

War Problems

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THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

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THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

AN INTERIM REPORT
BY A CHATHAM HOUSE STUDY GROUP

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APPENDIX I

ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING THE CAUSES OF GERMANY'S RESORT TO WAR

(Note: This is not intended to exhaust all possible assumptions as to the causes or combinations of causes underlying Germany's action. It is merely a graduated list of some of the more common assumptions and explanations currently made in this country or by the Germans themselves. None of the alleged causes has been singled out for acceptance by the group, which finds elements of truth in several of them.)

1. The Germans are a congenitally aggressive people; and it is owing to this inherent aggressiveness that they have remained (as they seem to many) less civilized than other European peoples, and that Christianity has gone less deep. This is a state of affairs which cannot be radically changed in our time. Germans yield only to superior force, so far and so long as it can be asserted.

2. The Germans are, in the first place, human beings and to be understood as such: generalizations which ascribe immutable characteristics to a whole people are misleading. The aggressiveness which as a political unit they have undoubtedly displayed, even if partly due to race, is also due to circumstance and especially to teaching. The teachers to whom Germans have listened most readily have hitherto been groups (Prussian militarists, Nazis), and individuals, to whose various *Weltanschauungen* it has been common that the rights of others could, when convenient, be violently overridden; but it is possible that many Germans already reject this outlook, and that the nation as a whole (except for limited categories of incurables) could be educated into rejecting it.

3. Germany's recent aggressiveness was due in an important degree to the hardships which Germany endured from 1918 onwards. One view is that the chief cause of these hardships was the unnecessary severity of the Treaty of Versailles, and that German policy would have been more co-operative if the Treaty had been less severe. An alternative view is that the terms of the Treaty were not the cause of the undoubted hardships suffered by Germans, but propaganda in Germany, on the whole tolerated or even abetted elsewhere, persuaded the Germans that they were. This persuasion, combined with affronts to Germany's "prestige" and other psychological irritants, was a chief cause of aggressiveness.

4. Though a less severe Peace Treaty and subsequent treatment would not have prevented an aggressive policy, this could have been prevented by recognizing that Germany was a "have not" power, and by granting the possibly large but still limited margin of concessions which would have transformed her into a "have" power.

5. Germany's recent aggressiveness was due to the fact that, after 1918, she was treated too mildly: no victory march, no determined control of armaments, etc. She could have been deterred by suitable measures.

6. Germany's recent aggressiveness was due to the fact that her leaders were bent on purposes that could be fulfilled only through war, or at least were employing methods, as in economic policy, of which war was the natural outcome. The people, or sufficiently important categories of the people, followed their leaders because:

- (a) they desired to fight or at least expected rewards; or
- (b) they accepted war as necessary for the "mission" of the Third Reich; or,
- (c) though they were averse from war, their political immaturity prevented them either from recognizing the danger or, if they recognized it, from overthrowing their leaders; or
- (d) they were prepared to support any one, at any risk, who led them away from mass unemployment.

7. Aggression, such as that to which Germany resorted in 1939, is sufficiently explained as the inevitable product of monopoly capitalism at a given stage of development.

8. Germany's aggressiveness is an attempt to rectify consciously and by force an injustice imposed by accidents of history. While Russia, France, England, and the United States of America were building and consolidating empires, Germany was only a geographical expression. She had not achieved the nationhood, the unity, the metropolitan core, necessary to imperial expansion. By the time she had done so, opportunity for expansion had been very heavily restricted. The German nation and people had less outlet for their industrial, scientific, and even biological potential of enterprise than other (in the German view, less competent) nations.

9. "Aggressiveness" is not a specific trait of German policy. All states assert themselves to the utmost of their strength by the most convenient means, military, economic, or moral. Germany merely happens now to be the most powerful bearer of the aggressive impulse in Europe, as was once Spain, then France. The impulse may fail, owing to causes which cannot be controlled from outside.

10. Germany has not been aggressive. She has defended herself against threats from outside, e.g. encirclement, or the Slav menace.

11. The word "aggression," implying moral condemnation, is not applicable. The Germans have merely asserted their rights as a superior people against inferior opponents. Though there is no criterion except Germany's own judgement of her rights, Europe's feeble first reactions amounted to an admission of them.

12. Germany resorted to war in order to save Europe from Jewish

and Bolshevik influence, and from the secular British policy of division; and to fulfil the task, which the present moment of history commands, of creating European unity.

APPENDIX II

SOME FACTORS OF ECONOMIC STRENGTH

(*Note:* The figures presented here are intended merely to demonstrate *trends and magnitudes* of some of the principal factors of economic strength, and are helpful for picturing the future only if the reader keeps in mind the fact that the course of the war, the conditions of the armistice and peace settlement, and post-war domestic policies—all unpredictable to-day—will have significant effects on trends which might have continued undisturbed had war not occurred.)

	POPULATION TRENDS ¹				
	Total population (millions)			Population of working age (millions)	
	1929	1939	1960	1929	1960
Great Britain	46.0	47.7	48.3	21.5	19.3
Germany	72.1	75.8	84.2	30.0	38.1

NATIONAL INCOME AND INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

	National Income ²		Ratio between British & German National Incomes ³	Real Income per Head of Working Population ⁴	
	Great Britain (£ million)	Germany (RM million)		Great Britain	Germany
			Great Britain-Germany		
1925	4,357	59,928	1.46 : 1	1,077	579
1929	4,384	75,949	1.15 : 1	1,133	660
1932	3,844	45,175	1.28 : 1	932	557
1937	5,200	70,972	1.10 : 1	1,275	828
1940	6,454	100,000 ⁵	0.80 : 1 ⁶	—	—

¹ Colin Clark, *The Economics of 1960* (Macmillan, 1942). The figures for 1939 are taken from the League of Nations *Statistical Yearbook, 1939-40* (Geneva, 1940). The figures for Great Britain include Northern Ireland. The figures for Germany are for the old Reich plus Austria.

² British estimates for 1925, 1929, 1932 from Colin Clark, *National Income and Outlay* (Macmillan, 1937); for 1937, *Economist*, April 15, 1939; for 1940, *Economist*, April 12, 1941; German estimates for 1925 from *Konjunkturstatistisches Handbuch*, 1933 (Berlin, 1933); for 1929, 1932, 1937 from *Statistisches Jahrbuch des Deutschen Reiches* (Berlin, 1937); for 1940 from the League of Nations *World Economic Survey, 1939-41* (Geneva, 1941).

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION ⁷						
(Index: 1929 = 100)						
					Great Britain	Germany
1925	..	..	..	..	89.8	85.3
1929	..	..	..	..	100.0	100.0
1932	..	..	..	..	83.5	53.3
1937	..	..	..	..	124.0	126.2 (1938)

INDUSTRIAL WAR POTENTIAL, 1939⁸

1. <i>Armaments industries:</i>		Great Britain	Germany
Metal, engineering, chemical, precision instruments			
Value of net output, £ million		900	1,750
2. <i>Steelmaking capacity</i> (million metric tons)		14	24

APPENDIX III

GERMAN AND DEMOCRATIC VIEWS OF THE BASIS OF SOCIETY

How far German thought is the cause of, and how far it is merely the excuse for, German practice is uncertain. It is certain, however, that for many generations there have been in Germany authors whose writings form as it were a *corpus* of the philosophy of militarism and expediency. There have been great Germans of another and more humane tradition, but the exponents of the doctrine of force have shouted louder and gained a more attentive hearing. One of the chief aims of educational policy should be to bring the Germans back within the orbit of the European tradition which they have repudiated. Some of the master ideas of the Nazis, such as that of the *Herrenvolk*, are flatly contradicted by that tradition, and with them there can be no compromise. In other respects, the harmful ideas of the Germans are

⁸ These figures are roughly calculated from the two preceding columns to facilitate comparison; they are based on the assumption that the purchasing power of £1 in 1925 and 1929 was equal to RM 20, in 1932 and 1937 to RM 15, and in 1940 to RM 12.50.

⁴ Calculated in "international units" (=purchasing power in terms of U.S. dollars 1925-9); from Colin Clark, *Conditions of Economic Progress* (Macmillan, 1940).

⁵ This figure is for the old Reich plus Austria and the Sudetenland. On the assumption that the increase in territory accounted for an increase in the German national income by 10-15 per cent, the national income of the old Reich in 1940 may be estimated to have been about RM 86,500-89,500 millions.

⁶ Taking the figures for the old Reich given in note 5 above, the ratio in 1940 was 0.90-0.93 : 1.

⁷ League of Nations *Statistical Yearbook*, 1932-33 (Geneva, 1933); 1937-38 (Geneva, 1938).

⁸ Royal Institute of International Affairs: *The Bulletin of International News*, December 13, 1941.

perversions of conceptions which, unperverted, are not necessarily hostile to our own. If it be our purpose to help to create in Germany a lasting disposition towards co-operation with other nations we cannot think in terms of merely imposing our own intellectual system. We must seek any common intellectual ground which will enable us to talk in a way that is not wholly foreign to the best thought in Germany. A preliminary condition of discovering whether there can be any such common ground is to see as clearly as possible the ways in which Germany and the democracies conceive the nature of society.

Roughly, the great division in this sphere is between the classical or rational and the historical or romantic conceptions. The former teaching, ultimately derived from the Stoic and Christian ideas of a natural law of eternal validity and of a common humanity, fastens upon those elements in human life—law, spirit, reason, and ethics—which enable man to transcend the limits of particular communities formed by nature and history. It believes in certain ends common to mankind that embody the purposes in the pursuit of which men find their true fulfilment. It holds that the laws of particular states should be an expression of the eternal moral law (otherwise called the natural law), which states exist to interpret and administer, and which no state can ever be justified in breaking. The formation of this conception was a great achievement, especially as it took place at a time when the dependence of man upon natural and historical circumstances was specially evident. It did not deny the real importance of these factors, which indeed was too obvious to be denied, but laid stress rather on those things by which men, living in widely different conditions and with widely different experience, are united, than upon those by which they are distinguished. In our own times, however, this theory has been widely criticized as abstracting the individual from the concrete factors which most strongly influence his life. For if in one sense it has a unifying effect by asserting the principle of common humanity, in another it can tend, in obedience to the law that affections are intense in proportion as they are intensive, to loosen the roots by which men have status in an actual community.

The historical or romantic view, on the other hand, stresses the importance of history and of natural circumstances (geography, climate, etc.) in the formation of society, and the fact that the present is the result of a long train of irrevocable events. It fastens upon those qualities in man which unite him to the particular national community in which he lives, his devotion to the soil, his loyalty to his race, and his patriotism. It regards the national state as a living being possessing all the attributes of human personality—continuity, a will and a character of its own. It is not, however, incompatible with the recognition of a wider obligation than that by which a man is bound to the historic community of which he is a member. It can indeed act as a valuable qualification to the classical view, by emphasizing the right of com-

munities to develop in their own way so long as they do not deprive other similar communities of the same right. But just as the classical theory, when exaggerated, becomes the enemy of local community strength rather than the friend of true inter-nationalism, so the historical view, when similarly exaggerated, can be made the excuse for ruthlessness, national arrogance, and the denial of universal standards. In this perverse form it is the enemy of religious, intellectual, and artistic freedom, and of all those pursuits which are not directly useful to those who control political power.

The Germans have always shown a particular bias in favour of the historical view, although it is important to notice that this view is in no way their exclusive property, and that its earliest and most distinguished exponents include Montesquieu, Burke, and Comte. The Nazis have distorted the idea by transforming what in its origins was a plea for recognition of the foundations of national communities and of their legitimate rights into what in effect is a claim that no national community save Germany has any rights. They have invented a racial theory which goes far beyond the limits of legitimate pride, by setting forth the claim of Aryan superiority and using it as a pretext for the oppression of other races. Further, they have imported into the historical view a positively alien element by assigning to the Nazi Party powers which are inconsistent with all respect for tradition, with the result that principles which were originally conservative in character have been made the instrument and the justification of revolution. It is now the Party, and not inherited tradition embodied in law, which determines what communities are entitled to exist and by what laws Germany herself should be governed. In their foreign propaganda they have given up traditionalism altogether, and now claim to be the leaders of a great revolution which ignores national boundaries and purports to wipe out all past injustices.

From our attempts to discover points of contact between the democratic and German conceptions of society, one conclusion seems clearly to emerge. The German view is the perversion of a doctrine which, in its original form, is not only necessary but capable of performing a valuable function. That doctrine has had a powerful influence upon western, and particularly upon British, thought, and democracies have suffered at times under the pressure of an exaggerated version of the classical or rational idea. It should therefore be our aim to induce the Germans to purge their doctrine of the perversions to which it is now subject, and to set it in its right perspective, by recognizing the existence of a supreme, everlasting, and universal law which rules out racial and national fanaticisms and demands a proper respect for the rights of all men and all communities. The Germans, who have a strong historical sense, must be induced to give that sense a more than private meaning, and to see that there is nothing necessarily incompatible be-

tween their own historical organic interpretation of community and the idea of a concourse of communities mutually helpful and each retaining its own distinctive excellence. On the other hand, something of this organic sense is necessary to the democracies, if they are to protect themselves against a risk of becoming totalitarian in their own way as collections of uprooted human atoms held together by external controls.

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