavia, and German exports, the plenary session of the Brussels Conference met again on March 14th, 1919, to sign the agreements reached, which were all drawn up within the framework of the Memorandum which had been presented to the conference. The German official record of the proceedings reports as follows on this final phase of the conference:

"UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE VON BRAUN: We have received instructions from the German Government to give our signatures to the agreement only if it ensures Germany's food supplies. As far as the food agreement is concerned, our wishes have, on the whole, been taken into consideration. On the other hand, we feel that the finance agreement does not offer a sufficient guarantee, seeing that only about one-half of the foodstuffs imports arranged for here are covered by the means of payment which have been agreed. . . . In earlier agreements it was envisaged that Germany should be supplied with the necessary foodstuffs by the Associated Governments. According to the present agreement, however, Germany is only given the possibility of purchasing foodstuffs in monthly quantities of 370,000 tons. . . . In view of the instructions of the German Government I should consider myself empowered to sign the present agreement only if a clause were added providing that in the event of the means of payment agreed to proving inadequate to meet the payments involved, then the granting of a credit would be considered, and that in a discussion which should take place within a week the limitation placed on Germany's trade with neutral countries should be withdrawn to permit her the possibility of free operations with neutral States in respect of food imports.

"ADMIRAL WEMYSS: I can see no reason why a further discussion should be arranged within a week, seeing that we should have no more to say then than we have now. I propose that perhaps a clause should be added to the agreement providing that in the event of the active items listed in Article III Paragraph II, including all available gold and all other resources, should not prove sufficient . . . the Associated Governments will reconsider the question of payments. . . . I propose that this document be now signed.

"UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE VON BRAUN: I should like to return once again to the question of our inhibited trade relations.

<sup>12</sup> Bane and Lutz, p. 255.

"ADMIRAL WEMYSS: I hear from the members of the Finance Commission that they propose to request the Blockade Commission to settle this question immediately. I formally repeat this assurance now.

"UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE VON BRAUN: After the formal declaration of Admiral Wemyss I consider myself empowered to append my signature to the agreement."<sup>13</sup>

What had the German Government actually achieved as the result of dragging out the negotiations for over two months? Holding its trump card of 2.5 million tons of shipping in hand, the German Delegates had entered into negotiations with three fundamental demands:

1. A guaranteed supply plan up to the next harvest.
2. The granting of credits for a part of the deliveries; and
3. The handing over of the German Mercantile Marine only after the conclusion of all agreements.

With regard to Points 1 and 3 Germany was successful all along the line. Only in Point 2 did she meet with unanimous American, British and French resistance. Thus on the whole, in accordance with the decision of the Supreme War Council, the Brussels Conference went a very long way towards meeting the German standpoint. As the American Delegate McCormick noted in his diary, those who took part in the Brussels Conference felt that the Allied offer represented a very definite success for Germany.

However, Germany's success lay not so much in the material results of the Brussels negotiations, for as far as Point 1 was concerned it might be said that it was a case of bursting open an unlocked door. The innumerable official records of the various councils of the Allied and Associated Powers show one thing very clearly, namely, that one of the main anxieties of all the Delegates was the prevention of any famine in Germany with its undesirable political consequences. Hoover spoke more eloquently on this point than ever Under-Secretary von Braun did. And even for M. Clémenceau, speaking in the Supreme War Council, there was no doubt that "Germany must be fed as soon as possible", and obviously, "fed" did not mean a single delivery of foodstuffs.

What was the essence of Germany's success at Brussels then? Although it may sound strange it consisted less in what was obtained than in the fact that what was obtained was obtained under pressure—pressure exerted cautiously and for the first time. Germany's attitude in the food question was, as we have already pointed out, an intentional first test of Allied and American steadfastness, the first trial of what would happen if Germany said "No." It was the first step on the general path of German resistance, and it was followed quickly by others, including the scuttling of the German Fleet at Scapa Flow, and the refusal to hand over war criminals for

<sup>13</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, II, pp. 175-7.

trial. The final steps were Hitler's march into the Rhineland and the reintroduction of compulsory military service. Thus Germany's final agreement in Brussels was not a capitulation to the Allied Powers, but merely the logical conclusion of the first act of planned resistance. When her Delegates realized that the situation called for the end of their manoeuvre they came to heel without making any more difficulties.

That was not all. The real master-stroke was the success achieved by Germany's propaganda in placing the moral responsibility for the two-months' period of delay and its accompanying nerve test on to the shoulders of her opponents.

## IX

### THE GREAT RELIEF ACTION

GERMANY signed the Brussels Agreement on March 14th, 1919, but a further period of from eight to nine days passed before she took the first steps to carry out her obligations. The agreed gold deposits to the sum of a preliminary 345 million marks arrived as follows:

March 22nd to British account in Rotterdam	..	50 million
March 25th to British account in Rotterdam	..	50 million
March 26th to United States account in Brussels	..	220 million
April 1st to British account in Rotterdam	..	25 million <sup>1</sup>

The following Reuter telegram from Copenhagen reports the beginning of the handing over of Germany's mercantile marine:

"A Berlin telegram of yesterday's date says: The German Armistice Commission announces the departure of the following German ships for England:

"On March 23rd—From Hamburg: *Genoa, Rugia, Graf Waldersee, Kaiserin Auguste Victoria, Alster, Heluan, Roda, Wolfsburg, Germanicus*; from Emden: *Claere, Hugo Stinnes*.

"On March 24th—From Hamburg: *Pretoria, Reveuma, Kagera, Hermia, Fuerst Buelow, Artissima*; from Koenigsberg: *Varundi*; from Bremen: *Sonnenfels, Weissenfels*; from Emden: *Varegga*."<sup>2</sup>

The reaction of the Allied Powers to the first reports that Germany was carrying out her obligations in the matter was prompt and generous. Surface and Bland report:

"Immediately on receipt of the first indication that the Germans would carry out their agreements, the Director-General of Relief diverted to Hamburg the S.S. *West Carnifax*, then afloat for relief purposes. This steamer carried a cargo of

<sup>1</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 195.    <sup>2</sup> *Morning Post*, March 25th, 1919.

6,626 tons of wheat flour, and arrived in Hamburg on March 25th, anticipating by one day the arrival of the first consignment of gold for American credit.”<sup>3</sup>

*The Times* was able to report from Berlin on March 30th that “250,000 cases of condensed milk and 6,000 tons of bacon have already been shipped”. The origin of this delivery is not uninteresting. It came from the depôts of a country that had been maltreated and plundered for over four years—Belgium:

“When the Brussels Agreement was finally signed . . . it was impossible to make immediate delivery of sufficient quantities from A.R.A.—American Relief Administration—stocks. Mr. Hoover, therefore, arranged with the Commission for Relief in Belgium to sell to Germany such supplies as could be spared from stocks in Rotterdam and Antwerp. These sales, totalling 134,980 metric tons, worth \$44,350,810, were of the greatest importance in relieving the acute situation in Germany at this time.”<sup>4</sup>

There was a good reason for drawing on Belgium’s food stores. Behind the scenes of the great relief action things were not going too well. The long delays caused by Germany before handing over her ships brought the relief work to the verge of a serious crisis—even after the signing of the agreement. As we have already pointed out, the world tonnage situation in March 1919 had deteriorated to an almost catastrophic point. When Germany’s ships finally arrived they were too late to meet even the most urgent German demands, for as Hoover cabled to New York:

“German ships now leaving will be unable to arrive in Germany with food before June 1st. In the meantime they (the Germans) must have about five hundred thousand tons of food over and above the two hundred seventy thousand tons now being scrapped from European stocks.”<sup>5</sup>

An emergency mobilization of British and United States tonnage, the latter thanks to the personal intervention of President Wilson, was carried out to fill the gap caused by the delay in handing over the German ships. It was successful in the end, but not without considerable sacrifice on the part of almost all the countries involved.

The supplies which Germany received in the first two months (April, 138,000 tons, and May, 343,000 tons) almost all arrived in German ports on non-German ships. They represented a carefully prepared programme of specially needed foodstuffs. From United States stores came wheat flour, cereal flour and rye; from Belgian stores came rice, peas, beans, barrelled beef and lard substitutes; and from British stores came bacon, condensed milk,

<sup>3</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Bane and Lutz, p. 278.

vegetable oil, margarine, drippings, rice, Rangoon beans, oatmeal and cereal flour.

Amongst the immediate deliveries which were made via Brussels were actually supplies from France. Whilst German propagandists, including left-wingers, were making great play with an invented phrase ascribed to Clémenceau ("There are 20 million too many Germans in the world"), the France of Clémenceau, still suffering from the wounds of the war, was actually taking part in the general action to feed 65 million Germans. In addition, France, loyal to her promise, permitted payment for the foodstuffs she delivered to be made not in gold but in coal :

"Germany paid for these supplies chiefly through the exchange of commodities and not through the transfer of gold. . . . Of the supplies furnished to Germany by France, 55,000 tons consisted of oil seeds from French provinces in Africa. The remainder consisted of flour, pork products, and miscellaneous foods, chiefly army rations."<sup>6</sup>

A gratis delivery of French foodstuffs to the value of over a million dollars was made to Russian prisoners of war still held in Germany, whose fate had exercised the Allied Councils for some time, as these men were on the verge of starvation.

Over and above the supplies delivered by Allied and American organizations, neutral foodstuffs markets were now opened to Germany by the Brussels Agreement :

"Furthermore, Germany was allowed to purchase supplies in any markets she chose, up to the limits of the allowed ration per month, provided she could make satisfactory financial arrangements. Considerable quantities were purchased from the Netherlands and other nearby countries and, in addition, arrangements were made to purchase grain from the Argentina."<sup>7</sup>

In order to transport the 200,000 tons of wheat and linseed secured by Germany in the Argentine the Supreme Council of Supply despatched the necessary tonnage without delay to La Plata.

In the concluding report of the German Armistice Commission we find, referring to the deliveries of food, the one laconic sentence : "Only after the handing over of almost all the German Mercantile Marine had been enforced and guaranteed by the Brussels Agreement of March 14th, 1919, did the by no means adequate foodstuffs deliveries begin, slowly and haltingly."<sup>8</sup> Is it really true that deliveries were slow and halting? And were they in the end really so inadequate?

<sup>6</sup> Surface and Bland, p. 64.    <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.    <sup>8</sup> *Waffenstillstand*, II, p. 3.

As far as the first question is concerned, what we have already said about the beginning of the great work of supplying Europe gives a preliminary answer. Moreover, it is a fact that despite the tonnage calamity, greatly aggravated by Germany's fault, deliveries began astonishingly quickly. The monthly delivery figures show that the organizers of the great relief action even succeeded, despite all the difficulties in the beginning, in sending uniform deliveries (so important for any food planning) right through to the subsequent harvest. According to an incomplete list we see that United States, British and French deliveries arrived in Germany as follows :

April	..	..	138,000 tons
May	..	..	343,000 tons
June	..	..	194,000 tons
July	..	..	155,000 tons
August	..	..	159,000 tons <sup>9</sup>

Even according to these incomplete figures we observe that up to the end of June, that is to say up to the time of the signing of the Versailles Treaty, Germany received deliveries amounting to 675,000 tons. Deliveries up to the conclusion of the peace treaty totalled approximately 700,000 tons, more than one-half of all deliveries. Thus the charge made by German propagandists and repeated irresponsibly by well-meaning people outside Germany that deliveries of foodstuffs to Germany were held back until after the conclusion of the peace treaty is seen to have no basis whatever in the real facts and official delivery figures.

And what about the final figures of the great relief action? F. M. Surface and R. L. Bland give us the following table in their book :<sup>10</sup>

*Summary of Total Relief Deliveries to Germany*

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Total Value</i>
	<i>Metric Tons</i>		
American Relief Administration ..	483,094,9		\$113,728,950,49
American Friends Service Committee	60,9		29,687,25
Commission for Relief in Belgium ..	134,980,0		44,350,810,47
<b>Total from United States ..</b>	<b>618,135,8</b>		<b>\$158,109,448,21</b>
United Kingdom .. .. .	299,144,0		75,653,861,00
France .. .. .	69,404,0		16,262,889,00
Argentina .. .. .	155,000,0		16,774,000,00
Netherlands .. .. .	44,648,0		9,784,989,00
Switzerland .. .. .	28,886,0		5,825,812,00
<b>Total from Countries other than United States ..</b>	<b>597,082,0</b>		<b>\$124,310,551,00</b>
<b>Total .. .. .</b>	<b>1,215,217,8</b>		<b>\$282,410,999,21</b>

<sup>9</sup> Surface and Bland, pp. 611-25. <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.



These final figures on deliveries to Germany are seen in their full significance only when they are compared with the total of all deliveries made during the period of the Armistice to Germany and all other countries, including former allies, neutrals and enemies. The picture is then as follows :

*Total Relief Deliveries under the Direction of the  
Director-General of Relief<sup>11</sup>*  
(November 1918 to August 1919)

	<i>Total Metric Tons</i>	<i>Total Value</i>
Total Deliveries .. ..	4,178,447.7	\$1,101,486,783.34
Deliveries to Germany .. ..	1,215,217.8	\$282,410,999.21

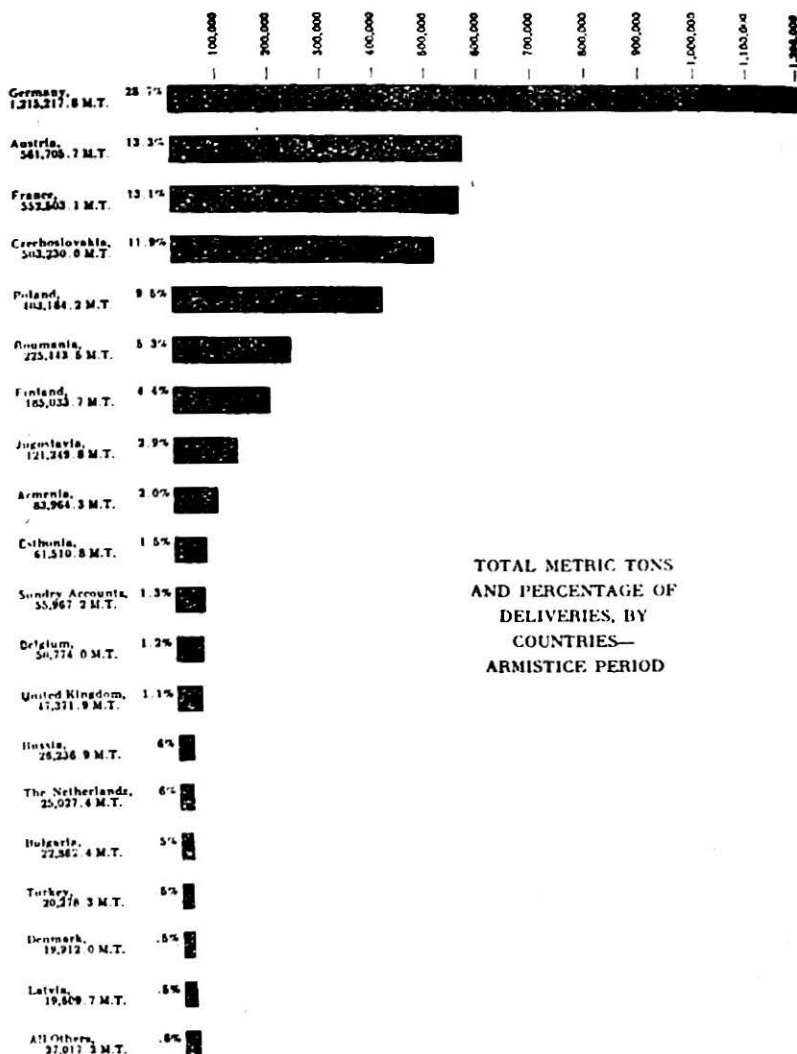
These figures are clear and eloquent. They show that Germany received 29 per cent of all deliveries in quantity and 25.6 per cent in value. What this German share in the total deliveries to European countries means becomes clear only when we compare the German deliveries with the deliveries to the other countries. This comparison can be seen best from the graph printed on page 88, which is taken from the report of F. M. Surface and R. L. Bland. The two Americans observe: "It will be noted that the largest deliveries to any country during the Armistice Period were those to Germany."

This is very true, and its weight cannot be discountenanced by pointing out that Germany has a larger population than the other countries involved. Quite a superficial comparison between the deliveries made to Germany and those made to France show that German deliveries per head of the population were considerably larger than those made per head of the population to France, although a large area of France had been devastated and plundered during the war. The same is true of a comparison between the deliveries to Germany per head of the population and the deliveries per head of the population to her eastern and south-eastern neighbours, that is to say, a comparison with countries which were at that time, by general admission, actually famine areas. Speaking cautiously and conservatively of the great relief action as a whole, therefore, we are justified in saying that Germany did not receive less than she was entitled to per head of the population.

It might be objected (and it has been so objected) that despite this the total deliveries were nevertheless inadequate to meet Germany's most urgent needs. Let us hear F. M. Surface and R. L. Bland again on this point :

"The total supplies delivered to Germany in terms of bread-stuffs and fats amounted to approximately 600,000 tons of the former and 175,000 tons of the latter. These deliveries cover a period of five months. Under the terms of the Brussels Agreement, Germany would have been allowed to import in five

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 35 and 197.



TOTAL METRIC TONS  
AND PERCENTAGE OF  
DELIVERIES, BY  
COUNTRIES—  
ARMISTICE PERIOD

From F. M. Surface and R. L. Bland: *American Food*, p. 37

months 1,500,000 tons of cereals and 350,000 tons of fats. Her importations were thus far below the allowed ration. She did, however, purchase all that the world supply of food and shipping would permit and all for which she could provide finance."<sup>12</sup>

Had Germany any right to deliveries in excess of her fair pro capita share? Had Germany any right to receive deliveries over and above what she was in a position to pay for? Were the United States and Great Britain under any moral obligation to grant Germany credits, which, as J. M. Keynes pointed out, they had been compelled to refuse their own allies? Such questions are obviously absurd, but they would have to be answered in the affirmative before it would be possible to maintain that a wrong was done to Germany in the apportionment of the available deliveries of foodstuffs.

It was the financial aspect of the problem which caused H. W. V. TEMPERLEY to come to the following conclusion: "Indeed, from the end of 1918 onwards, the blockade of Germany, in so far as it existed, was due not to the action of the Allies, but to the breakdown of German finance."<sup>13</sup>

One question remains to be asked, and it brings us back once again to the core of our investigation. It is the question of how the beginning of deliveries to Germany compared in time, etc., with the beginning of deliveries to other countries. If there was a difference, what was the cause? According to the detailed tables published by F. M. Surface and R. L. Bland,<sup>14</sup> the beginning of deliveries during the Armistice period was as follows:

BREADSTUFFS		FATS
None	<i>November</i>	None
	<i>December</i>	
N. France and Belgium		N. France and Belgium
	<i>January</i>	
None		None
	<i>February</i>	
Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Roumania, Armenia		Czechoslovakia and Poland
	<i>March</i>	
Esthonia and Turkey		Yugoslavia
	<i>April</i>	
Germany, Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania		Germany, Austria, Roumania Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania
	<i>May</i>	
Finland		Finland

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198. <sup>13</sup> Temperley I, p. 303. <sup>14</sup> Surface and Bland, pp. 32-33.

This table is very instructive. It shows at a glance that the beginning of deliveries to Germany was by no means so long delayed as twenty-five years of vociferous propaganda would have the world believe. With regard to fats, for instance, six countries received deliveries before Germany, and five countries received deliveries either at the same time, more or less, or even later. If we regard this table of delivery commencements as typical we find that apart from Northern France and Belgium, where relief organizations were already in operation from the war period, most European countries received their first deliveries in February, whilst Germany received her first delivery in April.

Why general deliveries did not begin until February we have already discussed in our chapter "The Organizational Phase". What remains is the two-month period which lay between the beginning of general deliveries and the beginning of particular deliveries to Germany. Is it possible to fashion any reproach to the Allied Powers out of this two-months' delay? As we have seen, exactly two months passed from the moment the Allied Powers first asked for the handing over of Germany's Mercantile Marine (January) and the moment when Germany actually began to comply (March). These two months of constant delays on Germany's part coincide exactly with the two-months' delay in the delivery of foodstuffs to Germany. These two months of German delay were responsible for the lag in the commencement of deliveries to Germany. If Germany had handed over her ships in January, as the Allied Powers requested, the deliveries of foodstuffs to Germany could have started in February.

The internal documents and files of the various Inter-Allied Councils published by S. L. Bane and R. H. Lutz in their book leave no doubt whatever that deliveries began *as soon as it was possible to begin them*. Of its own volition and for reasons which we do not need to repeat the German Government decided to delay the handing over of its mercantile marine, and its arrangements for payment, until March. As a result deliveries to Germany began, though with astonishing promptitude, only in April.

Even German critics after the First World War answered the defenders of the Kaiser's policy when they talked of the "encirclement of Germany" by pointing out that it was thanks to Germany's own unwise policy that she, so to speak, encircled herself. In so far as there was any foodstuffs blockade of Germany after the First World War it was a self-imposed blockade. This was, in fact, what Germany's action amounted to when by her delaying tactics she retarded the commencement of food deliveries by two valuable months. This was done partly as the result of pressure from certain powerful German interests at work behind the scenes, and partly as the result of a criminal policy which deliberately exploited the undernourishment of the German people as the basis for a first act of resistance to the Allied Powers and for the sabotage of Germany's obligations under the agreements she had signed.

THOSE who planned and the names of the first act of resistance against the victors of 1918 omitted, their work behind a smoke-screen of poisonous propaganda about the mythical "hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who succumbed to the blockade after November 11th". They calculated cold-bloodedly that a storm of indignation would arise when the results of their action were seen, and that the indignation would prevent any objective inquiry into the causes. The spreading of the monstrous lie about the "hundreds of thousands . . . done to death with cold deliberation" was merely an advanced operation of Hitler's principle that "only a really big lie" has any chance of being believed. The theory worked; they were believed.

The usefulness of this propaganda about "the victims of the blockade" was recognized by the leaders of Germany, both the old and the new, in the first moment of defeat. It is noteworthy that the Armistice Commission was supplied with a Memorandum on the deaths and other damage suffered by Germany as the result of the blockade. This Memorandum bears the title, "*Damage caused to Germany's Resources by the Enemy Blockade*", and it was issued by the Reich's Health office in December 1918. This astonishing document has received far too little attention. It is a shocking witness to the spirit of Germany after November 11th, 1918. On page 66 it attempts to transform the deaths and the sicknesses suffered during the period of the blockade into monetary terms in order to include them in an account for damages. Here is the passage:

"Damage done to Germany's National Resources by the effects of the enemy blockade:

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| "(1) By the <i>death</i> of 763,000 civilians<br>(reckoned at) . . . . .  | 8.4 milliard marks  |
| "(2) By innumerable cases of <i>sickness</i> amongst the civilian population (impossible to estimate) . . . . .   | — milliard marks    |
| "(3) By the <i>prevention of the birth</i> of approximately a million children, i.e. a quarter of the total reduction in the birth rate (reckoned at) . . . . . | 8.4 milliard marks  |
| "(4) By the <i>weakening of the labour capacity</i> of the working population as a whole by about one-third (reckoned at) . . . . .                             | 30.3 milliard marks |

3.5 milliard marks

4 milliard marks

"Thus the damage, more or less, of my blockade to Germany's National Resources is commensurate with a total monetary loss to the National Wealth of more than 54.6 milliard marks."

That is the conclusion and the highlight of an official German Memorandum, not a document drawn up by fanatical and irresponsible Nazis, but by the Republican Government of the "New Germany". For our purposes in this study the particularly important figure is the first one which gives the number of deaths amongst German civilians as a result of the Allied blockade as 763,000. This is the figure which was, so to speak, logically followed by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's summary charge that still further "hundreds of thousands of non-combatants" had been "done to death" as a result of the alleged prolongation of the blockade after the Armistice.

Now, this figure is false. It appeared as the mainstay of an official German Memorandum, but since then it has been admitted to be an estimate, even a rough estimate. Exactly ten years after the publication of this official Memorandum of the Reich's Office of Health another book was published. This was the work of Dr. F. BUMM, ex-President of the German Health Office, and in it we find a different and much lower figure. It was published by the Carnegie Institute and contained a special study by a high German medical official, DR. ROESLE, who wrote:

"The figure (424,000) which has been placed too high in previous Memoranda and other documents, represents the actual increase in the death of the civilian population during the war, that is to say, the effects of . . . various factors, shortage of food, the intense cold of the winter of 1917-18, and the shortage of heating material."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Roesle's statement is sensational. Not only was the increase in deaths of civilians during the world war only 424,000, instead of 763,000, but he expressly stresses the fact that food shortage was only one factor amongst three chief factors which combined to increase the death rate amongst the civilian population. One can only agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Roesle when he concludes his investigation by observing that:

"The result of this investigation shows the effect of war shortages in Germany in a considerably less baleful light than did former investigations based only on rough calculations."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. F. Bumm (ex-President of the Reich's Health Office), *Deutschlands Gesundheitsverhältnisse unter dem Einfluss des Weltkrieges* ("Health in Germany under the Influence of the World War"), Berlin, 1928, I, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Without the two clear references to earlier pronouncements it would still be obvious enough what the aim of the publication was, namely, *to make a belated correction of an official propaganda lie, the lie that the Allied blockade cost the lives of 763,000 non-combatants in Germany.* The names of the prominent men who formed the publication committee, Dr. C. Melchior, Dr. Hermann Buecher, Dr. Karl Duisberg, Dr. A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Dr. Max Scering, can only add additional weight to the importance of the study.

Incidentally, Dr. Roesle killed two other German propaganda lies stone dead. Referring to the so-called "hunger influenza epidemic" of 1918 he points out that the mortality rate for the influenza epidemic which swept Europe at that time was practically the same in Great Britain as in Germany.<sup>3</sup> And referring to "the blockade war against babies in arms" he writes :

"The decline of the infant mortality rate in the German Reich during the world war must be regarded as one of its most surprising phenomena."<sup>4</sup>

The significance of this official German correction to an official German propaganda lie regarding the numbers allegedly killed by the blockade for the question dealt with in this chapter of our investigation is very clear. If according to official German figures the increase in the civilian deaths in Germany throughout the war, i.e. in a period of over four years, is 424,000, that is to say just about 100,000 per annum (an increase admittedly not wholly due to undernourishment), then it is obvious that the truth of the German propaganda contention that in the four months which passed between the conclusion of the Armistice and the first arrival of foodstuffs in Germany, "hundreds of thousands of non-combatants" died of famine in Germany, is seriously called into question.

That is significant enough, but we are not dependent on "rough estimates" or mere deductions. Official German statistics for the year 1919 show a rapid drop in the mortality rate for all classes of the population as compared with the war years. The following are the figures for 1918, the last year of the war, 1919, the first year of peace, and 1920, i.e. a real peace year when there was no limit of any sort on Germany's imports :

"*German Female Mortality Rate* (per 1,000 of the female population above 1 year) :

1918	..	17.8
1919	..	13.4
1920	..	12.2 <sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

*“German Infant Mortality Rate (children under 12 months : per 100 children born alive) :*

1913	..	15.1
1918	..	15.4
1919	..	14.5
1920	..	13.1 <sup>6</sup>

*“German Mortality Rate for Children between 5 and 10 years (per 1,000 children between those ages) :*

1918	..	6.1
1919	..	3.9
1920	..	3.2 <sup>7</sup>

*“German Mortality Rate for children between 10 and 15 years (per 1,000 children between those ages) :*

1918	..	4.8
1919	..	3.0
1920	..	2.3 <sup>8</sup>

*“General German Mortality Rate including both sexes and adults and children of all ages (per 1,000 of the population) :*

1918	..	24.8
1919	..	15.6
1920	..	15.1 <sup>9</sup>

One thing is particularly noticeable in all these mortality rate categories: the rapid drop in the figures for 1919. Dr. Roesle, who deals with 1919 only incidentally and in passing, nevertheless feels it necessary to offer some explanation for this very obvious fact. In one passage he speaks of “the winter of 1918, which was certainly mild and resulted in only a very slight increase of mortality in the months from January to March.”<sup>10</sup>

And finally Dr. Roesle presents us with the following, rather peculiar, conclusion :

“With the lifting of the blockade on July 12th, 1919, after the signing of the Peace Treaty of Versailles the mortality rate immediately began to drop rapidly. One can explain this rapid effect only by assuming that the importation of foodstuffs saved the lives of many sick people who were fighting against death.”<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Roesle thus gives the impression that foodstuffs were sent to Germany only after the signing of the peace treaty, but we know that this was not the case, and that by July 12th, when the peace treaty was finally signed, Germany had already received at least 675,000 tons of bread, meat and milk. However, Dr. Roesle no

<sup>6</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer das Deutsche Reich* (Germany's official Statistical Annual), Berlin, 1921-1922, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Bumm, p. 43.    <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.    <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.    <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



longer dares to speak of "hundreds of thousands of people" who were fighting against death at the nick of time.

The exact figures showing the excess which interests us in this study, the 134,000 from February 1918 to March 25th, 1919, are not available from the February conference in Spa, J. A. Logan of the German Delegation, Under-Secretary of State, estimated that the deaths due to starvation were estimated to only take the 134 days into consideration that would give a figure of 107,200 deaths. Now the official German Statistical Annual gives the following figures for deaths in Germany in 1919 and 1920:

1919	..	1,017,284
1920	..	985,235 <sup>13</sup>

That is to say, that for the whole year 1919 there were approximately 32,000 more deaths than in the following full peace year 1920, and we may assume that approximately half of these fell within the first six months of 1919.

Now whatever judgment one may pass on the official figures we have given, and however one may interpret them, it is clear that the information communicated by Under-Secretary von Braun to the Spa Conference, and the statement of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau at Versailles, were, to say the least of it, gross exaggerations. If they were not, in fact, deliberately misleading they were certainly culpably irresponsible.

## CONCLUSION

FROM a propaganda standpoint at least the most successful of all the actions launched by the New Germany to resist the Allied Powers after the Armistice and to undermine their victory was the action planned and carried out in connection with Germany's food supplies. The memoirs of Allied and American statesmen all show what a deep impression was made by this first, carefully timed, German drive against the victors.

This investigation has tried to clear away the propaganda debris of a quarter of a century and lay bare the real facts of the matter. We must leave it to the reader to judge for himself whether it has succeeded and exactly what it has revealed. All that remains for us now is to give the answers which follow logically on the basis of our study to the questions we formulated in our introduction.

We asked: "Is it true that the supply of foodstuffs to Germany after the Armistice was prevented or even delayed through the fault, deliberate or otherwise, of the Allied and Associated Powers?"

<sup>13</sup> Bane and Lutz, p. 187. <sup>14</sup> *Stat. Jahrb.*, 1921-1922, pp. 32, 33.

s that in so far as there were differences lies as to the manner in which Germany's needs for raw materials, there is no proof whatever that Germany's needs were met directly or indirectly to any delay in the deliveries of raw materials to Germany. On the contrary, the peace negotiations show clearly that the delays in the deliveries were due, in so far as they were due, to insurmountable technical difficulties, to Germany's lack of a merchant marine at the disposal of the relief commission, and to her refusal to pay for the deliveries allotted to her.

We also asked: "Is it true that from November 1918 to July 1919, that is to say, from the signing of the Armistice to the signing of the Peace Treaty, 'hundreds of thousands of non-combatants' died of starvation in Germany?"

Our investigation of the official figures has demonstrated that the "hundreds of thousands", or even one hundred thousand, was a gross falsehood. And further, our investigation has shown that so far as the prolongation of Germany's unfavourable food situation adversely affected the health and well-being of the German people, the responsibility for it rests squarely on the shoulders of those military and large-scale capitalist interests who were responsible for the political manoeuvres of resistance on Germany's part.

The "Hunger of the German People" represented an integral part of all Germany's war plans from the beginning of the present century onwards. The motto of 1919 "Ships rather than Bread" was just as logical a result of these plans as the slogan of 1935 "Guns rather than Butter".

THE END



(REG. TRADE MARK)

A *Fight For Freedom* PU