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FROM CHARLEMAGNE TO HITLER

A SHORT POLITICAL HISTORY OF GERMANY

by J. S. DAVIES

CASSELL
AND COMPANY LTD.
LONDON · TORONTO · MELBOURNE
SYDNEY

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARDS

First Published, 1948

Printed and bound in Great Britain by William Clowes and Sons, Limited,
London and Beccles.
F. 846

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CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF THE GERMAN NATION

IF WE NEED a date to mark the beginning of Germany as a nation, perhaps A.D. 843 will serve as well as any. In that year, by the so-called Treaty of Verdun, the great empire of Charlemagne was split by his grandsons into three parts. Charles, surnamed the Bald, took as his share the greater part of what is now France; Lewis, known henceforth in history as Lewis the German, acquired the lands east of the Rhine; while to Lothaire, along with the title of Emperor, were left the two capitals of Aachen (called by the French Aix-la-Chapelle) and Rome, as well as a long narrow belt of territory which, embracing these cities, stretched from the flat lands at the mouth of the Scheldt and the Rhine as far south as central Italy.

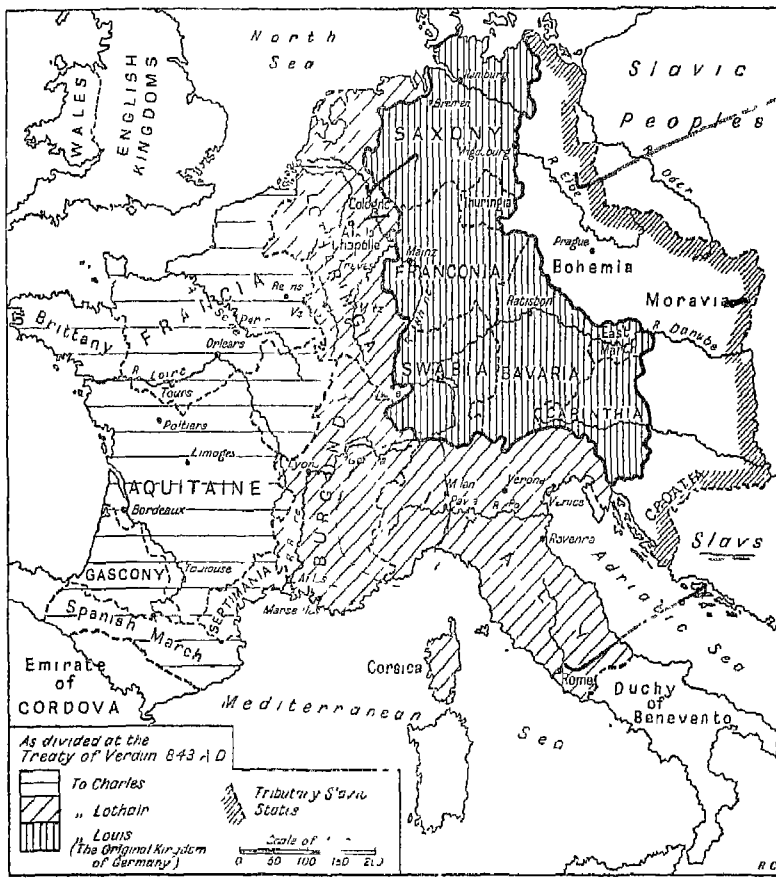
The French claim Charlemagne as one of themselves; the Germans regard him as their hero king. Whichever view is right, there is no doubt that his home, if not his birthplace, was somewhere in the region west of Cologne and that he was buried in the cathedral city of Aachen. Till the year 800 he was simply King of the Franks. The Franks were originally a German tribe, who in the 5th century were settled around the lower course of the Rhine and probably spoke a language closely resembling that in use among the Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain. When the armies of the Roman Empire were no longer able to hold back the barbarians—war-bands of the Franks under their leader Clovis (that is, Ludwig or Lewis), as he was called by the Romans, overran the province of Gaul and eventually, yielding to the superior civilisation of its

Romanised inhabitants, gave up their German speech and culture, discarded their pagan gods, and accepted the Latin Christianity of Western Europe. Only their name did they retain, and this they transferred to the people they had conquered under the form of *François* or *Français*, which we English translate as 'French'.

Meanwhile the Franks of the Rhineland remained for the most part German in speech and culture. On the whole, it is probable that Charlemagne was one of them, though by the close of the 8th century all the people of this region, at least, had been won over in one way or another to the forms of the Catholic Faith. Charlemagne himself was a stout champion of the Faith. His dominions stretched from just beyond the Pyrenees in the south-west, where he held back the forces of the Mohammedan Moors, to the river Elbe in the north-east. They included within their limits Franks of all kinds, Romanised warriors of the west and German Franks of the east, not to mention other German tribes, such as Saxons along the Elbe and Alemans and Bavarians further south. It was to the suppression of the paganism of these easternmost Germans, and especially of the Saxons, that Charlemagne devoted much of his energies.

So, too, in his subjugation of the Lombards, a German tribe which had become settled in north Italy, he united zeal for the Catholic Faith with the extension of his own power; for the Lombards, though Christians of sorts, had originally been regarded as heretics by the Pope and responded by constant assaults on the position of the Roman pontiff, which were continued for political reasons long after the Lombard rulers had abandoned the Arian heresy. Two successive Popes appealed to Charlemagne for aid, which was readily given. Thus in the year 800 a German king (so say the Germans), *Karl der Grosse*, who had already made himself the crowned king of Lombard Italy, became Roman Emperor, crowned and acknowledged as such by Pope Leo III in Rome and saluted as Caesar or *Kaiser* by Italians and Germans alike.

There were many notable consequences of the symbolic revival of the Roman Empire of the West, but as far as the German subjects of Charlemagne were concerned, the most obvious one was the fact that the new Roman Emperor succeeded where all



THE EMPIRE OF CHARLEMAGNE

the old ones had failed, for he brought or was in the process of bringing them within the sphere of Roman law, Roman religion, and Roman culture. To appreciate this observation it is necessary to look back to the early days of Rome's contact with the various tribes to whom the Romans of the first century of our era gave the generic name of 'Germani'. The historian Tacitus wrote a book about them, which he entitled *Germania*. It purports to describe their habits and customs and dwells on their warlike propensities and their barbarian vigour and simplicity; but it is less a historical treatise than a tract, designed apparently to castigate the degeneracy and lack of military virtues of the Italians of that day by comparing them with the 'noble Savage', who was held back in his thousands behind the barrier of the Rhine and the Danube by the mercenary armies of a Rome whose citizens had ceased to practise the art of war in their own persons.

This view of Germans as constituting a peculiar race, distinct and separate from all the other races of Europe, whether Celts, Latins, Slavs or whatnot, is one which has been sedulously cultivated by modern pan-Germans and has also been accepted by many people outside Germany on equally sentimental grounds. Science, it appears, lends no countenance to this view. According to anthropologists all these names are descriptive of language and culture, not of race. Practically all the peoples of Europe, they say, whatever their differences of speech, are just mixtures of the same three racial types that are found to be in varying proportions all over the continent and its adjacent islands. Hence the most potent influences in the formation of 'national' character are facts of geography and climatic surroundings, modified by special cultures and political conditions that have arisen in large measure out of this environment. 'There is no Irish race,' says Bernard Shaw; 'there is only an Irish climate.' Similarly it might be said that there is no German race, but there was once a forest-covered land of mountain and, in the north, of sandy plain, with mud-flats at the mouths of its parallel rivers, set between the North Sea, the Rhine, the Elbe, the upper Danube and the Alps.

It was a hard land in those days, and the tribes who lived there, speaking various forms of the same tongue, were equally hard and

tough. Turning their eyes westward, they sought to break out into richer lands beyond these limits. The organised and disciplined power of Rome held them back. Julius Caesar, busy with the task of bringing Gaul under Roman control, slaughtered them mercilessly, but made no attempt to tame them. His successor Augustus ventured to think that he might add Germany to Gaul as another province of his empire, and in A.D. 9 he sent his legions over the Rhine to carry out this purpose. But a certain Arminius, whom the German national sentiment of later days calls Hermann, headed an uprising of the tribes of the north-west, and a Roman army of some 10,000 men was wiped out in the forests of Westphalia.

Thus Augustus failed to civilise the region between the Rhine and the Elbe or to make the latter river the eastward boundary of the *Pax Romana*. The Emperors who came after him, pagan and Christian alike, contented themselves with enlisting companies of German mercenaries in their armies, but apart from occasional punitive expeditions they left the German tribes beyond the Rhine to follow their own devices. What the effect upon German lands would have been had the Augustan design been successfully carried out is an interesting, but hardly a fruitful, speculation. Presumably the Roman genius for organisation would have had the same unifying influence upon the tribes of that region as it exerted upon those of Gaul. The Germans, however, would have none of this. They combined to expel the Romans, but thereafter they reverted to their habitual disunity. Charlemagne, a German supreme war-lord and Roman Emperor combined in one person, appeared to succeed for a time where the true Cæsars had wholly failed. With the Church to aid him, he imposed his will upon the lesser German powers. Some he raised to the dignity of Dukes, or governors of provinces, others he made counts of borderlands, or Marks. He tried to enforce the rule of law, Roman law, and he issued decrees, which all his subjects, great and small, German, Gaul and Latin, were expected to obey. But he died in 814, and it soon became apparent that the unity which he had established was not organic. Gaul and German were different in something more than speech. Even the old tribal system of the Germans was

displaying itself once more in the guise of a developing feudal system, and dukes and counts were assuming the character of hereditary rulers of the regions over which they had been set. Nevertheless Charlemagne had done one thing for the Germans which had not been done before his time: he had suggested to them the ideal of unity under a single chieftain or king, who would stand above all lesser authority and be the overlord of all Germans. Some such sentiment must have been present to the minds of the German nobles, as we may now call them, who refused to accept the sovereignty of Charles the Bald or Lothaire, but followed Lewis, when at Verdun he made his compact with his brothers and so created the nucleus of a German nation.

CHAPTER II

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

THE FIRST REICH

THE TRIPARTITE ARRANGEMENT made at Verdun did not survive the death of the Emperor Lothaire in 855. A confused and confusing period of history followed, in which the 'middle' kingdom fell to pieces, as it was bound to do sooner or later. All kinds of shadowy figures pass across the stage. Italy was ruled or misruled by its many dukes, with Popes striving to extend, or sometimes simply to maintain, their hold on Rome and its environs. There were princes in the Rhône valley and the mountains of Switzerland who called themselves kings of Burgundy—the original Burgundians were another German tribe, who had settled in this region and for the most part became 'romanised' like the original Franks. For the rest, kings of France and kings of Germany, when they were not busy with attempts to repel incursions of Norsemen on one side or Slavs and Hungarians on the other, or to control their own restless nobles, sought to acquire possession of some part or other of Lotharingia—the land of Lothaire—Lothringen, as the Germans called it; Lorraine in French. Thus began the age-long struggle in the debatable frontier lands, which has continued to the present day. The Germans won the first round, and the frontier of Germany was pushed out west of the Rhine to include Alsace-Lorraine (*i.e.* the lesser Duchy of Lorraine of later times, not the much larger area which went by that name in the tenth century), Luxemburg and most of the Netherlands.

In due course the line of Charlemagne died out. The last German king of this line, like the first, was called Lewis. When he died, in 911, it became evident that the idea, or ideal, of nationhood had begun to take root among the Germans, for measures were thereafter taken to maintain the office of king. The 'kingdom' at this time was divided into five 'nations' or dukedoms, each ruled by its own duke. These were:

(1) the Franks or Franconians;
(2) the Suabians, (in modern Baden and Würtemberg);
(3) the Bavarians;
(4) the Saxons (to the west of the Elbe); and
(5) the Lorrainers (west of the Rhine, to its mouth).

It is interesting to notice that contemporary England had a similar arrangement, for Alfred the Great, besides being king of the West Saxons, was acknowledged as overlord king of the English by the ealdormen or earls of the East Anglians, the Mercians and the Northumbrians; and when his line failed for the moment in 1066, it was Harold Godwinson, earl of the West Saxons, who was chosen king of the English by the assembly of the nobles called the Witenagemot. So now, in 918, the choice of some such national body fell upon Henry, Duke of Saxony, to be king of all the Germans. This Henry I appears to have been a vigorous person, but his name and fame are entirely eclipsed by the achievements of his son, Otto I, known to history as Otto the Great.

The reign of Otto the Great (936–973) marks a stage in the development of Germany which can best be expressed in the statement that he founded the Holy Roman Empire, which modern Germans like to speak of as 'the First Reich'. In its original conception the Holy Roman Empire was no more than a revival of the Empire of Charlemagne, and when Otto arrived in Rome in the year 962, on the invitation of Pope John XII, to restore order in that most disorderly capital of Western Christendom, he, the king of the Eastern Franks, regarded himself as repeating the exploit of that other Frankish king who received the imperial crown from the hands of the Pope of his day. Like Charlemagne, before he arrived in Rome he had established his claim to sovereignty over the various principalities and powers of

Italy and had been crowned king at Pavia. And so when Pope John crowned him Emperor, February 2, 962, and the Roman people shouted their assent, the parallel seemed complete. Nevertheless there were differences. Charlemagne had always been something more than a German king, and his revival of the imperial name and dignity was in some ways a natural consequence of his possession of an 'empire' which was not unlike in extent the empire of the Roman Cæsars of earlier days. Otto, on the other hand, was merely the sovereign ruler of the five German 'nations'. His interests had been concentrated on the consolidation of his German kingdom and its defence against the wild Magyars of the Danube plains. Then in 951 a half-chivalrous response to an appeal from an oppressed princess took him across the Alps into the plains of Lombardy; from which he returned victorious over the oppressor, with an Italian wife and a vision, perhaps, of the greater things to come.

So began that connection between Germany and Italy which continued down the centuries and brought in its train little of good to either country. So too began that strange, almost mystical, union between the office of German feudal king and that of the secular head of Latin Christendom, who was known as the Emperor—never Emperor of Germany or even German Emperor, but at first simply Emperor and only in later days with the words 'Holy Roman' prefixed. The idea and the office exercised in the middle ages an extraordinary fascination upon the minds of Germans and non-Germans alike. It seemed to give the German nation a primacy over the growing nations of Europe, but beneath the glittering surface of things the actual process of development towards full nationhood in Germany was being checked and arrested by events and conditions which were largely the result of this apparent primacy of Germany and the high-sounding claims of its ruler. The history of medieval Germany is the history of these events and conditions and of the decline in the power of the German monarchy and nation at a time when her neighbour France, discarding all such claims to mystical pre-eminence, was slowly but surely achieving greater unity and strength.

At first all went well. Emperor Otto was a man who knew his

own mind. He discovered that Pope John, who had placed the imperial crown on his head, was plotting against him, and that the same Pope, like so many of his immediate predecessors, was a profligate and an improper person in every sense of the word. He therefore deposed him from his office and replaced him by a more obedient and reputable pontiff. John retaliated by stirring up the rabble of the city, who were persuaded by their leaders that they represented the ancient Republic of Rome. Otto made short work of this kind of thing. He suppressed the 'republic' and handed over the management of Roman affairs to his nominee, Pope Leo VIII, thereby establishing a precedent which his immediate successors respected and later ones learnt to regret.

Meanwhile, in Germany and on its borders the monarch's power increased. This is the period of the development of the 'marks'—those borderland territories of Schleswig, Brandenburg, and Austria, pushed out to resist the pressure of Norsemen, Slavs, and Magyars, and eventually to act as civilising agencies of Danes, Poles, Bohemians, and Hungarians. Indeed, the part played in German history by the three Ottos of the Saxon line, whose regular succession seems to indicate a revival of the hereditary principle at this time, is not unlike that of the Norman kings of England, who strove to break down the power of their great nobles and at the same time encouraged the establishment of 'marches', on the borders of Wales and Scotland, which should serve as outposts of Anglo-Norman influence and power in those parts. This process continued after the death of Otto III in 1002, when the Saxon line of Emperors came to an end, and it reached its climax in the reign of the Franconian Emperor Henry III (1039–56).

Under Henry the Black, as he was called, the power and prerogative of the Emperor reached its highest point in Germany and Italy alike. In his zeal for improving the morals of the clergy in his dominions, he vigorously asserted his right to depose and appoint Popes, and thus gave his support to the religious revival then spreading through western Europe. His early death opened the way for vast changes in the order of things, for his son, Henry IV, who succeeded him, was a child, and a long minority gave an

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

opportunity for all the forces of disunity to assert themselves. The chief agent in producing this state of things was the Papacy, which Henry III had done so much to encourage and support; and when the son grew to man's estate, he found that many of those privileges and rights which had been acknowledged, almost without question, when his father proclaimed them to Popes and nobles, were challenged and denied to himself. In particular, the regenerated Papacy contested the right of the Emperor to supremacy over itself and to a control of Church lands throughout his dominions. The young emperor vigorously rejected these pretensions, whose most uncompromising champion was the famous Pope Gregory VII. He it was whose action in forcing the penitent Henry to stand barefooted in the snow for three days and nights outside the castle of Canossa, in central Italy, before he was admitted to the papal presence, created a special figure of speech for any form of humiliating surrender.

Thus began the tremendous struggle of the Empire and the Papacy, which ended in the middle of the 13th century in a complete victory for the latter power. We need not wait over its details, for they are part of the general history of Europe, and echoes of the contest were heard in this country, where indirectly they stimulated a baronial revolt which gave us Magna Carta. The consequences to Germany were of a more disruptive character. Magna Carta became a rallying-cry to Englishmen, barons and commons alike; but no such 'national' or 'constitutional' advantages resulted in Germany from the 'baronial' revolts which a succession of able Popes encouraged and blessed. In a pause in the struggle at the end of the 12th century the splendid figure of the hero-Emperor Frederick Barbarossa seemed to recover some of the lost grandeur of the imperial office, as he certainly established himself in the imagination of Germans of a later age as the type of the national king; but with the succession of his son, Henry VI, and still more of his half Italian grandson, Frederick II, the fight was renewed with greater bitterness than ever. Pope Innocent III, who humbled John of England, used the same methods against Henry's brother Philip and raised up a rival emperor to oppose him in Germany.

The same tactics were employed by Innocent III's successors to ruin the strange genius Frederick, who was known to his contemporaries as *Stupor Mundi*, the wonder of the world. When he died in 1250 Germany was broken and divided to an almost irreparable degree. His son Conrad IV held nominal rule for four years, and thereafter there ensued what is known as the Great Interregnum—a period of nineteen years when Germany had no supreme ruler of its own. Two rival emperors, it is true, were elected by German nobles, but they were both foreigners; one, the English Richard, Earl of Cornwall, brother of the English King Henry III, with the aid of papal support and English money, tried for some time to establish his authority and then gave up the task in despair; the other, a Spaniard—Alfonso, King of Castile—accepted the title, but was discreet enough not to set foot in the distracted country. At last in 1273 the magnates who by this time claimed the right to settle such matters came together and chose as their liege lord a certain obscure German nobleman of secondary rank called Rudolf, Count of Hapsburg. Hapsburg lay in what is now the Canton of Aargau in Switzerland, then included within the confines of the Holy Roman Empire. Its counts were in no sense men of mark or importance, and the only conclusion that can be drawn from the surprising elevation of their house is that the German nobles considered that they were choosing an Emperor whose family possessions and territory were far too small to enable him to threaten their privileges or revive the pretensions and powers of his predecessors.

It is, perhaps, a matter for wonder that at this time the Empire did not disappear altogether from the politics of Germany and Europe. It was already but a shadow of what it had been a century before, and it is conceivable that had the imperial title and its wide pretensions been allowed to die out when the Interregnum came to an end, Germany would have followed the example of France and England and would have recovered its unity under the Hapsburgs or some other purely royal house. Such considerations, however, were not present to the medieval mind, which regarded an Emperor, whatever his real power might be, as an essential part of the divinely appointed order—the complement, in

fact, on the secular side of a Pope on the spiritual. So much was this the case that in the reign of Charles IV (1347–78), one of the most helpless and hopeless Emperors of this helpless and hopeless age for Germany, the constitution of the Empire—that is to say, of Germany as she then was and as she was to remain, in theory at least, for another three centuries—was defined. The five German nations or dukedoms had long since disappeared or been split up into smaller noble domains. Seven of these were now recognised by the Golden Bull of Charles IV, as holding priority over the rest. They were known as electorates, because in their holders, Electoral Princes or Electors, as they were called, was vested the right of choosing the Emperor when the office should fall vacant, or if it was deemed advisable to do so, before that contingency arose, in which case the Emperor-elect was known as the King of the Romans until the vacancy became actual and the papal approval had been signified. Three of the members of this Electoral College were to be 'spiritual' persons—namely the Archbishops of Mainz, Cologne and Trèves, who were virtually the temporal rulers of wide lands; the secular Electors were the Count Palatine of the Rhine, the Duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg and the King of Bohemia. The meeting-place of the Electors was fixed at Frankfort-on-the-Main, and when the 'College' was joined by the Chamber of Princes, which comprised representatives of the greater nobility (lay and clerical) other than the Electors, and by a Chamber of Cities as well, the Diet or *Reichstag* was complete. Under other conditions this Diet, in which we see the outlines of a representative body of the German nation, might have developed into something akin to the English parliament, but the same influences which had destroyed the effective power of the German monarchy also prevented the various classes or 'estates' from combining to form a real legislative element in the German state.

The action of the Electors in reviving the Holy Roman Empire in 1273 under the headship of Rudolf of Hapsburg had consequences of great moment for Germany and the Hapsburg family alike. The Hapsburgs were an acquisitive race. Rudolf reigned till 1292, and after an interval of six years, during which a member

of another minor house bore the imperial title, the choice of the Electors again fell on a Hapsburg, Albert I. After the death of this prince more than a century was to pass before the Hapsburgs resumed their interest in the office of Holy Roman Emperor as a means of helping themselves to fame and fortune. In the intervening years they had been extending their territorial possessions eastward into Austria, leaving the field almost free for members of the royal house of Bohemia to secure the imperial title, while the other noble houses consolidated their position and power within their own domains. Charles IV was one of these Bohemian emperors, and he used his high position to the full to serve the interests of his non-German kingdom. The last of this line of emperors was Sigismund, who added the kingdom of Hungary to that of Bohemia, and is perhaps best known as the perjured prince, who, presiding at the famous Council of Constance in 1415, had not the power, even if he had the will, to keep inviolate the safe-conduct granted to the Bohemian Reformer John Huss.

At the death of Sigismund in 1438 the Hapsburgs came into their own. The reign of Albert II lasted only two years, but that of Frederick III, which followed, dragged on for fifty-three; and during this dreary time the real interests of Germany were sacrificed to the insatiable needs and persistent aggrandisement of the nominally ruling family. Private wars between nobles flourished. Outside the towns the mass of the people were serfs, bound to the soil and completely at the mercy of their lords. Many of these lords—lesser nobles and knights—owned allegiance to no one but the Emperor, whose rights and privileges were often sold for hard cash to the highest bidder among the 'princes' or higher nobility, and so could not be exerted in the interests of the general order. Trade could only be carried on at all by leagues of cities, like the famous Hanseatic League, which maintained armed forecs under their own control to keep open the highways of commerce by land and by sea.

While all this confusion and disintegration were going on in Germany, the opposite process was taking place in other countries. Spain, France and England during the 15th century were in one way and another achieving a substantial measure of national

unity under a national hereditary monarchy. It is not surprising, therefore, that under the influence of the prevailing tendency the House of Hapsburg did at last make an effort in the same direction. This happened in the reign of Maximilian I, who succeeded his father Frederick in 1493, having been previously elected King of the Romans in his father's life-time. High-spirited, ambitious, and possessed of wide territories, which stretched right across Germany from the north-west to the south-east, Maximilian seemed as likely as any prince of his time to found a national dynasty. At a Diet held at Worms in 1495 he secured the consent of that body to the establishment of the Imperial Chamber, which was a High Court of Justice designed to settle disputes between nobles of various degrees and so prevent private war. Other schemes were put forward, some by the nobles themselves and some by the Emperor, which, if they had been put into effect and developed, might in time have resulted in Germany's becoming what we should call today a federal state under a national Hapsburg monarchy. But the Hapsburgs had other interests than that of German unity; in particular Maximilian schemed, under cover of his title of Holy Roman Emperor, to acquire fresh territory for his house in Italy, while his grandson, the famous Emperor Charles V, already before his accession ruler by inheritance of the Netherlands and of Spain and all its dependencies in Europe and the New World, gave his chief attention to the concerns of those countries.

It was just at this moment that an entirely new factor appeared in German affairs. This was the Reformation movement, initiated by Martin Luther. How political conditions in Germany were affected by that movement must be considered in more detail in the next chapter. Here it is only necessary to say that as a result of religious divisions the hopes of the establishment of a national monarchy were completely shattered. The Hapsburgs reverted to the original design of their house and built up a purely Austrian monarchy, while Germany as a nation ceased to exist. Only the shadow of a past greatness lingered on under the empty name of the Holy Roman Empire, to be jeered at by Voltaire as neither Holy nor Roman nor an Empire. Throughout practically the

whole of the 18th century the rulers of Austria retained the high-sounding title for themselves, until Napoleon, eager to stand before the eyes of the world as a new Charlemagne, forced Francis II to abandon it.

So at last, in 1806, the First Reich came to an unlamented end.

CHAPTER III

GERMANY AND THE REFORMATION

THE REFORMATION IN Germany began with Luther's dramatic protest against the sale of indulgences. This took place in 1517. Soon Luther had a following, which increased so rapidly among all sections of the German people that the Pope was forced to take notice of the movement and in 1520 issued a Bull condemning the bold monk and the various pamphlets which he had written and spread abroad among the people. Luther responded with a louder challenge: he publicly burnt the Bull. The Pope now took stronger action: he appealed to the Emperor, in the latter's dual capacity of secular head of Christian Europe and sovereign ruler of Germany, to silence Luther and put an end to the religious disorders which he was stirring up. The Emperor at this time was the twenty-year old Charles V, who in the previous year had succeeded his Hapsburg grandfather Maximilian. When the Pope's appeal reached him he was holding his first Diet at the same old Rhine-side city of Worms where his grandfather had met the Diet of 1495 in order to consider the troubles of those days. Most of those troubles were still unsettled, and it was to find some way of settling them and redressing grievances that Emperor and Diet were met together at the beginning of 1521.

Charles was anxious to keep on good terms with his new subjects, for he wanted to enlist their support in a war in which he was about to engage with the King of France, principally in the interest of his Spanish possessions. He also wished to have the Pope on his side in this same struggle with France, which was

to lead to the expulsion of the French from northern Italy as they had previously been expelled by Charles's Spanish grandfather, Ferdinand, from the south. So, when the Pope's request for action against Luther was presented to the Emperor, he was ready and willing to issue the necessary edict forthwith. Not so the Electors, whom he consulted before taking such a step. Some of them actually favoured the cause which Luther had championed—of opposition to papal claims to collect money in Germany and in the territory of German princes without the consent of the rulers. Some went even further, notably the all-important Elector of Saxony, whose subject Luther was. In any case, the Elector was determined that Luther should not be condemned without being heard in his own defence. So Luther came to Worms and stated his case before the Diet; and though he was condemned and the Emperor's edict went out against him, he had become a figure of national importance, and more and more Germans of every sort came over to his side.

Meanwhile the Emperor had gone off to his wars, and Germany saw him no more for nearly ten years. During this time the division of the country on the religious issue took shape. The Emperor's edict was not enforced against Luther; indeed, the Elector of Saxony, who had been left by Charles as head of a Council of Regency in his absence, actually protected the Reformer. Other princes followed suit; and even bishops and abbots in some cases secularised their lands and sought to make themselves purely lay rulers. There was naturally a strong reaction on the other side, but it is to be observed that the Emperor's own brother, Ferdinand, to whom with the title of Archduke of Austria he had handed over the German Hapsburg dominions, showed no particular care for the interests of Catholicism as such and even exercised a certain tolerance to those of his subjects who had accepted the new heresy. Ferdinand, in fact, was engaged on other pursuits, arising out of the fact that his wife was the sister of Lewis, King of Hungary and Bohemia, who in 1526 met his death at the hands of the Turks at the disastrous battle of Mohacs.

The Archduke, true to Hapsburg tradition, claimed the vacant thrones in the right of his wife and in the following year secured

them, thereby assuming the championship of Cross against Crescent in the Danube basin and rallying Catholic and Lutheran alike in defence of Vienna when the Ottoman hordes came to attack it in 1529. Ferdinand, indeed, had little cause to interfere with the aims of German princes, who, after putting down, with Luther's full approval, a desperate rising of their oppressed serfs (misled into thinking that social must inevitably follow religious revolution), were using the disorders of the times to establish yet more strongly their power within their hereditary territories. Nor was the Emperor Charles any more ready to obstruct these activities—for the time being, at least. For by this time, after conquering and capturing the French King Francis, he had quarrelled with the Pope and had sent against him an army composed of Catholic Spaniards and Lutheran Germans, which, under the command of a renegade Frenchman, captured Rome and delivered it up to the horrors of a week's sack. Thus Pope Clement VII became the prisoner of the man who was at one and the same time His Catholic Majesty of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor.

In 1529 Charles V made his peace with the Pope, and shortly after with the king of France as well. He even persuaded the Pope to come to Bologna and there crown him as Emperor—the last occasion on which a Holy Roman Emperor received the imperial crown from the hands of a Pope. He was now free to give some attention to German affairs, and indeed it was high time for him to do so from the point of view both of his own position and of the orthodox faith. Things had moved fast in Germany. After the death of Luther's protector, the cautious Elector Frederick of Saxony, in 1525, the Lutheran princes, encouraged by events in Italy, had come to the conclusion that the Emperor had changed his mind and was now more favourable to the new teachings. They therefore secured from a meeting of the Diet a decision that each ruling prince might enforce the edict against the Lutheran doctrines or not, as he thought fit, within his own lands; and they went on to interpret this decision in such a way that they gathered into their hands a large amount of church property through the dissolution of religious foundations.

The reaction produced by such a policy, which gathered strength

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE REIGN OF CHARLES V
(1519–1558)

as it became known that the Emperor had made up his quarrel with the Pope, resulted in a new meeting of the Diet and a reversal of the decision taken three years before. It was now decided in 1529, at this second Diet of Speyer, that the decrees against Luther and his doctrines were to be enforced. But the Lutherans were now far too strong to be intimidated by mere proclamations, and the minority group of princes, beaten in the Diet, forthwith issued a 'Protest' against the action of the majority, thereby giving the new name of 'Protestants' to the party of reform. But for the Turkish war and the attack on Vienna, civil war might easily have broken out at this point.

On the Emperor's long-deferred return to Germany in the following year he determined to put down the Protestants, if need be, by force. Another Diet was held, this time at Augsburg, which the Emperor attended in person. The majority of the members supported the Emperor in his attempts to persuade the Protestant princes to submit. The latter refused all appeals and proceeded to defiance by adopting as their own a statement of beliefs or 'Confession' drawn up by Luther and his friend Melancthon. The Confession of Augsburg was answered by Charles with a fresh edict of condemnation, which, he made it clear, he intended to enforce.

The Protestant princes now made a league for their mutual defence. Once more, however, the Emperor's attention was diverted to other pressing matters, and the struggle was again postponed. There were wars with the Turks by land and by sea; there were fresh wars with France in Italy and on the frontier of the Netherlands. And for all these enterprises Charles needed as much help as he could get from his German subjects, whatever their religious beliefs might be. Not until 1544 were his hands really free to deal with the League of Schmalkalde, as the associated Protestant princes called themselves. Then, having obtained from the French king a pledge of support in his efforts to suppress heresy, he proceeded in real earnest with his plan for 'restoring order' in Germany. By a judicious mixture of cunning and force he managed to overthrow the Schmalkaldic League. First, by intrigue, he split the forces of the League and won over a

considerable part to his own side. Then, strengthened still more by reinforcements of foreign troops, chiefly Spanish, from Italy and the Netherlands, he completely defeated his opponents in 1547 and captured their two principal leaders, the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse. He was not able to lay his hands upon Luther, the cause, as it seemed, of all the trouble; for the great Reformer, who had always used his influence to prevent civil war, had died in the early part of 1546, a few months before the fighting began.

Charles soon showed that in crushing the Schmalkaldic League he was not animated solely by a desire to re-establish the Catholic form of religion in Germany; indeed, the attitude he adopted at this time, in relation to the plans put forward by the representatives of Pope Paul III at the Church Council which had begun its sessions in the south-Tyrol city of Trent, indicated that he was far more concerned with securing a settlement of the religious question which would be acceptable to the great majority of Germans and thus enable him to impose his authority upon all classes of the community. In fact, at this stage in his career Charles had his attention fixed on a political rather than a religious objective. He had been successful in setting up a despotic government in Spain and his other wide dominions, and he now sought to do something of the same kind in Germany. Unfortunately for him, the instrument with which he intended to work towards this end was the Spanish soldiery that he had introduced into Germany to help him defeat the Schmalkaldic League. In 1548 he began operations by bringing before a Diet held at Augsburg a plan called the Interim, which was intended to be a kind of compromise between the extreme views of the two religious parties. He made it clear that he expected all his German subjects to accept the plan at least until the Council of Trent had completed its deliberations. He then went on to formulate a scheme of reorganisation of the government of the *Reich* which depressed the power of the princes and elevated and strengthened the central authority of the Emperor. The whole ambitious scheme broke in his hands. The Pope bitterly resented the attempt to sidetrack the Council of Trent and used all his considerable influence to stir

up trouble for the Emperor in Germany and outside it; the German princes, including several who had formerly fought on the side of the Emperor against the Schmalkaldic League, showed every intention of resisting what they regarded as the attempt of a foreign despot to despoil them of their privileges; and finally Henry II of France, alarmed at the prospect of being shut in on all sides by the Hapsburg power, decided to sink his dislike of Protestants and made an agreement with those who were prepared to oppose Hapsburg 'tyranny' in Germany, giving himself, as he did so, the somewhat quaint title of 'Defender of the Liberties of Germany'.

The crash came in 1552. In the spring of that year the Emperor was at Innsbrück. Suddenly the new leader of the Protestants, Maurice of Saxony, who had been allowed by Charles to dispossess his kinsman, the defeated Elector John Frederick, of his electoral dignity, as a reward for services rendered in the previous war, appeared in the neighbourhood of the Tyrolese capital. Apart from his new role of champion of German Protestantism, Maurice was upholding still more definitely the rights of the princes as other than merely subjects of the Emperor. To Charles, on the other hand, the defeated Schmalkaldic Leaguers were rebels against his authority, and he had kept in prison, in hard and humiliating conditions, the ex-Elector and the Landgrave of Hesse ever since their surrender. One of the avowed objects of the banded princes was the release of these men and their restoration to their territorial and political rights; and Maurice, though he had no intention of yielding up the rank of Elector to his kinsman, was determined to prevent the establishment of a Hapsburg monarchy in Germany, under which petty feudal sovereignties would be liquidated and princes reduced to the condition of peers of the realm in Tudor England.

The forces of Maurice were far superior to those at the disposal of the Emperor, who did not wait for a trial of strength but fled precipitately to the farthest eastward limits of his hereditary domain, leaving the negotiations for the settlement, which must now inevitably follow the wishes of the princes, to his brother Ferdinand, who had none of the despotic proclivities of Charles

and little interest in his schemes of European ascendancy. So Ferdinand came to terms with Maurice and his confederates on the basis of the release of the two imprisioned princes and freedom for the Lutherans in the exercise of their religion. Whether Charles ever intended to keep this Peace of Passau, when fortune might have restored to him the power of contesting it, is very doubtful. His subsequent conduct suggests that he did not. In any case, fortune never really gave him that power, and disaster dogged his footsteps for the remainder of his reign, which came to an end with his abdication in 1556. The Electors' choice, against his will, of his brother Ferdinand, rather than his son Philip, as the new Emperor, was a clear indication of their determination to banish Spanish ideas of central control from Germany and to maintain their independent status as rulers of their separate States.

One of the greatest disappointments and humiliations sustained by Charles in these closing years of his reign was the capture by the French of the great frontier fortress of Metz. It was also a disaster to Germany as a whole. Metz was situated in the Duchy of Lorraine, part of that debatable Middle Kingdom of Lotharingia which had been absorbed into Germany in the century that followed the death of Charlemagne. Now, in consequence of the alliance that was made between Henry II of France, the Defender of the Liberties of Germany, and the confederates of Maurice of Saxony, it was seized by the French, along with two other border fortresses, Toul and Verdun; and despite all the efforts of Charles to recover them, the three 'bastions' of Germany were retained in French hands, to be used at a later time for further extensions of French territory in the same direction. Henry II, in fact, initiated the policy, followed with much success by later rulers of France, of encouraging disunion among the Germans and their rulers in order to acquire possession of what came to be called the 'natural' frontier of the Rhine, and to dominate German affairs in their efforts to retain that frontier.

Meanwhile Charles, defeated abroad as well as in his German designs and foiled in his attempts to stir up fresh troubles for the confederate princes, was at last compelled to fall in with the wishes of his brother and assent to what was intended to be a final

and definite settlement of the religious question. This was the famous Peace of Augsburg, drawn up and agreed to at a Diet held at that city in 1555. By this instrument it was laid down that those princes who adhered to the Confession of Augsburg of 1530, that is to say, the Lutherans, were to have the right to decide that that particular form of religion, and no other, was to be the established one in their States, while those who held by the Old Faith were to have similar powers of deciding the religion of their subjects in a Catholic direction. There was to be no toleration for individuals as such and no recognition of any other form of Protestantism than that professed by the Lutherans. The settlement, in fact, was based upon the principle set out in the Latin tag *cuius regio, eius religio*, that is, 'every subject must accept the religion of his ruler'. This was the principle which guided the Tudors in England when they made their various religious settlements, and the French kings attempted to do the same thing in their country.

Here, then, we get the political effect of the Reformation in Germany. The sovereignty of the Emperor was virtually set aside, and henceforth the real sovereign of a German, as the king or queen of England was sovereign of an Englishman or the king of France of a Frenchman, was to be an elector or a duke or a margrave. In other words, the Reformation accentuated and even stereotyped, as it were, the divisions of Germany, and by so doing it weakened it in its relations with other countries and made it less able to withstand external attack.

CHAPTER IV

THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

FOR WELL OVER half a century after the Peace of Augsburg Germany was saved at least from the horrors of war within her own borders. This was the more remarkable because, outside Germany, this same period—the latter half of the sixteenth century—was one of almost incessant warfare in some part or other of western Europe, arising in no small measure from causes of a religious nature. The spread of Protestantism in other countries besides Germany, especially in the more extreme form in which it was defined by Calvin, called forth a natural reaction among Catholics to oppose and, if possible, arrest these tendencies.

This is what is known as the *Counter*-Reformation, which, fostered by the activities of such bodies as the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), won its first great success at the Council of Trent. As was noted in the previous chapter, this famous assembly of Catholic divines and dignitaries was constituted, largely at the instance of Charles V, to bring to an end the schism in the Church by a possible compromise between moderate Catholics and Lutherans and finished its much interrupted labours in 1563 by drawing up a most uncompromising statement of the orthodox Catholic position, in effect calling upon all Catholic powers to support with their authority its decrees. The spearhead of this militant Catholicism was Spain under its Hapsburg king, Philip II, who managed to combine, in a manner little pleasing to the Papacy, a devotion to

his Faith with the interests of the great Spanish empire. Thus, when the Wars of Religion began in France, Philip of Spain was quick to seize the opportunity of exploiting civil war in France to the advantage to his country. Later, when the attempt of the Spaniards to crush Protestantism in the Netherlands was meeting fierce resistance from the Dutch, men from Germany and England joined in the *mêlée*—partly no doubt, in many cases, because they were soldiers of fortune, but partly also to help beat back the flood of Spanish power which threatened to overflow into their own countries in the name of the Counter-Reformation. So the Dutch fought on to win their freedom; the Armada came up the Channel and was shattered by English gunnery and English weather; and Henry of Navarre became King of France and went to mass, the better to unite Frenchmen in the struggle against the might of Spain.

This was the time when the forces of the Counter-Reformation began to turn their attention seriously to Germany, where Protestantism, despite the terms of the Augsburg settlement, had continued to make progress. According to the Peace all secularisations of Church property which had taken place before 1552 were to be confirmed, and the Catholics interpreted this to mean that as from that date no further secularisations were to be valid, and that any bishop or abbot who went over to the Reformed Religion was to vacate his office and give up all the territorial and other rights attaching to the position. The Protestants refused to accept this interpretation, and in practice this Ecclesiastical Reservation, as it was called, was completely ignored: more of the princes turned over to Protestantism and appropriated or secularised Church lands, and more of the ruling bishops did the same thing. Even in Catholic States the attitude of the ruler was sometimes so indifferent that he tolerated the presence of Protestant preachers in his territory and allowed them to make their converts without molestation. This was true even of Austria and its dependencies, at least in the days of the Emperor Ferdinand I, who died in 1564, and of his son and successor Maximilian II, who was suspected of being secretly in favour of heresy.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that in western

Germany, at least, Calvinism was tending to displace Lutheranism as the more popular form of Protestantism. This was natural, perhaps, with France and the Netherlands so near. But it was a severe blow to the Lutheran cause when Calvinistic theology was accepted by no less a personage than the Elector Palatine, the most powerful and important prince between the Rhine and the Elbe. As no provision for equal treatment for Calvinists and Lutherans had been made in the Peace of Augsburg, there was now a division in the ranks of the Protestants, of which, when the time came, the Catholics took full advantage.

Meanwhile the tide was beginning to turn. The chief stronghold of Catholic belief was Bavaria. Here the Jesuits had established some of their famous schools under the protection of the Duke, who belonged to a branch of the same family (the Wittelsbach) as the Calvinistic Elector Palatine, and regarded with not a little envy the superior dignity of his heretical kinsman. From this vantage ground the Jesuits carried on their work of education and propaganda in the interest of the Old Faith, and with considerable success. Their first principal object was to regain control of the situation in the Hapsburg lands. Events played into their hands. Ferdinand I, as we have seen, followed a policy of *laisser-faire*, and so did his son Maximilian II, but the next generation of archdukes came under the influence of the Catholic reaction which was called forth by the aggressiveness of the various Protestant sects. The most forceful of these younger Hapsburgs was Ferdinand of Styria, the son of the Emperor Maximilian's youngest brother, Charles, who had been given the duchies of Styria and Carinthia as his portion by the Emperor Ferdinand, his father. This younger Ferdinand had been educated at the Jesuit University of Ingoldstadt, where he had as a fellow-student Maximilian, the son and heir of the Duke of Bavaria. These two young men were thus trained to the task, which they later eagerly assumed, of rooting out Protestantism, first in their hereditary dominions and afterwards, to the best of their abilities, in Germany at large.

Matters came to a head in the year 1618. There had been several crises before this date, but the memories of the Schmalkaldic War

and of the later one which was ended by the Peace of Augsburg, to say nothing of the knowledge of the religious wars then raging in other European countries, acted as a restraint and supported the efforts of emperors and princes who worked for a peaceful issue from these disputes. What happened in 1618 was not just an ordinary religious dispute like the rest, though it could hardly have assumed the importance that it did without the religious element in the situation. It will be remembered that in 1527 the crown of the ancient kingdom of Bohemia (along with that of Hungary) came into the possession of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, as he then was. Ferdinand sought to pass on these kingdoms to his descendants as part of the hereditary dominions of his house. All went well for a time, but in the days of the Emperor Rudolf II, the first of the 'reactionary' Catholic rulers of Austria and its dependencies, the Bohemian people, or at least the Bohemian nobles, of whom a considerable proportion were Protestants, with a tradition of Hussite resistance to orthodoxy begun in days long gone by, put forward a demand that the Bohemian crown should be recognised as elective. This demand was virtually admitted in 1611, when Rudolf, who tried to evade his promise to allow toleration for Protestantism in Bohemia, was deposed from his Bohemian kingship, and his brother Matthias was elected in his place and accepted the crown on these terms.

The same trouble recurred in a more acute form six years later. Matthias had succeeded Rudolf as Emperor as well as king of Bohemia, but he was old and childless, so it was agreed by a kind of family council of the Hapsburgs that Ferdinand of Styria should be recognised as the head of the family and put forward in all parts of what might be called the Austrian dominions as the heir of his cousin Matthias. When it came to the turn of Bohemia to recognise this transaction, a 'packed' assembly of notables—so it was claimed by the Bohemian Protestants—was induced to proclaim Ferdinand as future king. The suspicions of the Protestants were soon justified, for, even before Ferdinand had formally succeeded to the throne, he proceeded to introduce into Bohemia the same methods for the suppression of Protestantism which he had found so efficacious in his original duchy of Styria. An

armed revolt soon broke out, the signal for which was the dramatic event called the 'Defenestration'. This occurred in Prague in the month of May, 1618, when a group of Bohemian nobles made their way into the Hradschin, or Castle of Prague, seized two of the Austrian agents and hurled them out of the window of the chamber into the castle-ditch fifty feet below. This act of violence is generally regarded as marking the beginning of the Thirty Years War, that devastating struggle which prostrated Germany before her neighbours and enemies for generations.

Fighting of a somewhat desultory kind began at once in Bohemia and Austria, but the struggle did not assume the character of a general war between the partisans of the old and the new religions in Germany until Ferdinand had received a challenge which enabled him to appeal to his co-religionists throughout the Empire. This arose out of the death of the Emperor Matthias early in 1619. Ferdinand now assumed the title of King of Bohemia in succession to Matthias. A few months later the Bohemian nobles formally deposed Ferdinand and offered the crown to Frederick, the Elector Palatine. This step was taken not so much on account of the personal qualities of the prince himself as because he was the head of the Protestant Union of Germany and the son-in-law of the Protestant King James of England and Scotland, and it was expected that he would be able to bring into the field on the side of the Bohemians the forces of protestant Germany and secure aid, at least of a financial kind, from King James and his subjects. But the Protestant Union did not include the larger States of the north, like Saxony and Brandenburg, while even the lesser Lutheran ones of the south, which were members of the Union, were by no means enthusiastic supporters of Frederick—a fanatical Calvinist—in his schemes of aggrandisement. King James too gave him no encouragement, though many of the latter's Calvinistically-minded subjects, both English and Scots, eventually clamoured for help to be given to him, and not a few found their way into Germany to fight on his side and under the banner of other Protestant leaders. Nevertheless, dazzled by the prospect of leading a Protestant crusade to victory against the forces of the Counter-Reformation, Frederick accepted the offer of the

Bohemian patriots, left his native Heidelberg, and was crowned king in Prague.

He was not left long in the enjoyment of his new dignity. The Catholics too were organised in a union or league, the head of which was Maximilian of Bavaria. Ferdinand, who by this time had been elected Emperor, appealed forthwith to the Catholic League, and the army of that body—made up of many diverse elements by no means wholly German and led by a famous soldier, the Walloon (or Belgian, as he would be called today) Count Tilly, who, as befitted an alumnus of a Jesuit college, was a devout and devoted Catholic—marched into Bohemia, routed Frederick in a battle outside Prague and drove him back to Heidelberg. Meanwhile the Hapsburg king of Spain, ready and willing to lend a helping hand to his kinsman of Vienna as well as to the cause of the Church, ordered the commander of the Spanish forces in the Netherlands to march up the Rhine, albeit outside Spanish territory, and attack the city of Heidelberg. Once again Frederick had to flee before his enemies, this time to Calvinist Holland, which was carrying on a struggle of its own against the Spaniards, while for the time being, he sent his English wife with her children back to her father. But he never returned to either of his capitals, and he died in exile some twelve years later. It may be remarked, in passing, that one of these children, Prince Rupert, later on played a notable part in English affairs, both in our own Civil War and in colonial enterprise; while his sister Sophia, as the wife of the Elector of Hanover, became the mother of the future King George I of Great Britain and Ireland.

One of the chief causes of this utter defeat of the scheme of Frederick and of the hopes of the Bohemian nationalists was undoubtedly the unity of the Catholic powers as compared with the divisions in the ranks of the Protestants. The Union of Protestant Princes gave little or no support to the Elector Palatine when he evinced his desire to use them in his ambitious design to wear a kingly crown, while the leading Lutheran princes of the north condemned the whole project from the start. These divisions presented the Catholics with an opportunity of recovering some of the ground lost in the previous generations, of which they made

full use. Thus, when another ambitious potentate came forward in the person of King Christian IV of Denmark to champion the Protestant cause, the army of the Catholic League, still under Tilly, handled him severely; while Saxony and Brandenburg, as before, gave no aid, despite the fact that Christian was a Lutheran and in addition, in virtue of his position as Duke of Holstein, a prince of the empire. Meanwhile the Emperor Ferdinand had been putting down resistance to his authority and exterminating Protestantism in Bohemia and other parts of his hereditary dominions. To do this the more effectively he had raised a new army, distinct from that of the Catholic League and under a separate commander. This was the famous Wallenstein.

Wallenstein was in many ways the typical soldier of fortune in an age which produced a surfeit of his kind. Born of a noble Bohemian family and reared in a Protestant environment, he easily turned his coat when such behaviour helped him in his pursuit of a military career; but, unlike Tilly or even his master Ferdinand, he had no fanatical detestation of Protestants as such. After enforcing the submission of the Emperor's enemies in the east, Wallenstein marched his army westward to help the Catholic Leaguers in the struggle with the Danish king, which they seemed unable to finish off by themselves. One campaign sufficed for Wallenstein. He drove King Christian clean out of Germany, including his duchy of Holstein; and had he possessed a navy as well as an army, he would probably have driven him out of Denmark also. By the year 1629 the Emperor, thanks to his new army and its brilliant commander, was virtually master of the whole coastline of north Germany, and the King of Denmark had engaged to abstain from all further intervention in German affairs.

When things had reached this stage, a new situation began to develop in Germany, both from the domestic and the external point of view. The Emperor had now attained to a position somewhat similar to that of Charles V in the heyday of his power. Indeed, he was, if anything, stronger than Charles had been, for he had at his disposal an army entirely dependent upon his authority and apparently able and willing to carry out his orders in any part of Germany. This alarmed the Catholic princes. They

had taken up in arms in the cause of their religion and for no other reason, and they now saw an upstart adventurer, who was not even a reliable Catholic Leaguer, high in the confidence of the Emperor and preparing, so it was said, to make the Emperor absolute ruler of Germany with himself the power behind the throne. And though they succeeded, against the advice of Wallenstein, in inducing Ferdinand, by what is known as the Edict of Restitution, to declare that all lands and territories which had been secularised since 1552 were to be restored to the Catholic Church, they failed in their effort to get Wallenstein dismissed from his command of the imperial army. They thus looked for help in another direction outside Germany.

In France at this time all real power was in the hands of the famous Cardinal Richelieu. Richelieu had crushed the power of the French Protestants and had taken from them their political privileges, but he had no desire on that account to see a Hapsburg monarch do the same thing with German Protestants and build up on the other side of the Rhine a power like that which he was set on establishing for the monarchy in France. So when the princes of the German Catholic League sounded him about giving them his support in their endeavour to separate the Emperor from his too successful general, Richelieu agreed to do what he could. His agent in this intrigue was the 'mystery man', the Capuchin Friar, Father Joseph, who managed in a truly remarkable way to combine in his own person a deep devotion to the Catholic Faith with an equally intense devotion to the political causes which Richelieu cherished, even when such causes were injurious to the Catholic Church. An opportunity soon came for Richelieu to play a decisive part in the game. A meeting of the Electors was held in 1630 at the city of Ratisbon. Father Joseph arrived in the city and got into communication with the Electors. He then succeeded in persuading the Emperor that he could induce the Electors to make his son King of the Romans, that is to say, heir-apparent to the Empire, if Wallenstein were to be removed from his command. The intrigue succeeded and the man whom both Richelieu and the German princes feared as the instrument of a revival of Hapsburg power went into retirement, and his army, which was the basis of

the Emperor's new authority, was handed over to Tilly and the League.

Meanwhile another foreign ruler had begun to take an interest in German affairs. This was Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden. Like Richelieu, he was alarmed at the apparent extension of Hapsburg power and especially at Wallenstein's conquests of the shores of the Baltic Sea, which seemed to threaten his own designs in that region. Indeed, long before Father Joseph had gone to Ratisbon, the Swedish king had been encouraged by Richelieu to intervene in the German war on the side of the Protestants and had been promised French help in money, if not in troops, if he did so. Unlike Richelieu, however, Gustavus Adolphus, who was an ardent Lutheran, genuinely sympathised with the Protestant cause; and now, when that cause was at its lowest ebb, he decided to give it his support and at the same time clear the German Baltic coast of Hapsburg domination. The latter object was soon attained, for the king was a master of the art of war; but when he sought to move southward against the main forces of the Catholics, he found himself hampered by the opposition of the two great Lutheran States of Saxony and Brandenburg, which had refused from the beginning of the war to aid their co-religionists. Even when Tilly captured and sacked the neighbouring city of Magdeburg, to the accompaniment of every possible atrocity, neither Elector would make a move.

At last Gustavus, aided by an unprovoked attack which the Emperor foolishly ordered his troops to make upon Saxon territory, won over both the recalcitrant princes. The way was now clear for him to attack the main forces of the Catholics under Tilly. In a few months these forces were defeated and scattered and Tilly was dead. Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, the head of the Catholic League, was driven from his capital of Munich, and Vienna itself seemed likely to be the next objective. In this emergency the Emperor Ferdinand turned for help to Wallenstein, who came back to command not a Catholic army but an almost independent force, on his own terms. At Lützen, in Saxony, the two great generals met. Wallenstein lost the battle, but Gustavus lost his life. All this happened in the year 1632.

For two years more Wallenstein managed to maintain his independent command, planning and plotting to bring about a general peace in Germany on the basis of toleration for all creeds and a kind of federal union of the States. But the Catholic princes refused to obey his leadership, while the Emperor was led to believe that the man who had saved Vienna from the Swedish army had designs upon the crown of Bohemia. In 1634 he was assassinated by some Scottish and Irish mercenary soldiers serving in his army, who had been suborned for the purpose.

The war now began to assume a different character. Gustavus Adolphus, though a foreigner and moved, in part at least, by political ends, had not included among those ends the disruption of Germany. On the contrary, he appeared to be aiming at a union of all the German States on a Protestant basis, with himself as a sort of Protector of the whole, if not actually Emperor. His death was a disaster for Germany as well as for the Swedish army, for the men who now took charge of Swedish affairs were not concerned with the interests of Germany or even with those of the Protestant religion. Their sole object was to enforce a settlement which would give Sweden the territorial advantages she required in the Baltic lands. To achieve this end the Swedish armies marched backwards and forwards across Germany without the slightest regard for the welfare of the unfortunate German people whose habitations lay in their line of march. This, of course, was the order of proceedings throughout the whole of this destructive conflict. The mass of the German people had little or no part in the warlike operations except to suffer death, cruelties or bestialities at the hands of the professional mercenaries who took their orders from one or other of the various leaders of the two parties. As long as Gustavus lived he maintained a standard of discipline which prevented the Swedes from behaving as Tilly's troops did at Magdeburg, but after his death they were allowed by their generals to fall to the same level as the rest.

To make matters worse, a new foreign element was now introduced into the situation, for Richelieu judged that the time was ripe for France to take a direct share in the fighting and so gain

some solid advantage for herself out of the welter of confusion that had settled down on Germany. Thus, after some initial defeats on her north-east frontier at the hands of the forces of Hapsburg Spain in alliance with Hapsburg Austria, France, under her Catholic rulers, joined in the fray as the nominal ally of the Protestants, and French armies marched and counter-marched in Germany like the rest, laying waste what those who had gone before had deliberately or inadvertently spared.

This long drawn-out agony of Germany continued till 1648. By that time most of the original actors in the tragedy, including the Emperor Ferdinand II and Frederick of the Palatinate, were dead. Even Richelieu, whose determination to fight out the feud between Bourbon and Hapsburg on German soil long after the Germans themselves were ready to compose their quarrels, had passed from the scene; though, before he did so, he had the considerable satisfaction of knowing that French arms had secured a firm grip on the left bank of the Rhine by the conquest of the Hapsburg lands in what henceforth came to be known as Alsace rather than Elsass. Under Richelieu's successor, Cardinal Mazarin, the French won military successes, but no additional territory, and and at last became convinced that they had done enough to weaken Germany and humble Austria. Sweden too had laid firm hold of large slices of territory on the Baltic and North Sea coasts of Germany; while two of the bigger German States, Protestant Brandenburg in the north and Catholic Bavaria in the south, had improved their position considerably at the expense of their neighbours. Only Austria, now under the Emperor Ferdinand III—less able than his father, but equally devoted to the interests of his family and his religion and supported by his kinsman of Spain—wanted to continue the struggle and come out of it with something more than Bohemia won and Alsace lost. But France held Spain in check, and all the German States were exhausted and tired of Hapsburg ambition and domination. So at last the Peace of Westphalia, as it is called, was signed, and Germany was left to its own devices for some twenty years or so.

The effect of all this civil war and foreign intervention on Germany was necessarily very great. It is said that something

between one-third and one-half of the inhabitants perished during this disastrous time; whole regions were wasted and depopulated and many thriving towns ruined or destroyed. The economic and cultural condition of the country naturally suffered in consequence, and some authorities have taken the view that in this respect, at least, the Thirty Years War left its mark on Germany for the next two centuries. This would perhaps be true if one took into account the economic effects of the political consequences. Put quite briefly, the political settlement of Germany as laid down in the Treaty of Westphalia made an end for good and all of the system of precarious unity that had survived from the Middle Ages. Little of this unity had been left after the Reformation; this last of the so-called 'Wars of Religion' left none at all.

Henceforth Germany was nothing more than a mass of some three hundred or more independent States, big and little, most of whose rulers did exactly as they liked with their territories and their subjects, the majority of whom were serfs. All along the Rhine, which should have been a free highway of trade, lay the domains of these princelings, lay and clerical, who all took toll of the traffic and in that and other ways hampered and restricted the natural development of the country. As for religion, the original cause of the strife, the Catholics, had undoubtedly made considerable gains at the expense of the Protestants, especially in the south; but the military successes of the Swedes combined with the 'treason' of Wallenstein had stayed their advance northward, so that the net result in this respect was that, broadly speaking and with some notable exceptions, north Germany remained Protestant, while the south was recovered for Catholicism. Toleration in matters of faith for individuals made no progress, though Calvinist princes were now allowed the same right as Lutheran and Catholic to insist that all their subjects should profess the form of religion adopted by themselves. This was hardly a concession to the principle of 'freedom of thought'; rather a complete recognition of the supremacy of the *prince* in German life. There may also have been a subtle psychological effect of the war upon some Germans. One German State, at any rate, or rather its ruler, seems to have come to the conclusion that

it is a sin for a country to be weak and disunited. Therefore he set himself to consolidate his new and old territorial possessions and so laid the foundations of that military monarchy which became the nucleus of modern Germany.

But the rise of Prussia requires a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER V

THE RISE OF PRUSSIA

IT IS SOMETIMES said that Prussia is not really German. This is one of those half-truths that lead to wrong conclusions. Prussia, in the sense of the state which was ruled over by Frederick the Great in the 18th century, was almost wholly German, and its ruling family and nobility entirely so. This family of the Hohenzollerns, to whom Prussia owes so much of good and ill alike, resembles that of the Hapsburgs—of whom it eventually became the great rival—in the fact that it started from small beginnings in south-west Germany. It moved into prominence when the Emperor Sigismund made Frederick of Hohenzollern Margrave of Brandenburg in 1415, a position which carried with it the dignity and rights of an Elector. As we have seen, the Mark of Brandenburg was one of those bulwarks of Germanism pushed out from the main body to resist the pressure of non-German peoples on the frontier of the Holy Roman Empire. It was a flat, sandy plain, whose inhabitants were hardened by their constant struggles with the deficiencies of their soil as well as with their neighbours to the north and east. This, then, was the hard core of the Prussian kingdom that was to be; and Berlin, the seat of government of the Margrave, was in its early days a place of no particular size or importance.

But the Hohenzollerns, like the Hapsburgs, had strong acquisitive instincts. Some of them had secured minor principalities for themselves in western Germany, in the Rhineland; others elsewhere in the central region. A scion of one of these branches of the family, named Albert, was fortunate enough to be chosen as Grand Master of the Order of Teutonic Knights before the storm of the Reformation broke upon Germany. This militant Order,

founded during the Crusading age, had devoted its energies to bringing the blessings of Roman Christianity and German language and modes of life to the lands between the rivers Niemen and Vistula, where dwelt a people known as Prussians (because, apparently, they came next to the Russians), who were a kindred folk to the Lithuanians, according to some authorities. The efforts of the Order met with great success. The whole region became thoroughly 'teutonised', so far at least as the landowning and trading classes were concerned, the natives being exterminated or reduced to complete subjection. Towns like Königsberg (the capital) and Danzig, the great Hansa settlement at the mouth of the Vistula, were entirely German, while the 'Knights', who formed what might be called the nobility, and their followers supported themselves from the estates into which they divided the land. This was the original Prussia.

The Grand Master, Albert of Hohenzollern, availed himself of the opportunity afforded by the Reformation to change his status for the better. He became a Protestant, secured the dissolution of the Teutonic Order and assumed the title and style of Duke of Prussia, though with the recognition of the suzerainty or feudal supremacy of the King of Poland over his new duchy. This was in 1525. Nearly a century later this branch of the Hohenzollerns died out, and the Duchy of Prussia passed to the Elector John Sigismund of Brandenburg. Forty years more passed, and then in the days of Frederick William, the 'Great Elector', (1640–1688) the Polish king was compelled to abandon his rights of feudal sovereignty, and the ruler of Brandenburg became once and for all the wholly independent Duke of Prussia. Meanwhile the Hohenzollern lands in the Rhineland had come into the hands of the same Brandenburg branch of the family, while the Treaty of Westphalia had allowed the Elector Frederick William to take possession of the Baltic region of East Pomerania as well as certain secularised bishoprics west of the river Elbe. The Elector Frederick William became 'the Great' not merely because he made all these acquisitions, but still more because he set up in Berlin a strong central government which brought under one control the diverse parts of his widely spread dominions.

All this prepared the way for the next significant step, which was to give a name to a whole mass. This was the work of the Great Elector's son and successor, Frederick, who otherwise would have small claim upon the attention of posterity. A new great war was about to break out in 1700 between the Bourbon King Louis XIV of France and the Hapsburg Emperor Leopold. The Austrian ruler sought to secure as an ally in this struggle the now substantially strong military State of Brandenburg. The Elector Frederick was willing to agree to this suggestion, but only on certain terms. He had what might be called 'social aspirations' and wished, moreover, to give a more formal unity to his varied territorial possessions by constituting a kingdom out of the whole. Austria's need was the Hohenzollern opportunity, and after some preliminary haggling Leopold condescended to use his prerogative as Holy Roman Emperor to confer upon his hesitating ally the rank and dignity he desired. Thus, much to the disgust and annoyance of his fellow electors and other princely personages in Germany and elsewhere, Frederick of Brandenburg became Frederick I, King of Prussia. Then the 'Prussians' marched to battle on the side of the Grand Alliance, and under the Englishman, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough and the Savoyard, Prince Eugene, they did good service to the 'common cause' of resistance to French 'aggression' at Blenheim and on other famous battlefields of the War of the Spanish Succession.

For the next forty years there was no notable change in the position of Brandenburg-Prussia in relation to her neighbours. King Frederick assumed the character of a patron of the arts and sciences, and founded a University at Halle; while his brother-in-law, George of Hanover, found balm for his wounded feelings, caused by the advancement in status of the parvenu Hohenzollerns, in the possession of the far more ancient crowns of England and her sister monarchies of Scotland and Ireland. Then came the half-mad King Frederick William I, who carefully refrained from participating in a new war, that of the Polish Succession, which the rivalry of Bourbon and Hapsburg started in Europe, but spent his energies in furbishing up a military machine which he could not bear to use for fear of spoiling it. His

son had no such scruples. Frederick II, better known as Frederick the Great, succeeded his father in 1740. His youth was made miserable by the ill-treatment, both physical and mental, to which he was subjected by his drill-sergeant of a father, who on one occasion sentenced him to death and was only with the greatest difficulty prevailed upon by his relatives not to carry the sentence into effect. Whether his youthful experiences were in any way responsible for the behaviour displayed by Frederick the Great, either as a man or as a king, we need not stop to consider. It will be sufficient to say that in an age that offers many examples of bad faith and crooked dealings in international affairs, this greatest of the Hohenzollerns stands out as a master of the kind of statecraft which allows no moral scruples to hamper the attainment of its objective.

Frederick did not wait long after his accession to give the world a taste of his quality. A few months later the Emperor Charles VI died, leaving no son to succeed to all the scattered lands of the Austrian Hapsburgs. He did, indeed, leave a daughter, the young and beautiful Archduchess Maria Theresa; but succession in the female line was not generally accepted in Germany, and so the Emperor had been at great pains, all through his reign, to provide against the contingency of disputes breaking out over the succession to the Hapsburg territories if he should die without leaving a male heir. It was largely on this account that he arranged a marriage between Maria Theresa and Francis, Duke of Lorraine, whom at the same time he induced to exchange his ancestral domain for the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in Italy; by which transaction—a characteristic piece of 18th-century diplomacy, which made no attempt to consider the feelings of the inhabitants of the transferred territories—the way was cleared at last for the incorporation of Lorraine with France, while on the other side the French monarchy agreed to recognise the succession of the Archduchess. Similar methods were employed by Charles VI in his dealings with other powers, great and small, whose assent he wished to obtain for his plan for the peaceful succession of his daughter. The plan was embodied in a formal document, called a Pragmatic Sanction, which was accepted by the feudal assemblies of the

various parts of the Hapsburg dominions and then promulgated as a law binding upon them all. Thereafter it was the main purpose of the Emperor Charles to induce the Governments of other European countries to guarantee the Pragmatic Sanction. France, Spain, Prussia, England, and Holland agreed to do so. The two last upheld their promise; the others did not. Each of the three defaulters had designs upon some portion of Hapsburg territory. France coveted the southern Netherlands (the Belgium of today), which had been transferred from Spain to Austria at the close of the War of the Spanish Succession. Spain, or rather its queen, an Italian princess, wished to obtain possession of Austrian territory in northern Italy; while the Hohenzollerns, until King Frederick William of Prussia had abandoned the claim by accepting the Pragmatic Sanction, had always maintained that they were the rightful lords of certain lands in the Austrian province of Silesia, which lay to the south of Brandenburg on either side of the river Oder.

Frederick of Prussia was the first to make a move. On the death of the Emperor, ignoring his own father's promise, he marched into Silesia. The Austrian army, which had been sadly neglected by Charles VI, was unable to stop him, and in a short time he had overrun a large part of the province. By this time the other potential enemies of the Archduchess were beginning to give evidence of their intentions. The Elector of Bavaria, for example, with French support openly claimed the Archduchy of Austria itself and let it be known that he was a candidate for the imperial dignity. The late Emperor had always intended that, in default of a male heir, this should be secured for his son-in-law, but he had died before he had made the necessary arrangements with the Electors. The King of Prussia at the moment of his invasion of Silesia offered Maria Theresa his alliance against Bavaria and promised her husband his support in the College of Electors when the choice of a new emperor was made—all at the price of the surrender of Silesia. The Archduchess, or Queen of Hungary as she was now called, indignantly refused the blackmailing offer and turned to face her other enemies, while Frederick made a compact with them.

Thus began the War of the Austrian Succession, which lasted for nearly eight years. Once again French armies marched across Germany, with or without the compliance of the rulers of the various States, and once again a French king tried to decide for the Germans what was best for them. But Louis the Well-Beloved was a poor thing compared with Louis the Great, and none of his ministers was a Richelieu. This time, too, one of the pro-Hapsburg Electors was King of England and was able to exert an influence on some powerful elements of English opinion, so that an English army co-operated in driving the French across the Rhine and English money was provided to help Queen Maria Theresa to equip the forces that rallied to her from the loyal parts of her dominions. Moreover, Frederick of Prussia proved to be a very unreliable ally, and neither Bavaria nor France had much to thank him for. So in the end Maria Theresa saved the greater part of her inheritance inside Germany and elsewhere, and although Charles Albert of Bavaria had the empty satisfaction of wearing the crown of the Holy Roman Empire for three years, he not merely failed to get Vienna into his possession, but actually found himself a fugitive from his own capital of Munich, which was occupied by the Austrians. He was still an exile when he died early in 1745, and then at last the Queen of Hungary was able to call herself Empress, for a majority of the Electors decided to make her husband Emperor. Nevertheless she entirely failed in all her endeavours to recover Silesia, and when peace was restored to Germany and Europe in 1748, Frederick was allowed to remain in possession of the disputed province.

It may be observed that, lawless and aggressive as the action of the Prussian king appears to be from the standpoint of his own or any other day, there does not seem to have been much resentment on the part of the inhabitants of Silesia at their forced transfer of allegiance. On the contrary, large sections of the population welcomed the presence of the Prussian troops when they first appeared, and made no effort to aid the Austrians in expelling them. This somewhat surprising fact was doubtless due to the more liberal conditions which were allowed in matters of religion under the sceptical Frederick than were possible under the

devotedly Catholic regime of Maria Theresa. In fact, the Protestant population of Silesia gained by becoming 'Prussians' and had no wish to revert to their former status.

But the Empress took no heed of considerations such as these. To her the King of Prussia was just a robber who had stolen her property, and her ally England, who had deserted her cause at Aix-la-Chapelle, so that she was compelled to accept a shameful peace, had compounded a felony. Hence she was bent on recovering Silesia and encompassing the ruin of Frederick if the chance of doing so ever presented itself to her. She had not long to wait for her chance. If she was tired of the English alliance and disappointed in its results, so were the French of their association with Prussia; and the idea was gaining credence at the French court that some territorial adjustment in the Netherlands which would be favourable to France might be more easily achieved by an accommodation with Austria than by fighting her. Perhaps, too, there was a growing suspicion in the minds of Frenchmen that Hapsburg power had ceased to be a danger to Bourbon ambition, and that France for the future should regard Prussia rather than Austria as the enemy.

Maria Theresa and her minister Kaunitz succeeded in availing themselves of this change of outlook of the French Government and began to build up on the basis of this new Franco-Austrian entente an anti-Prussian coalition of European states. Meanwhile the King of Prussia had not been idle on his side. If Austria could make new alliances, so could he. He knew, of course, that it was not solely on the grounds of chivalry or a regard for the terms of the Pragmatic Sanction that England had taken the side of the young, beautiful, but apparently helpless Archduchess in 1740. England and France were colonial rivals, and if war broke out on the continent of Europe in which France became involved, there would be a strong inducement for England to take the other side. This had happened during the Austrian Succession War, and Frederick calculated that if he were attacked by a Franco-Austrian Alliance, it would be to England's interest to lend him aid. English statesmen thought the same thing, and when fighting broke out again between English and French in India and America,

the English Government decided to approach the King of Prussia. The result was the Convention of Westminster, agreed upon at the beginning of the year 1756, by which George of England and Hanover and Frederick of Prussia decided to change their respective partners and, if necessary, fight their former friends. It was, in truth, a very cynical age. The fighting foreshadowed began the same year, and before long Frederick found himself surrounded by enemies.

It is said that the modern German mind has a horror of a 'war on two fronts'; but in the Seven Years War, on which he was now launched, Frederick the Great had to fight on *four* fronts at the same time. That, perhaps, is one reason why is he called 'the Great'. In the west he held up and eventually repelled a French invasion of Germany, thereby becoming to the Germans of later generations a kind of national hero; though it is doubtful if he would have recognised this picture of himself, for there was nothing particularly 'national' about him, and he always spoke French in preference to German, which to him was a barbarous and uncouth tongue. On the east he was threatened by the Russians, in the north by the Swedes; while to the south the Austrians tried to combine with the Saxons to drive him out of Silesia. Maria Theresa had done her work well in planning his overthrow and the reduction of his territory to the limits of the original Brandenburg. But the execution of the plan was not so successful, and despite enormous losses and defeats, which on two separate occasions forced him to abandon his capital to the Russians and would have crushed a lesser man, the king in the end disappointed all the hopes of his enemies; and when the peace came to be made, he remained in possession of every part of his kingdom, including Silesia.

Undoubtedly Frederick's own genius was the principal factor in bringing about this surprising result, but there were two others, without which he could not have held out against the enormous forces that were arrayed to secure his overthrow. One of these was the support given him by the British Government. This was scanty enough at the opening of the struggle, but when the great Pitt took control of the British war effort, a new spirit entered

into the Anglo-Prussian alliance. Pitt declared that America would be won for Britain in Germany. He therefore supplied Frederick with the necessary subsidies to enable him to maintain his armies and keep the French land forces fully engaged on the continent. He even despatched a considerable expeditionary force to Germany, which helped at the battle of Minden in 1759 to complete the discomfiture of the French begun by Frederick himself in his resounding victory of Rossbach two years before. When Pitt fell from power in 1761, this support was withdrawn, and Frederick for a time seemed faced with inevitable disaster. Then something like a miracle happened. The Czarina Elizabeth, who had sent a Russian army to attack Frederick largely on account of a personal grudge which she bore him, died; and her successor Peter III, who admired the king as much as his aunt had hated him, called off the Russian forces and then proceeded to enter into a formal alliance with the recent enemy.

This move might have turned the tables completely and given Frederick an overwhelming victory, but a palace revolution at St. Petersburg led to the deposition of the Czar and the seizure of power in Russia by his wife, that remarkable woman who is known to history as Catherine the Great. Catherine had no particular interest in the victory of either Austria or Prussia; she therefore contented herself with observing a strict neutrality during the remainder of the struggle. That was enough to save Frederick from disaster. Without English subsidies, however, he was unable to continue the fight on the same scale as before. Fortunately for him, his enemies were in no better case. Sweden had already followed the example of Russia and withdrawn completely. France was tiring of a war in which the losses were heavy and the prospect of any gains whatsoever was fading away. Under these circumstances a treaty of peace was drawn up and signed at the beginning of the year 1763.

No further attempt was made from any quarter to detach Silesia from Prussia, and for the remaining twenty-three years of his reign Frederick the Great avoided all wars and devoted himself to the task of consolidating his kingdom and developing its resources. He was one of the most successful 'benevolent despots'

of his time. He allowed a large measure of freedom of thought, encouraged industry and agriculture, and sought, according to his lights, the material welfare of his subjects. The means towards this end were a well-trained and centrally controlled bureaucracy and an impartial administration of justice. But he showed no interest in representative institutions or popular self-government and did nothing to interfere with the social privileges of the land-owning aristocracy and their rights over their serfs.

In the 18th century the spirit of the age was entirely unfavourable to nationalist movements, and Frederick the Great was not peculiar in ignoring the wishes, expressed or unexpressed, of the inhabitants of territories which were transferred from one ruler to another. His attention was wholly set on Prussia, and if he cared nothing for his own Germany, there seems no particular reason why he should have respected the idea of a Polish *nation* when, in the latter part of his reign, the fate of Poland was under discussion between himself and his fellow despots of Austria and Russia. Poland had played a notable part in the history of eastern Europe in bygone days and had, indeed, sometimes oppressed her neighbours, as most countries have tried to do, when circumstances favoured such enterprises. Now she had fallen on evil days. Her system of government was bad; there were considerable non-Polish elements within her borders; and the disorders of her condition gave to her three powerful neighbours a colourable excuse for intervention in her affairs.

Part of the Polish kingdom—Polish in speech and custom, as it happened—lay just east of the main central block of Brandenburg-Pomerania, separating it from East Prussia: the region, it will be remembered, from which the name of the whole kingdom was originally derived. It was this intermediate province that King Frederick now determined to add to the rest of the territory over which he ruled and so make his kingdom continuous from the Elbe to the Niemen. If he acted alone, this would probably mean war with Austria and Russia; another war on two fronts, at least. He did not want war, and he had no desire to act alone if it was possible to induce Austria and Russia to act with him. This he succeeded in doing. The Czarina Catherine already had her eye on

those eastern provinces of Poland which were inhabited by non-Polish people, and she readily listened to Frederick's suggestion for a partition of the country which would give them each what they wanted.

To buy off any possible objection from Austria the latter was offered a share in the scheme. Maria Theresa had no liking for the business, but her son, the Emperor Joseph II, overbore her scruples and pegged out a claim to Galicia, to the north and east of the Carpathian mountains. Thus the stage was set for the first act in the tragedy of Poland. Appropriate pressure was applied to the weak Polish Government and the aristocratic assembly which was supposed to represent the Polish people, but really represented only its own noble order, and the plan of partition was duly approved and accepted in the name of Poland. This was in 1772. There was another partition in 1793, and though Frederick the Great had died in the interval, his policy was maintained, despite a valiant effort of resistance on this occasion on the part of the Poles; and the area of the kingdom was still futher reduced for the benefit of the three great states. Finally, in the year 1795, when a new star was about to rise in the political firmament and there were signs of the beginnings of a new order in Germany as elsewhere, Poland, as a political unit, was completely eliminated from the European state system by the deliberate action of Catherine of Russia. Inevitably, Prussia and Austria shared in the Third Partition that followed.

Thus Prussia, which had only reached the status of a kingdom at the beginning of the 18th century, had doubled its size and more than doubled its population by the end. It was now a Great Power, the equal of all such, and ready, it appeared, to meet and deal with the problems of the new age.

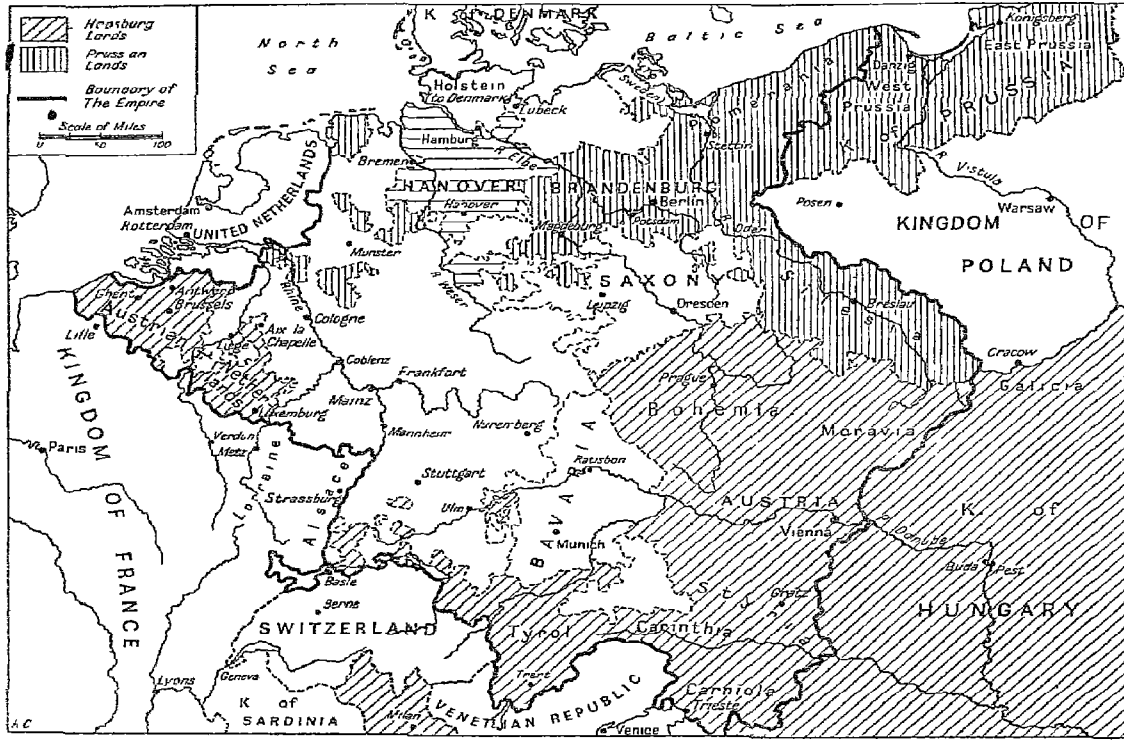
CHAPTER VI

NAPOLEON'S GERMANY

WITHIN THREE YEARS of the death of Frederick the Great there started one of those world-shaking events which change the course of history. This was the French Revolution, which was ushered in with the proclamation of the Rights of Man and ended amid assertions on all hands of the rights of nations. Germany was one of the first countries to feel the impact of these ideas. As we have seen, the conception of Germany as a nation had virtually died out since the Thirty Years War. The Holy Roman Empire was little more than a name, carrying with it no power and very little dignity. The Austrian 'Empire'—the actual name was not yet in use, but it emerged in the course of a few years—was a conglomerate mass of peoples, differing from one another in language and custom, in the main occupying the central part of the Danube basin, but spreading northward into Bohemia and southern Poland and south-westward into Italy, with the Belgian Netherlands serving as a kind of far-distant outpost on the shores of the North Sea. Apart from its political allegiance to the Hapsburgs it had no unity, except perhaps of an economic kind in rudimentary form in the Danubian area. A dominant German monarchy and aristocracy, with submissive lower orders to carry out their will in peace and war, controlled the whole from Vienna. One of its 18th-century rulers, it is true, the 'philosophic' Emperor Joseph II, tried to bring some administrative unity into the mass, but his efforts were defeated by the feudal instincts of his various aristocracies, and he had to abandon the scheme. Prussia was another great monarchy which had grown out of the decaying body of the German nation and under

Frederick the Great and his immediate forebears had sought to make itself a European state of first rank. The rest of Germany was split up into some three hundred minor states of all sizes, some of them so small as to consist of just a castle and a few square miles of 'territory' round it; others merely self-governing towns, or Free Cities, as they were called; yet all alike enjoying a condition of virtual independence of any superior authority. Among these minor principalities and lordships were the ecclesiastical States, some like the Archbishopric of Cologne, which spread out on both sides of the Rhine, covering a considerable area, others embracing no more than the lands of a single abbey, but all held by 'spiritual' persons who exercised powers of government similar to those which the Pope enjoyed in the Papal States of Italy down to the unification of that country seventy odd years ago. The effect of this multiplicity of sovereignties upon the economic life of Germany at this time was deadening. Each of these petty potentates took toll of the trade that passed across their frontiers, while in the Rhineland, where there were so many princelings and lordlings of one sort and another, the natural flow of traffic that the great river should have carried was obstructed by the demands of the men who ruled on one bank or the other. Such was the political framework of Germany at this time. Of national feeling there was none, and as the bulk of the population was burdened by the incidence of serfdom and other relics of medievalism, there was no sense of unity such as leads free men to co-operate consciously for some common end; and German thinkers and men of letters were ready to welcome deliverance from the thralldom of the past, from whatever quarter it might come.

It came from France. When the news of the fall of the Bastille and of other startling things done by the French people to signify that they had done with feudalism came across the frontier of the Holy Roman Empire, it made the ears of all who heard it to tingle. Particularly was this the case in the courts of the Rhineland princes. While they were wondering what could be done to prevent the infection from spreading into their own territories and among their own people, there began to arrive in their midst out of France a number of noble refugees—*émigrés*, as they were called—



THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE IN 1789

dissatisfied with the turn of events in their own country and anxious to convince the rulers of Germany that it was their interest no less than their duty to intervene to restore the old order in France before it was too late. In due course their number increased, and they began quite openly from their headquarters at Coblentz to make preparations for a return in arms to France, with the avowed intention of raising an insurrection against the constitutional regime which the French king, Louis XVI, had been forced to accept. The Prince-Archbishop of Trèves, in whose territory these assemblages and preparations were taking place, made no attempt to restrain them. The French Government protested and demanded that the Emperor, as overlord of the Rhineland princes, should exercise his authority to secure the disbandment of the *émigré* formations and an end of the threat that was being directed against the peace of France.

The Emperor Leopold was in a difficult position. On the one hand, as the brother of the French Queen Marie Antoinette, who with her husband King Louis was virtually a prisoner in the palace of the Tuileries in Paris, he was under strong pressure of family feeling to act in support of the *émigrés*. On the other hand he was temperamentally cautious and feared that intervention would precipitate a European war, which he wished to avoid until he was sure that Austria would receive the full support of all the important European monarchies and especially of England. But England, where the younger Pitt was Prime Minister, was as usual loath to involve herself in any Continental quarrel unless her own interests were directly affected; and at this time neither Pitt, the leader of the Tories, nor Fox, who headed the Whigs of the Opposition, would agree that British interests were in any danger from the Revolutionists who had secured the control of the French Government: indeed, Fox and his friends were openly sympathetic to the new order of affairs in France and regarded it as opening out an era of goodwill and understanding between two countries that had long been enemies.

So the Emperor temporised and hoped that something would turn up to relieve him of the necessity of making up his mind. Then on March 1, 1792, he died. His young son, soon to be elected

Emperor Francis II, was completely under the influence of the war party, and steps were taken to form an alliance with Prussia for common action against the Revolutionists, when the latter, somewhat unexpectedly, determined to forestall the impending attack and compelled the reluctant King Louis to declare war upon Austria. The French army received its orders to advance forthwith into the Austrian Netherlands; and thus began the Great War of the Revolution, which so far as Austria was concerned, lasted, with one short pause, till Napoleon, then master of revolutionary France but not yet Emperor, brought it to a victorious conclusion in 1801.

At the beginning, however, things did not go at all well for the revolutionary cause. The French soldiers, lacking officers (most of whom had joined the ranks of the *émigrés*) and discipline, behaved badly. The invaders of the Netherlands were easily driven out, while the Prussians pushed back the army which was guarding the eastern frontier of France and actually captured Verdun. Then the tide turned for a while. The Prussians were brought to a halt, evacuated Verdun and recrossed the Rhine for the winter; in the Netherlands the French general, Dumouriez, succeeded in winning a victory and, following it up, forced the Austrians to abandon the greater part of the country, including Antwerp and Brussels.

By this time a new and still more revolutionary government had been set up in France. The king had been dethroned and a Republic declared. Flushed by the unlooked for successes of their troops, the Republicans treated the Flemish coast as far as the mouth of the Scheldt as French territory, and when the Dutch Government protested, it was answered with a threat of war. The French revolutionary 'Convention' went even further and offered aid to any and every people who rose against their 'tyrants'—a clear invitation to the suppressed peoples of Germany to follow the example of France. All this commotion brought England into the centre of things. The region around the mouths of the Scheldt and the Rhine had always been a particularly tender spot for England; and she was bound, moreover, by treaty to uphold the integrity of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, as the country

now popularly known as Holland was then called. The English governing classes, too, had become seriously alarmed by the excesses and extravagant claims of the French revolutionaries, as well as by the spread of 'Jacobin' propaganda among their own 'lower orders'. Pitt still sought to avoid war, but when King Louis was guillotined, in January 1793, the French ambassador in London was given his passports, and the Republican Government responded with a declaration of war.

When Great Britain entered the war, it became general. All the lesser European states followed suit, and of the great ones only Russia remained outside the Coalition which 'Pitt's gold' had built up. Catherine the Great indeed, sympathised with the theory, though not with the practice, of revolution; but she wanted to have her hands free to deal with the revolutionary tendencies that were displaying themselves at this time in Poland. So monarchical Europe, headed by the German powers, with the British navy holding the seas in support, mustered all its forces for a combined assault upon France which was to restore the ancient institutions of that country and root out once and for all the subversive elements that were disturbing the established order of things throughout Europe.

At first it looked as if Revolutionary France was doomed. All her frontiers were violated; a strong counter-revolutionary movement developed in the west and another of less strength in the south; while the British blockaded her ports and actually secured possession of Toulon from the royalist 'fifth-columnists' who were in control of that region. Then the miracle happened. The enemy was beaten on all fronts. A young captain of artillery, named Napoleon Bonaparte, pointed out how the English could be got out of Toulon, and got out they were. But the ruthless men who had made the 'Republic one and indivisible', and who had in addition called out a new national spirit in France, such as had never been seen before in that or any other country, were not content merely to defeat and drive back the enemy from without and to crush the enemy from within. The revolutionary armies swept over Belgium and then over Holland, driving before them Austrians and British, who had tried to invade France from this

quarter. The Belgians welcomed them as deliverers from Austrian rule, and the Dutch submitted to superior force after the quasi-royal House of Orange had evacuated itself to England. Meanwhile in the centre zone the Prussians were forced to fall back to the Rhine, leaving all the German lands west of that river to the French Republic which they had sworn to destroy. The Republican generals issued proclamations of 'Liberty, Fraternity, Equality' to the people of these lands, though they were not always able, or perhaps even willing, to save them from the depredations of the ragged Republican soldiery.

Nevertheless the promise of liberty had come in definite form to Germany, the more so as the Prussians, disgusted with their Austrian allies and anxious to be in at the death of Poland, now at the beginning of the year 1795 decided to withdraw from the struggle against the forces of the Revolution. Their example was soon followed by the lesser members of the Coalition, such as Spain. Weakened though she was by these desertions, Austria still endeavoured to hold back the French in the south, where, after driving back the Piedmontese from the Riviera, they were now seeking to establish themselves on the Italian side of the Alps. This is the point where the young captain of artillery of Toulon fame takes the centre of the stage. High in favour at the moment in Government circles, Napoleon Bonaparte was given the command of the Army of Italy, with which he proceeded, in a succession of amazing victories, to compel the submission of the Piedmontese, drive the Austrians out of Italy, and finally impose peace terms which destroyed Austrian power and prestige in Italy and Germany alike.

The whole of Germany was now out of the war, Germany shorn of that west bank of the Rhine which had been so often and so long the object of French diplomatic and military endeavour. The Middle Kingdom, the kingdom of Lothaire, was at last virtually 'reunited' to France, and the dividing line between Germany and Gaul became once again that which Cæsar had fixed centuries before: such famous cities of medieval Germany as Cologne (Köln), Trèves (Trier) and Mayence (Mainz), once bulwarks of Roman power, but long since become centres of German life and

speech and corner stones of the old Germanic Empire that was masked under the title of Holy Roman, now passed into the hands of a new and upstart power, which had broken with the past but was as yet only beginning to reconstruct the brave new world of its dreams. Yet, even so, most of the inhabitants of these liberated territories would feel like the German-speaking Alsatians and Lorrainers that they had gained something in passing from subjection to their petty tyrants into the condition of citizens of the French Republic. Some few of them might have dreamed of a day when there would be a German citizenship as free as that of France, but there was small hope of anything like it in 1797.

When General Bonaparte laid down the terms of his Treaty of Campo Formio in the autumn of 1797, he exacted an undertaking from the Emperor Francis that a congress of the German states should be summoned to confirm this transfer of territory from the German *Reich* to the victorious French Republic. This was done, and the Hapsburg monarchy, as it had so often done before, made its bargain with the outsider at the expense of German national interests. The Congress met at Rastadt on the *right* bank of the Rhine, but it never finished its labours. While it was considering how the affairs of Germany were to be regulated under the new conditions, news reached the courts of European monarchs that General Bonaparte had met with disaster in Egypt, whither he had gone with the avowed intention of completing the destruction of Pitt's Coalition by forcing England, which still remained in arms, to come to terms under threat of an attack upon India directed by land from that quarter. The story was that General Bonaparte's convoying fleet had been destroyed off Alexandria by Nelson and that he and his army were cut off in Egypt, in hostile territory, unable to advance towards India or return to France.

The story turned out to be true; but true or not, it served to rouse the Austrians to make a fresh effort against the French. Prussia refused to take part in the new Coalition, but Catherine being now dead and the Polish question satisfactorily settled, the new Czar Paul I decided that Russia should play a major part in crushing republicanism in France or anywhere else. So an Austrian army appeared at Rastadt while the Congress was still in session,

the French envoys who were present to watch the interests of the Republic were murdered, and the Congress broke up in disorder. Meanwhile the Czar had been as good as his word. He sent an army to aid the Austrians in Italy and with it some of his best generals, including the famous Suvaroff; who drove the French out of that country and would doubtless have conducted a successful invasion of the south of France if Austrian jealousy of his victories had not held him back and led to his resignation from his command.

By this time the French had begun to rally their forces on other fronts. They had compelled the capitulation of a British army which had sought to aid the Austrians by landing in Holland; under the leadership of General Masséna they had also defeated another Russian army at Zürich in Switzerland; and all the time they were holding off the Austrians from any attempt to recover the western Rhineland.

Then came the event which was destined to change the political face of Germany more than anything which had happened since the Reformation. This was the return to France of General Bonaparte, the spoilt child of Fortune, on October 9, 1799. He had come without his army, escaping, by a seeming miracle, the various vessels of the British fleet which were lying in wait for him. Within a month he was master of France, bearing the title of First Consul of the Republic. In little more than a year Austria was ready to recognise him and to accept at his hands terms of peace, which so far as the Hapsburgs were concerned, were much the same as those of three years before. But this time the First Consul decided that the settlement of German affairs should not be left to a Congress of German delegates, but that he would arrange the whole matter himself. His interest and purpose were clear enough, and in following them he was merely carrying out, with greater thoroughness than had ever been the case before, the traditional policy that the rulers of France had always adopted in their dealings with Germany, whenever they had the means of giving effect to it. Henry II, Henry IV, Richelieu, Mazarin, and, above all, Louis XIV—every one of these men saw to it that they had the support of some of the German princes, who might

be relied upon to favour France in its perennial quarrel with the House of Hapsburg.

Napoleon, as we may now call him, for he began to act as a monarch long before he had assumed the title of emperor, had laid it down at the Treaty of Lunéville, which ended the war early in 1801, that compensation had to be found elsewhere for the secular princes who had been dispossessed of their territory on the west bank of the Rhine when that area had been annexed to France. No compensation, however, had been paid to the Rhenish archbishops and other ecclesiastical rulers when their westward lands were formed into French departments; and taking this as a precedent Napoleon now suggested to the Imperial Diet, which met at Ratisbon a little later in the year, that all the ecclesiastical states should be secularised throughout Germany and the dispossessed Rhineland princes compensated by being given new principalities in them. He made the further suggestion that the political independence of the Free Cities should be extinguished and that they should be integrated with the surrounding territory and be subject to its prince.

As soon as it became known what the First Consul intended, German potentates of all sorts sent their envoys to Paris to put before Napoleon their claims to consideration in the allocation of the disputed territory. Napoleon turned over the details of the business to his Foreign Minister, Talleyrand, whose ante-chamber consequently became thronged with anxious petitioners, and who is said to have made a small fortune out of the gifts bestowed on him by the princely suitors. At this point the First Consul cunningly invited the young and impressionable Czar Alexander I to act as mediator in the settlement, thereby giving an air of disinterestedness to the proceedings and at the same time removing any grounds of opposition on the part of the august ruler of Russia, who was related by ties of marriage to the very princes who were specially favoured by Napoleon. These were the Electors of Bavaria and Saxony, the Duke of Würtemberg and the Margrave of Baden, and they were all granted large accessions of territory. Prussia did well out of the transfer of lands, for though, despite her neutrality in the later stages of the revolutionary war,

she had lost her possessions to the west of the Rhine, she was due to receive far more than an equivalent according to the scheme agreed upon by the First Consul and the Czar. Austria, on the other hand, was to get nothing.

Early in 1803 this scheme of reorganisation of the Empire was laid before the Ratisbon Diet and accepted by that body. The general effect was to weaken still further the position of Austria in Germany and to strengthen that of Prussia. The latter had acquired a block of territory in Westphalia, that is to say, in the heart of Germany. This would enable her, if she remained on good terms with France, to dominate the northern half of the country. Furthermore, the disappearance of the ecclesiastical states, and with them forty-four of the fifty Free Cities, had altered the balance of power in the Diet, where henceforth the Protestants would be in a majority; and this too tended to increase the influence of Prussia as against Austria.

As for the three favoured States of Baden, Würtemberg and Bavaria, not only did they gain enormously at the expense of the Church and the Free Cities, but between them they took over the political control of all the petty nobles in their neighbourhood, thus still further extending their territorial importance and increasing their cohesion. This *bloc* of South German States now formed a kind of bastion of French power thrust into the heart of Germany. Their rulers realised that they owed their unexpected aggrandisement solely to Napoleon, and that as his allies they must be prepared at all times to support him in his policies and ambitions, for clearly, if he failed to maintain the dominant position he had won in European affairs, they could not hope to keep their own extensive acquisitions.

Their loyalty to their master was soon put to the test. The British Government, which had accepted the Peace of Amiens with Napoleon in 1802, while Pitt was out of office, became alarmed at the way the First Consul was interpreting his rights and powers under the treaty, as well as at what appeared to be his preparations for future military and naval enterprises. Without waiting, therefore, for support from any continental allies who might be persuaded to join them, the British determined to act at once and fore-

stall, as far as they could, Napoleon's schemes. So a new war began—the so called Napoleonic War—and Pitt was summoned back to office to direct the British side of it. He began at once to build up a new coalition of states which felt themselves threatened by the designs of Napoleon.

Already humiliated and angered at the recent settlement of German affairs, the Hapsburg monarchy saw the First Consul in the spring of 1804 proclaim himself Emperor, an act in itself a kind of challenge to the ancient dignity which Austria had so long enjoyed, and which called forth by way of reply the proclamation of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis II as Francis I, Hereditary Emperor of Austria, to give notice, as it were, that, whether the old medieval Empire gave way or not before the pretensions of the new Charlemagne, Austria at least under its Hapsburg rulers should remain a European power equal in rank to the greatest. A year later Napoleon, still regarding himself as the true successor of Charlemagne, was proclaimed King of Italy and was crowned in due form with the iron crown of the old Lombard kings. This ended the hesitation of Austria. She still possessed territory in Italy—the lands of the ancient Republic of Venice—made over to her by Napoleon himself in 1797 and retained her by, with her conqueror's consent, under the Treaty of Lunéville; and she saw in this new Napoleonic creation a dire threat to her hold on this precious domain. So Austria yielded to Pitt's persuasions. The Czar, who had many grounds for hostile intent against the French 'usurper', had been won over a little earlier. Strong efforts were made to induce Prussia to join this Third Coalition, but King Frederick William, possessed of that kind of gratitude which is said to be a lively sense of favours to come, refused.

At the first blast of war Napoleon sent an army across the Rhine to occupy King George of England's German Electorate of Hanover. The Prussian king's advisers saw possibilities here. If Prussia maintained a careful neutrality, she might, by a process of bargaining begun at the appropriate moment, gain possession of Hanover and so extend herself still more widely over north-western Germany. It was an idea worthy of Frederick the Great, but it needed a Frederick the Great to put it into effect; and there

was only Frederick William III, with an all-too-clever minister named Haugwitz. Napoleon played with these men and let them believe that if they kept quiet, they would get Hanover. So Prussia held off from Austria and Russia until it was too late. Meanwhile Napoleon acted with his accustomed speed and energy. A big army was moved from the Channel coast of France, where it had been threatening England with invasion, and passing over the Rhine across the territory of the South German allies, it caught and surrounded the Austrian army which was guarding the road to Vienna at Ulm on the Danube and compelled it to surrender on October 20, 1805, the day before Nelson destroyed the French and Spanish fleets at Cape Trafalgar.

Napoleon now continued his march to Vienna, which he occupied on November 13 after the Austrian emperor had left it to join the Czar in Bohemia, where the bulk of the remaining Austrian forces had linked up with the Russians. Three weeks later, on December 2 Napoleon won his crushing victory over the allies at Austerlitz. The Emperor Francis now submitted to the conqueror, and the Russians marched homewards. Napoleon's terms for Austria were severe. She was deprived of all the Venetian lands which she had been granted at Lunéville and thus lost all contact with Italy. Further, the Tyrol, most loyal part of the whole Hapsburg inheritance, was handed over to Bavaria, while what was still left of the original Hapsburg domain in south-west Germany was divided between Baden and Würtemberg.

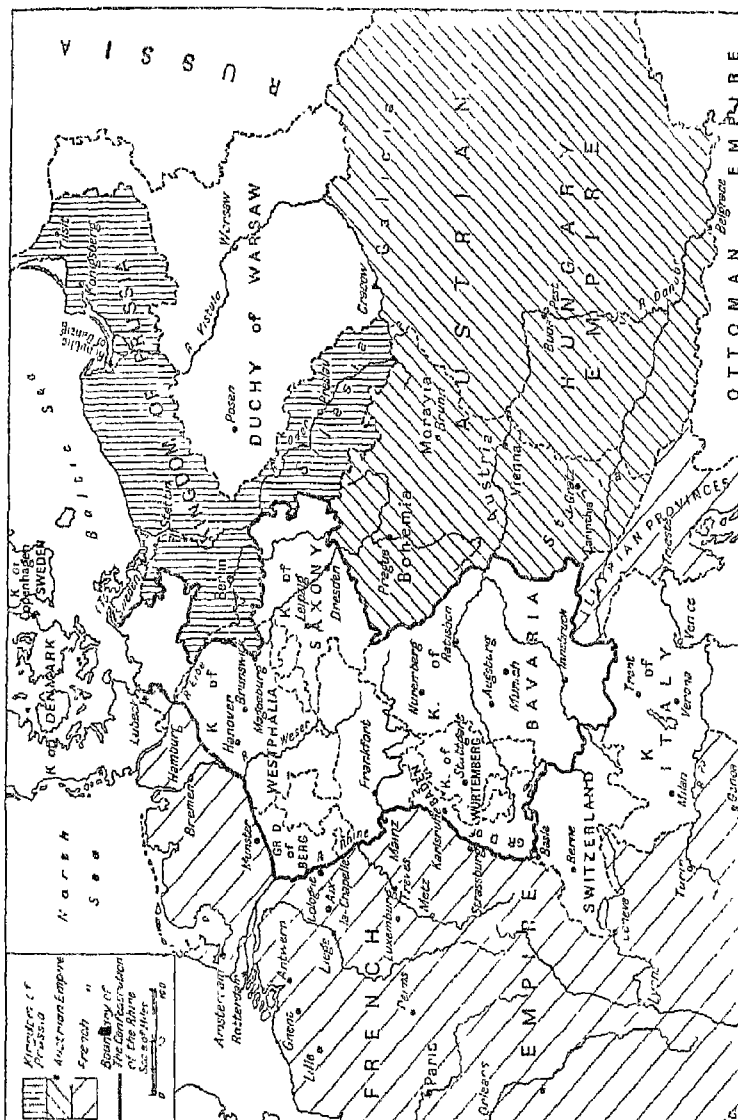
So ended Austria's attempt to recover, with Russian and English aid, her dominant position in Germany. The result was the complete and final extinction of the Holy Roman Empire and the establishment of an entirely new organisation of the German States under French hegemony. The Confederation of the Rhine, as it was called, came into formal existence in July 1806, but the plan of it had been in Napoleon's mind for some time before. It was intended to bring together under French control, but enjoying a semblance of independence, all the Rhineland States on the east side of the river. Such an arrangement would put the great inland waterway at the disposal of French interests; and with Holland at the mouth of the river, formed into a kingdom under

Napoleon's brother Louis, the whole political and economic life of this region would be dominated by France.

Bavaria and Würtemberg now became kingdoms and Baden was raised to the dignity of a Grand Duchy, while all three States received further extensions of territory in a final annexation or mediatisation, as it was called, of the lands of the independent lords, or Free Imperial Knights, of the now virtually defunct Empire. Together with nine lesser States they made up the original Confederation; other States came in later. The Confederation had its capital at Frankfort and was allowed to have a Diet to manage its affairs, subject to the approval of Napoleon, who was its Protector. Austria took the hint indicated by this plan, and on August 6 of the same year 1806 the Emperor Francis II abdicated. There was no election of a successor, and so the Holy Roman Empire simply ceased to be.

It was now Prussia's turn. King Frederick William had shown extraordinary vacillation of purpose ever since Napoleon entered Germany in his campaign against Austria. At one point, after the capitulation of Ulm, it seemed as if he were about to join the Coalition, and he even went so far as to make a compact with the Czar. Then, after Austerlitz, Haugwitz was sent to Vienna and came back with a treaty which Frederick William, despite the entreaties of the queen and the patriot party, ratified, although the Prussian Government was negotiating at that very time with England for a subsidy to enable it to fight the French. By the terms of this agreement Prussia was to give up to Napoleon her remaining Rhineland province—on the east bank—and cede another district, in the neighbourhood of Bavaria, to that State; in return, she was to receive King George III's Hanover.

There were delays about the transfer of Hanover, and in the meantime, Prussia saw the establishment of the new confederation, in which she was to have no part or lot, and about which she had not even been consulted. She felt that she had been tricked, and her sense of humiliation was complete when it became known in Berlin that Napoleon was now in negotiation with Fox, who since the death of Pitt had become the English Foreign Minister, and had offered as the price of peace the return of Hanover to King



GERMANY UNDER NAPOLEON

George III. At last Frederick William was won over to the patriot side, and Prussia declared war on Napoleon. She was quickly overwhelmed, first at Jena on October 14, 1806, and finally in the summer of the following year at Friedland in East Prussia, whither the king with the remnant of his army had retreated, leaving his capital in the hands of the enemy. The Czar had come to the aid of Frederick William and suffered defeat with him at Friedland. There followed the Peace of Tilsit between Napoleon and Alexander, and the Prussian king had to accept the settlement of German affairs drawn up by the two emperors.

This settlement was even harder for Prussia than the one which Austria had been forced to accept after Austerlitz. Her western boundary was fixed at the Elbe, and she lost all the Westphalian territory which she had gained at the time of the secularisations six years before as well as her ancient Rhenish lands, which Haugwitz had already bartered away. In the east she was deprived of her gains from the second and third Partitions of Poland, which were joined on to the new Grand Duchy of Warsaw that Napoleon was now forming, though she was allowed to retain the territory (excluding the Free State of Danzig) which linked up East Prussia with the rest of the kingdom. Thus reduced to about half her previous size, Prussia was called upon to pay a huge indemnity to France and to hand over a number of fortresses to be occupied by French troops. Her own army was to be limited to 40,000 men, while her seaports and all her trade relations were to be under French control to assist Napoleon in his great scheme for the destruction of English commerce.

The territory yielded up by Prussia in the west was added to the States of Hesse-Cassel and Brunswick, with a part of Hanover thrown in, to form a new kingdom of Westphalia, which was given to Napoleon's brother Jerome. This, of course, became a member of the Confederation of the Rhine. The old Electorate of Saxony, which henceforth till his downfall was to be Napoleon's most faithful vassal, was made into a kingdom and likewise brought into the Confederation, as were certain minor neighbouring States. To complete the 'encirclement' of Prussia and at the same time to encourage the loyalty of the King of Saxony, the latter was given

the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, much to the disappointment of the Poles, who had hoped for the resurrection of their ancient kingdom under French auspices.

Napoleon's Germany thus consisted of three parts—Austria, Prussia, and the Rhine Confederation. His primary purpose in disposing of matters in this way was undoubtedly to prevent the establishment of a united Germany under Hapsburg, Hohenzollern or any other leadership. For this reason, although the foreign policy of the first two parts was dictated by Napoleon, he made no attempt to interfere with their purely domestic concerns. With the Confederation, however, things were very different. It is true that the big States, like Bavaria and Saxony, were left with a considerable degree of autonomy, but in most of the others, and especially in those which, like Westphalia, were artificial creations, there was no attempt to disguise the fact that their affairs were to be managed as far as possible on French lines. Thus, for example, serfdom, which had already been abolished on the west bank of the Rhine, now disappeared on the eastern side as well. French methods of administration and above all French law—the Code Napoleon, which presumed the equality of all citizens—were introduced into these French-controlled regions. Even in Bavaria and the more independent members of the Confederation liberal changes of a similar kind were brought about to the obvious advantage of the mass of the people.

There were certain consequences, however, of these changes which were hardly foreseen at the time, but which eventually worked in a direction counter to French interests. The Confederation was by no means a unified state and still less a uniform one, but it did at least show the inhabitants of the area, as a whole, what solid benefits they had gained from the abolition of the old order and the substitution of a scheme of things which tended to increase personal liberty and to remove obstacles to inter-State trade. Thus the value of union was emphasised, and, as time wore on and the burden of the war exactions levied by the paramount authority of the French Emperor increased, the idea of a union free from French control began to take root in the minds of not a few people, however much the rulers of the States rejected it.

Such an idea, however, was much more carefully cultivated in Prussia during the years that followed its defeat. Napoleon had insisted, when he settled his score with Frederick William, that the leader of the patriotic party, Prince von Hardenberg, should be dismissed from his post as Prussian Foreign Minister, but he offered no objection when Baron von Stein became Minister of Home Affairs. Stein was not merely a Prussian patriot but something far more significant, a German patriot with a vision of a reunited German nation, liberalised and free alike from domestic abuses and foreign control. Learning from the enemy, he set himself to reform the whole internal organisation of Prussia. Till the Prussian peasant was a free man, so he argued, he would never be willing to give his best to the service of his country. Equally, townsmen and traders must be relieved of the burdens which feudal privilege laid upon them. Therefore in Prussia serfdom must be abolished, and steps taken to reform municipal government.

Had he remained in charge of Prussian affairs, Stein would probably have attempted to persuade the king to set up some form of representative parliament, and it is not unlikely that he would have succeeded, for at this time Frederick William was sympathetic to reform. But before any progress could be made in this direction Napoleon discovered from an intercepted letter that Stein was secretly working for an alliance with Austria, which was to bring about the expulsion of the French from Germany, and the Prussian statesman had to fly for his life. He eventually found refuge in Russia, where he acquired a great influence over the Czar Alexander, whom he persuaded to break with Napoleon and employ all his forces in the latter's overthrow.

Meanwhile the War Minister, Scharnhorst, had reformed the Prussian army. Here again Prussia (and eventually united Germany too) owes much to French example and inspiration; for the new army which Scharnhorst organised was not a professional one, like that of Frederick the Great and the armies of all European states in the 18th century, but was based upon conscription or, as we should call it today, national service. It was with an army recruited by such means that France had won those astounding

victories that had humbled the monarchies of Austria and Prussia. Under the influence of these experiences and moved too by the spirit of the times, Frederick William accepted the idea of a national army built up on those lines.

It is hardly likely, however, that Napoleon would have abstained from interference with the plan if it had been put forward baldly for what it really was, that is, a means of strengthening Prussia's military power and kindling national feeling among the people of Prussia. But Napoleon, all unwittingly, had opened the way for Scharnhorst to introduce his plan in an unobtrusive and at the same time effective fashion. Napoleon had laid it down, as we have seen, that the Prussian army must be limited to a total of 40,000 men. Scharnhorst accepted the limitation, but arranged that these 40,000 should not always be the same men, but that they should be enlisted for a short period of service and then discharged, and that their places should then be taken by fresh levies. In this way, in due course, the whole able-bodied male population of Prussia would be given a certain amount of military training, so that when a national emergency arose and a *levée-en-masse* was proclaimed, Prussia would have a large disciplined force, and not a mob, to rely on. Here we see the germ of that military organisation which grew up in the second half of the 19th century and was extended to the whole of Germany in the days of Bismarck.

In 1809 many Prussians believed that the time of national emergency had arrived and secret societies like the famous *Tugendbund* were spreading anti-French feeling among the younger generation. In that year Austria, which had also been endeavouring to set its house in order, made a valiant effort to shake off French control and recover her hegemony in central Europe. She appealed to Prussia for assistance, but the directors of Prussian policy were cautious; they did not think that the new army organisation had had time to establish itself or that they could dispose of forces strong enough to overthrow the French garrisons which occupied their fortresses. Apart, therefore, from one unauthorised effort by a group of patriots, which was quickly crushed, Prussia took no part in the events of 1809. Austria was again defeated and humbled, and a regime was set up to serve French

interests under the control of a man who was opposed to the whole conception of a United Germany. This man was Count, afterwards Prince, von Metternich—a Rhineland nobleman who found his spiritual and political home in Vienna. Metternich, in the interest of the Hapsburg dynasty, kept Austria faithful to Napoleon, using the marriage of the Archduchess Marie-Louise as a point in the great game of diplomacy until he was sure that Napoleon's star was at last on the wane. Then he joined, not the German national movement, which was gathering round Prussia, but the Fourth Coalition of European Powers which the Englishman Castlereagh was building up.

It was the German national movement, rallying round Prussia, that made the ultimate victory of the Coalition possible. But for the action of Prussia in 1812, when the fragments of Napoleon's Grand Army came straggling back from Moscow, the French Emperor would almost certainly have recovered his grip on things. Prussia prevented that. Frederick William still hesitated, but his hand was forced by the general who commanded the Prussian contingent that had gone to Moscow with the French. This General von Yorck went over to the Czar with all his men; the Prussian king gave way and proclaimed to his people, and to all Germans besides, that the time of national emergency had come. And so began what the Germans call the War of Liberation, out of which was undoubtedly born the German national movement of the 19th century. It lasted for little more than a year. Napoleon put up a magnificent fight, but was overborne by numbers, for this time he was not able to divide his enemies and deal with them separately. At Leipsig in the autumn of 1813 he was overwhelmed and began his retreat from Germany, which did not stop till he turned to bay inside France itself in a vain attempt to save something from the wreck of his fortunes.

The Confederation of the Rhine and the whole structure of Napoleonic Germany had already collapsed, as one after another of his vassal States deserted the Emperor, and their rulers, anxious to secure their own position and the retention of all the territories which their subservience to Napoleonic policy had given them, joined the Grand Coalition of his enemies, for the

most part under the wing of Metternich, who sought to ride the whirlwind of nationalism and subdue it. Only Saxony remained faithful to the fallen idol, and for that faithfulness she paid her price when yet another Germany was constructed at the Congress of Vienna.

CHAPTER VII

METTERNICH'S GERMANY

THE CONGRESS OF Vienna met to settle all those many matters which, in the muddled condition of Europe that resulted from Napoleon's defeat, seemed to call for general European agreement. One of these matters was the political organisation of Germany. It is interesting to observe how readily it was taken for granted that it was a matter for European concern how Germany was to be governed. Germany had been so long divided into separate parts, and foreigners of one sort and another had been so accustomed to intervention in German affairs, that it seemed quite a natural thing, even to Germans themselves, that an international congress should decide upon the form of government under which they were to live. In actual fact, however, on this occasion, foreigners had less to do with the settlement than at first seemed likely, for the Congress, or rather the leading statesmen there present, decided very wisely that the delegates from the various German states should get together and agree on a plan, which they could then submit to the Congress for its approval. This procedure was adopted, and in due course a kind of German constitution was evolved by the Germans and incorporated in the Treaty of Vienna or the Congress 'Act', as it was called. Thus the system under which the German national affairs were to be managed could be regarded as part of the public law or international order of Europe.

The plan, as adopted, provided for a *Bund* or Confederation of thirty-nine autonomous States, of which Austria was to have a permanent primacy. The headquarters or 'capital' of the Confederation was to be the city of Frankfort, to which had been assigned the same position in Napoleon's Confederation. Thus it looked

as if the new Confederation was to be the previous one, somewhat enlarged, with Austria substituted for France as the controlling power. And this indeed was what Metternich intended, if he could have his way. The actual number of States included at the outset was thirty-nine, though this was reduced to thirty-eight at a later time by the absorption of one of the very small States into a larger one. Here again Napoleon's lead was followed, for there was no attempt to restore all the petty principalities that had existed under the Empire. Apart from any other reasons for not going back to the pre-Napoleon era in this respect at least, the rulers of Bavaria and the other States which had gained so enormously in territory by Napoleon's policy were resolved to keep what they had gained, and Metternich, who saw an advantage in this from the standpoint which he had decided to adopt, gave them his full support.

In one respect, however—and that was an immensely important one—the 1815 *Bund* differed materially from the Rhenish Confederation. This of course was the fact that the *Bund* included both Austria and Prussia. Napoleon deliberately left them out, because he wanted to prevent the union of Germany, whereas the men who came together at Vienna were primarily concerned, or so they pretended, to secure that union. Moreover, it was a much larger Prussia that now took her place in the new Confederation than the State that had been excluded from the Napoleonic one, larger even than the Prussia that had tried single-handed to oppose Napoleon in 1806. Apart from the recovery of some of the Polish territory of which Napoleon had deprived her, she had secured about one-third of the kingdom of Saxony as well as a huge part of the Rhineland—on both sides of the river—which actually gave her a frontier with France and enabled the Prussian kingdom to assume the character of defender of Germany in the west as well as in the east. And as it was from Prussia that the real spirit of German resistance to Napoleon had gathered strength and encouragement, it was not unnatural that it was upon Prussia that the hopes were centred of those German nationalists who looked to see a strong union of German States built up.

This, however, was exactly what did not happen. The time was not ripe for such a development. The lesser States, large and small,

or at least their rulers, wished to preserve their identity; even King Frederick William, although he had listened to Stein in 1812 and promised a War of Liberation for all Germans against Napoleon, was unwilling to sink Prussia in a reconstructed Germany in 1815. But most of all, Austria under the leadership of Metternich was opposed to the idea of a compact United States of Germany. Metternich saw clearly enough that a close union of Germany, whether on a federal or any other basis, would spell the end of the Hapsburg Empire, as he knew it, which had grown up around German Austria. To him the existence of this great Austrian State, which in itself was a Great Power overshadowing Germany and stretching its tentacles across Central Europe over the Alps into Italy and down the Danube valley and beyond, to the frontiers of Turkey, was an absolute necessity for the preservation of the European balance of power and peace; and anything which upset that balance or diminished the influence or prestige of Austria was to be opposed in the interests not merely of Austria itself but of Europe as well.

That was his creed at all times. A united Germany, he considered, would have just this effect. If Austria were left out of the Union, the latter would be dominated or absorbed by Prussia, and the resultant German state would become a rival of Austria; while, if Austria were included, her dependencies would inevitably tend to break away from her, and confusion and war would ensue. Thus Metternich bent all his efforts to bring about the formation of a loose confederation, with little or no central control except what might be provided by Austria and Prussia acting in consort, whenever that might be possible.

What finally emerged was a kind of German League of Nations, resembling in many respects the ill-fated World League of Nations of our own day. Stein and his supporters had hoped to see established a real German Parliament and a German national army, organised and controlled by a central authority, which would be able to protect Germany from outside aggression and prevent France or any other Power from regulating German affairs. Instead of a representative parliament, the Confederation was given a Diet, which met at Frankfort, consisting of two chambers,

THE GERMAN CONFEDERATION, 1815–1866

whose members were all delegates appointed by the various Governments of the States and not elected, even in the case of the larger assembly, known as the Plenum, by the German people as a whole or by any section of it. The smaller body was therefore something like the Council of the League, and it had very similar powers, while the Plenum functioned in much the same fashion as the Assembly that used to meet at Geneva and discuss the affairs of the world between 1919 and 1939. The delegates had no right of independent judgment and voted as their respective Governments directed, and on all matters of vital importance the decisions of the Diet had to be unanimous. In other words, the independence of the States was carefully safeguarded, and the delegates to the Diet were virtually diplomats rather than politicians or parliamentarians, and their agreed decisions were in the nature of treaties between the States rather than laws or acts of parliament. Such an arrangement obviously could not provide a strong central authority, and hence the German Confederation was no more a German Government than the League of Nations was a World Government. As for a national army, that too was impossible under such conditions, for an army implies a Government able to organise and control it. The Diet, it is true, did from time to time give consideration to the matter, but these discussions always came to nothing, because the Governments of the great States wished to keep their own armies separate and intact and under their own control.

This, then, was Metternich's Germany, which he succeeded in keeping unaltered, in outward form, at least, till his fall from power in 1848. But it is an interesting fact that within a few years of its establishment he found that the absence of that central control which he had laboured to prevent hampered his plans for the suppression of democratic and liberal ideas, which at that time were gaining favour in Germany, as in other countries of Europe, and threatening Metternich's system from another angle.

The trouble arose, in part at least, from a particular article of the Constitution of the Confederation which laid it down that the ruler of each State should establish a representative assembly for his people, if such did not already exist. This was a concession to the

liberalism that the spirit of the French Revolution had called forth in Germany. Czar Alexander, at that time still a patron of liberal ideas, had given his blessing to the article, and Metternich had not been able to prevent it. Then there was the *Burschenschaft* (or student-club) movement, centred in the universities, which kept alive the spirit of the *Jugendbund* of the days of resistance to Napoleon and was encouraged by the liberal Duke of Saxe-Weimar, in whose territory lay the famous castle of the Wartburg, Luther's hiding-place after his condemnation by the Diet of Worms. There in October 1817 students from all over Lutheran Germany assembled to celebrate the tercentenary of the beginning of the Reformation.

What might have been a merely religious occasion turned out to be a political demonstration aimed at despotic authority as practised in most of the German States, Prussia being singled out for special distinction in this respect. Metternich seized on the opportunity thus presented for enlisting the support of the King of Prussia in the prosecution of his plan for crushing what he regarded as the beginning of a new revolutionary movement, which would, like its predecessor, infallibly lead to war. He also used the incident to excite in the mind of the Czar doubts as to the wisdom of the policy he had hitherto been cherishing of encouraging constitution-making in other countries than his own; and in the following year, when the Czar came to Aix-la-Chapelle for the great Congress of the Powers which had been summoned to review European conditions, Metternich was able to persuade him in personal interviews that things in Germany were working up to a crisis, and that liberalism should be checked, not encouraged.

The Czar's conversion was completed a few months later, when a German journalist of reactionary opinions, who was regarded by liberals as having exerted an evil political influence upon their former patron, was assassinated by a member of the *Burschenschaft* of Jena University. From this time on Metternich was free to go forward with his plans in the knowledge that he would have the sympathy rather than the opposition of the man who regarded himself a kind of saviour and protector of Germany.

Metternich's technique in this matter seems to anticipate in some respects the methods of certain European statesmen of more recent times, who when they wanted to get the blessing of the League of Nations for some design which they favoured, without increasing the prestige of the League at the expense of that of the Member States, were wont to hold semi-private conferences or 'exploratory' meetings. These might then lead up to a 'Preparatory Commission', at which the delegates, acting on the instructions of their various Governments, would agree on the terms of the plan or scheme for which it was hoped to get the endorsement of the Council or Assembly of the League.

Something of this sort happened in 1819. Metternich did not want to encourage anything suggestive of Federalism, which was exactly what he would be doing if he appealed directly to the Diet to exert its ill-defined authority against the liberals and liberalism. He therefore appealed to the princes and rulers of the separate States, first by holding private conferences with the King of Prussia and his ministers and so securing their support in advance, and then by arranging that Austria and Prussia should jointly invite the other States to take part in a so-to-speak official conference to be held in Austrian territory, at Carlsbad in Bohemia. The conference was duly held, and Metternich got his way. A number of decrees were drawn up and approved by the conference for submission to the Diet of the Confederation. These provided for a strict censorship of the Press and rigorous limitation of free speech, especially in the universities, which were to be subject to Government control. It was also decided that the Diet should be asked to set up a special commission to investigate charges of revolutionary conspiracy and secure the punishment of guilty parties by their Governments. Metternich by careful manœuvring secured the necessary unanimous vote for the decrees in the Diet, and in due course they were ratified and put into force by the Governments of the States. The Commission, which held its sittings in the City of Mainz, continued its labours till 1828. By that time the alleged conspiracy appeared to have been broken up, and consequently Metternich no longer found it necessary to use the dangerous weapon of federal action, however limited its scope,

to counter liberal or, as he would have called them, revolutionary tendencies.

Then everything went wrong again. A real revolution broke out in France in 1830, and soon almost every country in Europe was affected by the event in a greater or less degree. In Germany unrest showed itself mainly in renewed popular demands for State constitutions, though there were some outbreaks of positive violence, which were quickly suppressed. Once again Metternich in co-operation with Prussia invoked the support of the Diet, and the policy embodied in the Carlsbad Decrees was revived. Many despotic rulers, it is true, had yielded to the demands of their subjects for the establishment of elected parliaments in their States, but thanks to the influence of Austria and Prussia, who at this time received the strong backing of the new Czar Nicholas, a more resolute man than his brother Alexander, they were able in practice to prevent these bodies from exercising any effective control over them. Thus the Metternich system went on, and the unrest in the States died down, till fifteen years later a new and more violent outbreak of revolutionary feeling in Europe called forth such a response in Germany that Metternich himself was hurled from power and his system for the time being utterly collapsed.

Meanwhile beneath the surface of this political turmoil there were forces at work which were slowly but surely building up that very unity which it was Metternich's object to obstruct and prevent. These forces were economic, and for a long time their political implications were unnoticed by Austrian statesmen or even by the men who set them in motion or welcomed them. The economic confusion of the First Reich, or Holy Roman Empire, was, as we have seen, the inevitable consequence of its political disintegration. Something had been done to improve matters under Napoleon by abolishing the petty lordships and creating larger units, which were then linked together in dependence upon France; but when Napoleon's system collapsed, each State once more became a law to itself in the matter of tolls and tariffs.

All this was an obvious hindrance to inter-State trade. Hence some of the southern States soon combined to form a *Zollverein*

(*i.e.* a toll or customs union), which had as its object the abolition of customs duties on traffic between them and the division of the product of duties imposed on goods imported from countries outside the combination. Other groups of States were formed elsewhere in Germany with the same object in view, the most important of which was the one which grew up around Prussia. Prussia herself was so situated that some such arrangement was essential if her economic development was to be given full play; for between her Rhenish provinces and the main mass of the Prussian kingdom there were several independent States of different sizes which were in a position to hamper or to aid this development. Naturally enough therefore, the orderly Prussian mind, without any political intentions whatsoever, made it a deliberate part of the economic policy of the Prussian State to draw together into one *Zollverein* as many of the German States as possible.

By 1848 this object had been carried out with a remarkable degree of success, to the mutual advantage of all the partners, many of whom had no love for Prussia in a political sense. Austria, with her many non-German dependencies, whose economic interests ran in other directions, ignored this trend of events until it was too late, and when finally she sought admission to the *Zollverein*, her request was refused. This gradual development of a fiscal unity in Germany (exclusive of Austria) had an important effect in stimulating the belated industrial revolution in that country, with improvements in transport facilities, first in road and later in railway construction, in all of which Prussian initiative and enterprise played a considerable part. The business interests of Germans in general, therefore, operated strongly in the direction of strengthening the ties between Prussia and her neighbours; and consequently it is not surprising that when revolution came to Germany in dead earnest in 1848, a desire for a real political union of the whole country manifested itself everywhere, and a determined effort was made to bring about the consummation of this desire.

As before, it was from France that the breath of revolution first came. There in February 1848, the monarchy of Louis-

Philippe was overthrown and a National Assembly was elected on the basis of manhood suffrage to draw up a republican constitution. Before many days were past, Germans on the other side of the Rhine in the South German State of Baden were demanding and getting from their ruler a liberal constitution of the most pronounced type. From Baden the flame spread eastward and northward to Vienna and Berlin, where the sons of the rulers who witnessed the rise and overthrow of Napoleon and then allowed Metternich to reconstruct Germany were now the crowned heads of their States. Neither of these monarchs was a strong man. The Emperor Ferdinand was a half-imbecile epileptic, who left everything to Metternich till the crash came; when, terrified by the Viennese mob, he abandoned his minister and fled from his capital to safer quarters in the loyal Tyrol. The romantically minded King Frederick William IV of Prussia, after a brave show of resistance to the demands of the Berlin revolutionaries that he should follow the example of the South German princes, gave in completely and even walked in funeral procession to the graveside of the men who had been shot down by his troops in the streets of his capital. The rulers of the lesser States followed the example of the greater ones, till constitutionalism appeared to have triumphed throughout Germany.

Following these successes in the States the liberal leaders determined to go forward and establish national unity on a democratic, or at least a constitutional, basis. Here again they took France as their model, and with or without the approval or support of the State Governments they arranged for the election on a broad franchise of a National Assembly which would have for its principal task the drawing up of a parliamentary constitution for Germany as a whole. This plan was duly carried into effect, and in May 1848, the first representative assembly ever elected by the German people met at Frankfort. It is usually referred to as the Frankfort Parliament, a name which sufficiently indicates how differently it was regarded by the men of that generation from the Diet which it displaced from the supreme position in German affairs. Acting on the assumption that it was the sovereign authority of the whole German nation, the Frankfort Parliament forthwith

set up a kind of provisional government (once again like the French), consisting of an imperial administrator and a cabinet of ministers. The Archduke John of Austria, a liberal-minded member of the Hapsburg family, accepted the office of administrator, and it was intended that he should hold it until the projected constitution had been framed and a permanent head of the new German Federal Government had been selected.

Unfortunately for the success of the Nationalists' plan, no provision was made for the immediate and effective organisation of a strong Federal armed force, capable of dealing faithfully with any disruptive elements that showed themselves within Germany and of opposing any aggression that might develop from without; while all the time each of the various State Governments continued to retain absolute and undiminished control over its own military establishment. In these circumstances what followed was almost inevitable. The Parliament, consisting in the main, as it did, of men who were ardent liberals but had had little practical experience of politics, spent the best part of a year in deliberating and debating on a Declaration of the Rights of the German People, and then, when that had been put into an agreed form, on the Constitution itself. This provided for the establishment of a federal empire, with a legislature of two chambers, one representing the people, who were to elect the members on a wide franchise, and the other consisting of representatives of the separate States, whose legitimate interests would thus, so it was supposed, be duly respected but would be brought into proper subordination to the interests of the nation as a whole. At the same time the limits of the nation to which the Constitution was to apply were so fixed as to include only the purely German part of the Austrian Empire, thereby dividing and weakening the latter in precisely the way in which Metternich had reasoned in 1815 any real union of Germany would be bound to do. Metternich no longer controlled Austrian affairs in 1849, but the men who did, notably Prince von Schwarzenberg, who at this time held the office of Chancellor, were equally determined not to allow the Hapsburg dominions to disintegrate.

After the first stunning shock of the revolution the Hapsburg

forces had rallied. The futile Emperor Ferdinand was persuaded to abdicate and his young and popular nephew Francis Joseph was put in his place. One capable old soldier, Marshal Radetsky, recovered the Italian provinces; another suppressed the Czechs of Bohemia and followed up that success by regaining control of Vienna and eliminating its revolutionary and democratic rulers; while the southern Slavs, led by the Croat general Jellachich, showed that they preferred the rule of the Hapsburgs to that of Kossuth and his Magyars by fighting stoutly and, for a time, successfully in the interests of Hapsburg restoration.

Thus by the spring of 1849 the Hapsburg monarchy was once again in control of the greater part of its heterogeneous empire. The other ruling princes of the German lands took heart of grace as they witnessed the revival of Austrian power. The King of Prussia in particular became more inclined to listen to the advice of his anti-national Junkers, who hated the idea of Prussia's being absorbed into Germany and losing its identity in it, especially Germany infected with liberal and French habits of thought. So it came about that when, early in April, a deputation from the Frankfort Parliament came to Berlin and offered Frederick William the hereditary crown of a united Germany with the title of Emperor, he rejected both proposals. The King was unwilling to 'pick up the crown from the gutter', and he also seems to have believed that acceptance on his part would have involved him in difficulties not only with Austria but with other important States like Bavaria as well. But whatever his reasons, his action was fatal to the cause of German union on the basis of liberal institutions.

The situation at Frankfort now deteriorated very rapidly. First the Austrian Government ordered the Austrian deputies to withdraw. The Prussian Government soon followed suit; and when the Lower House of the Prussian State Assembly protested at this policy, it was dissolved by the King. Eventually the deputies of all the larger States departed from Frankfort, while those that remained, of whom the majority were markedly democratic in their outlook, announced their intention of offering the crown to some other prince. Before they could carry out this intention,

democratic risings broke out in several centres. But the princes were no longer overawed by such demonstrations, and where they were unable to suppress them with their own forces, Prussia very obligingly lent her aid, and in every case the disturbances were stamped out.

By this time the more moderate members of the Parliament had lost hope of making their plan of union a success, and eventually the democratic rump, which continued to utter brave words but was unable to control even the disorder that went on in Frankfort, decided to seek safer quarters in the city of Stuttgart, where there was less risk of unfriendly interference with its activities on the part of neighbouring State Governments. Stuttgart was the capital of the kingdom of Würtemberg, but even in that State, where a form of parliamentary government had existed for more than a century, the authorities were not willing to allow what remained of the National Assembly to become a centre of revolutionary unrest. They therefore on June 18 closed the building where the Assembly held its sessions and forced the deputies to disperse.

This was the end of the Frankfort Parliament, but it was not quite the end of the contemporary effort to bring about the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership. For King Frederick William, having by his great refusal deliberately ruined the hopes of those who sought to create a liberal and democratic Germany, thought he saw an opportunity of gaining, in more acceptable form, the substance of what he had previously rejected. What in fact he had rejected was not the headship of Germany as such, but the headship presented to him as a gift by a popularly elected body. If he could achieve the same end by a different method and receive at the hands of the German princes, who were his peers, what he shrank from accepting from the elected representatives of the German people, the problem would be solved.

The moment was opportune for making a move in this direction, for Austria was experiencing unexpected difficulty in reducing revolted Hungary to obedience; and as a consequence, it was to Prussia rather than Austria that the rulers of Saxony and other States had appealed for aid in re-establishing their authority.

King Frederick William therefore invited the princes to meet him in Conference in Berlin, where he laid before them a scheme for a Federation of German States with Austria excluded and Prussia as president. The scheme was welcomed by many of the lesser States but opposed by the larger ones, especially Bavaria, and so hung fire. Before anything could be settled in the matter, the position was entirely changed by the collapse of Hungary, which was attacked in the rear by a Russian army, for whose aid the Emperor Francis Joseph had appealed to the Czar, and the surrender of the city of Venice, which had been holding out desperately against Radetsky long after the rest of Northern Italy had submitted. These two events, which happened about the same time, in August 1849, released large Austrian forces and enabled the Austrian Government under Schwarzenberg to take a strong line with Frederick William.

Matters came to a head in the following year. Schwarzenberg's first step was to re-constitute the 1815 *Bund* or Confederation by summoning the old Diet to resume its sittings at Frankfort, thus passing a sponge, as it were, over the record of everything that had happened since it retired in favour of the revolutionary Frankfort Parliament. The summons was obeyed by all the States except Prussia and her satellites. He then called a Conference of States, something like Metternich's famous Carlsbad Conference. This too was held on Austrian teritory, in the Moravian town of Olmütz. A Prussian delegation attended the Conference and was virtually given an ultimatum. Prussia was informed that the plan for a Union of German States with Austria excluded must be abandoned, and she must rejoin the Confederation on the old terms. King Frederick William submitted to very evident superior force, and very soon everything was, to all outward seeming, much the same as it had been before the upheaval of 1848. Only in Prussia there were men who did not forget the 'humiliation of Olmütz', and the king, when asked by Schwarzenberg to do so, refused to cancel the very undemocratic constitution which he had granted to his people in 1849.

Metternich's Germany was thus restored for a time. He himself survived till 1859, (outliving his pupil Schwarzenberg, who died

in 1852) though he took no further part in the direction of affairs. The intervening years were uneventful as far as Germany as a whole was concerned. Then Austria became involved in a war with France, where Napoleon III came out as the champion of Italian freedom from Austrian control, and was seriously weakened in consequence. Prussia carefully watched the trend of these events, and at a not inappropriate moment a man was appointed to take charge of her affairs who in due course made a real end of Metternich's Germany. This man was Bismarck.

CHAPTER VIII

BISMARCK'S GERMANY

THE SECOND REICH

BISMARCK DID NOT set out at the beginning of his official career to build up a new Germany and do all those things which are usually associated with his name. When he was appointed Minister-President of Prussia in 1862, it was largely because he was a good Prussian rather than a good German. He belonged to a noble land-owning family which had been settled in Brandenburg—the heart of the Prussian State—for centuries, and he himself had an estate in the adjacent region of Pomerania; so that he was fully qualified for the name 'Junker', which was applied to Prussians of his class and status by South Germans. Till 1848 he took no interest whatever in politics, and after a half-hearted attempt to adapt himself to a career in the Prussian civil service he had settled down to the life of what in England would be called a country gentleman. Indeed, there is something about Bismarck at this stage of his career which reminds one very much of the English Tory squire of the 18th and early 19th centuries—strong for the national monarchy and the national church, as well as for the rights and privileges of his own order; only in Bismarck's case the *national* monarchy was that of Prussia (not Germany) and the church was Lutheran—under royal control.

The events of 1848 brought him to the front of affairs. He joined with other opponents of the Revolution in Prussia to form an ultra-conservative party, called the *Kreuz Partei*, or Party of the Cross, which sought to prevent the surrender of Prussia to Ger-

many. He became a member of the new Prussian Parliament and spoke and worked against the liberal tendencies of the times. Naturally he was opposed to the Frankfort Parliament and all its works, including the plan for making the King of Prussia Emperor of Germany. He was even critical of King Frederick William's scheme for a union of German monarchies, under Prussia's presidency and with Austria excluded; and while as a good Prussian he resented the 'humiliation of Olmütz', he was not sorry when the old *Bund* and Diet were restored, and it seemed possible that German affairs might once more be conducted on the basis of mutual agreement and, where necessary, joint action on the part of the two greatest States of the Confederation.

It was in this spirit that in 1851, shortly after the restoration of the old order at Frankfort, Bismarck accepted the post of Prussian envoy or delegate to the Diet. This was the real turning-point in his political career, for during the six years that he spent at Frankfort he came to realise the tortuous diplomacy of Vienna and to believe that it was Austria's fixed policy to thwart Prussia in every possible way and lower her status and prestige among the German States. Bismarck learnt many other things at Frankfort, which was so near to France, particularly about the hopes and schemes of the new French Emperor Napoleon III, whose rise to power seemed at that time to foreshadow in the minds of most European statesmen a revival of French aggressiveness. And when, in 1857, he became Prussian Ambassador to Russia, he had shed all his earlier illusions about Austria and was fully alive to the possibilities of an international situation in which France, newly victorious over Russia—in the Crimean War—might seek to dominate Europe once more.

At St. Petersburg Bismarck made contacts which he turned to good account in later years, and then in the early summer of 1862 he was transferred to Paris, where for some few months he had an opportunity of observing the behaviour of the French Emperor at close quarters and of forming judgments about conditions in France. Meanwhile in Prussia important events had been taking place, as a result of which Bismarck was suddenly called home and put at the head of the Prussian Government. The first of these

events was the mental collapse of King Frederick William and the appointment of his brother Prince William as Regent. This was followed four years later, in 1861, by the king's death and the accession of the Regent to the throne. William I was a very different kind of man from his brother. The latter was irresolute, liable to changes of mood and of policy, which had been a source of much concern to Bismarck and his friends of the Kreuz party. Since Olmütz the king had appeared to be satisfied with the lowered status to which Prussia had been reduced as a result of her submission to Austrian orders, and neither he nor the Prussian parliament seemed willing to strengthen Prussia in a military sense.

King William was determined to alter this state of affairs. He was primarily a soldier, and his principal concern was to improve and enlarge the Prussian army. His War Minister, Von Roon, had a plan of army reorganisation which he persuaded the king to accept. The only difficulty—and that was an overwhelming one—was the fact that the scheme would involve increased taxation, and under the constitution of 1849 new taxation must receive the approval of the parliament. Partly on the grounds of economy and partly because some of the liberal and anti-militaristic feeling that had been characteristic of the period of revolution still persisted in the Prussian parliament despite its undemocratic character, a strong opposition to the proposed increased taxation developed, and eventually the proposals were rejected. As a consequence the king was ready to abdicate and was on the point of doing so when Von Roon urged him to consult Bismarck. William took the minister's advice and summoned Bismarck home from Paris.

Bismarck's attitude was based upon his reading of the international situation. France, Austria and Russia were all busy in one way and another with schemes of aggrandisement, some of which might very well be carried out at Prussia's expense. The parliament did not understand these things; the politicians were either ignorant or factious. The king must ensure the safety of the state by making the army strong enough to defend the country from any would-be aggressor. If parliament refused to agree to the new

taxes, the king should act on his inherent right as Protector of the State and collect the taxes in spite of the opposition of the parliament. When King William asked Bismarck if he was prepared as Chief Minister to carry out such a policy as he had indicated, the latter accepted the commission.

To an Englishman there is something reminiscent in all this of Charles I's quarrels with his parliaments. But there are too many differences between the two pictures for the parallel to be pursued closely. King Charles had no army, only a rabble of armed courtiers at his back, when he tried to browbeat the Long Parliament into submission; and Prussia produced no Hampden and no Pym. So Charles had to raise an army to fight the one which the parliament men were organising, whereas King William with Bismarck at his side held a large trained army in reserve when he sent out his officials to collect the wherewithal to make that army still larger and better trained. Not that there was no opposition, or that no voices were raised in the parliament and in the country. But the parliament was ignored, and unlike an English parliament it could not make and unmake cabinets of ministers. If Bismarck was for the time being the best hated man in Prussia, he did not let that fact stand in his way. He censored the press, forbade public meetings of protest and in general resorted to the usual methods of arbitrary government. The politicians were angry, but the people submitted, and the king (not a parliament on this occasion) got his 'new model' army just in time to enable Bismarck to meet with comparative confidence the foreign complications of the next decade.

The first of these complications was the Schleswig-Holstein question. The two regions, or duchies, whose fate was involved in this question lay across the frontiers of Denmark and Germany; one, Schleswig, forming, as it were, the stem of the Jutland peninsula, whose bulging point was the mainland of Denmark; the other, Holstein, embedded in the German mass and serving as the base out of which the peninsula grew. Holstein was an integral part of Germany, being one of the thirty-eight States of the Confederation, and practically all its population was German. Schleswig, on the other hand, was not a member of the Confedera-

tion, and about one-third of its inhabitants, concentrated for the most part in the northern portion of the duchy, were Danes, the remaining two-thirds being of German origin.

The many difficulties of the situation arose from the fact that both duchies were ruled by the same prince, and he was no less a personage than the King of Denmark. The Danish royal family, it should be observed, claimed descent from a 15th-century German nobleman or prince of the neighbouring state of Oldenburg, who in the year 1448 was elected King of Denmark and a few years later made good his claim to be Duke of Schleswig-Holstein as well. Since that time the duchies, though never absorbed into the Danish kingdom and retaining their own separate political institutions, had come to be regarded as dependencies of the Danish crown. The position in this respect was somewhat similar to that which had formerly existed in the neighbouring State of Hanover, where for over one-hundred and twenty years the ruler, known as Elector till 1815 and King after that date, was the British monarch. When William IV died in 1837 and was succeeded in the United Kingdom by his niece Victoria, the personal link with Hanover was severed on account of the law or usage that prevailed throughout Germany, which prohibited the succession of a female.

A wider interpretation of this particular law, barring, in general, succession *in the female line*, provided an occasion for the outbreak of the trouble that came to a head in 1863. Already, amid the upheaval of 1848, there had been a foreshadowing of the conflict in which Bismarck displayed his powers to the astonished gaze of Europe. The German inhabitants of the duchies threw in their lot with the German nationalist movement and revolted against the Danish king, placing themselves under the rule of a certain Duke of Augustenburg, who claimed to be the lawful heir in the male line to the ducal crowns of Schleswig and Holstein. Aided by the feeble forces of the 'national' German army of the Frankfort Government, but abandoned by the King of Prussia, who at first had sent a contingent of his troops to take part in the struggle, but had no real desire to see German nationalism win a victory for itself even against a 'foreign' enemy, the insurgents were

defeated by the Danes and brought to submission by the Austrians and Prussians after the liquidation of the revolutionary Frankfort regime.

Meanwhile the Danish Government had defined the position from the Danish point of view. The King of Denmark, Frederick VII, was childless. Hence his Government laid it down that in default of direct heirs, the crown of Denmark, in accordance with the Danish rule of succession, would pass to Prince Christian of Glücksburg as next of kin, though his descent was through the female line. They further let it be known that they intended to ignore the claim of the Duke of Augustenburg to the duchies under the alleged German rule of succession, and to maintain the connection between them and Denmark in the person of the Danish king, whoever he might be.

At this point Great Britain took a hand in the affair. Anxious to prevent a renewal of strife which might easily develop into a much wider conflict, the British Government invited the Powers to send representatives to a Conference to be held in London for the settlement of the succession to the duchies on the basis of a general European agreement. The Conference was duly held, and the decision arrived at was embodied in the London Protocol (or Treaty) of 1852. This took the form of an agreement between Denmark on the one side and Great Britain, France, Russia, Sweden, Austria and Prussia on the other, by which these Powers undertook to recognise the 'integrity of the Danish Monarchy' and the succession of Prince Christian of Glücksburg and his descendants in the male line to the kingdom of Denmark and the duchies. Before, however, the two German Powers gave their adhesion to the terms of this agreement they received an assurance from Denmark that the status of Holstein as a member of the Germanic Confederation would be unaffected, and that no constitutional changes should be made in the relationship of Schleswig to Denmark which would have the effect of incorporating the duchy in the Danish kingdom. It was accordingly understood, though the point was not formally expressed in the treaty, that the autonomy and separate political institutions of the duchies were to be respected. One other important feature of the agreement

was the fact that the Diet of the German Confederation was not a party to it, although in the past that body had always regarded itself as being specially interested in the status of the duchies and the welfare of their German inhabitants.

It was this last feature of the situation, combined with the determination of a section of Danish opinion to ignore the pledges given to Austria and Prussia before the signature of the treaty, that was responsible for the re-opening of the Schleswig-Holstein question in 1863. There was in Denmark at this time a strong nationalist party which desired to see Schleswig, at least, fully incorporated in the Danish state. They pressed their views unceasingly on King Frederick, who was not indisposed to agree with them, and at last, at the beginning of 1863, a new constitution was drawn up which provided for the virtual incorporation of Schleswig in Denmark along with an independent regime for Holstein. The immediate result of this was a loud outcry throughout Germany, and the Diet threatened 'Federal Execution' against King Frederick in his capacity as Duke of Holstein unless the obnoxious constitution was withdrawn. While negotiations were in progress, with Great Britain acting as mediator, King Frederick died, and Christian of Glücksburg succeeded him in accordance with the terms of the 1852 London treaty and signalised the occasion by promulgating, that is to say, putting into force, the disputed constitution. This precipitated the catastrophe which Lord John Russell, the British Foreign Secretary, had been seeking to prevent. The Duke of Augustenburg, the son of the man whose claims had been set aside in 1852, was saluted by his German partisans in the duchies as Frederick VIII, and, acting on the orders of the German Diet, Saxon and Hanoverian troops marched into Holstein and occupied it without resistance on the part of the Danish forces. The latter retired into Schleswig and prepared to defend that territory against all-comers by land and by sea.

This was Bismarck's opportunity for settling the position of the duchies in a way which he considered would be most advantageous to Prussia. He had no particular sympathy with the aspirations of the German Schleswigers for a union with Holstein under the Duke of Augustenburg, nor did he look with much favour

at the idea of the establishment of a large independent State on Prussia's flank, which might very readily associate itself with other North German States, such as Hanover, to thwart Prussian policy in the Confederation and to support the continuance of Austrian hegemony. On the other hand, he could not ignore altogether the national feeling which had been aroused throughout Germany by the high-handed action of the Danes, who had so patently repudiated the compromise of 1852. This feeling was expressed as strongly in Prussia as in other States of the Confederation, including Austria, and it was clear that, with or without the support of the two States that had signed the London treaty, the Diet intended to rescue Schleswig from the Danish clutch.

Faced by this dilemma Bismarck determined to take the bold course of treating the situation as one in which the Danish action had released Austria and Prussia from their obligations under the agreement of 1852, and they were consequently free to join in the warlike operations against Denmark. There were obvious dangers in such a course. The other signatory Powers might decide to support Denmark, and, if they did, Austria might give way to pressure and Prussia might have to choose between military and diplomatic defeat, with disastrous results in either case for Prussian prestige. Before taking the plunge, however, Bismarck had provided at least for Russia's neutrality by giving the Czar strong support in his suppression of the Polish revolt which broke out this same year (1863). Next he persuaded the Austrian Chancellor, Rechberg, to join him in the plan contemplated by pointing out that the French Emperor wished to call a Conference of the Powers at Paris and so to avoid the necessity of armed intervention in support of the Treaty. The Austrian Government had no liking for European Conferences held under the auspices of Napoleon III, and suspected that, if this one was held, other issues in which Austria was interested, besides the Schleswig-Holstein one, might be raised. So Bismarck won his point, and Austria was drawn into the scheme which he now prepared to put into operation. Ignoring Sweden, and convinced that Great Britain, unsupported by any Continental Great Power (for Russia had been 'squared' and Napoleon was unwilling to make the

maintenance of the treaty a *casus belli*), neither would nor indeed could employ force to back up any protests she might make, the Prussian minister took the step which, whether he intended matters to turn out so or not, led by a succession of wars to the erection of a new order in Germany and a complete alteration in the balance of power in Europe.

The first of these wars was of course that which Prussia and Austria waged jointly with the Danes. The fighting started early in 1864, when the armies of the two Powers crossed the frontier of the Confederation into Schleswig. The Danes put up a very gallant resistance, but they were overwhelmed by force of numbers and compelled to yield on the conquerors' terms. These were that the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were to be handed over, not to the Confederation or to the Duke of Augustenburg, but to Prussia and Austria in combination. There was a loud outcry about this decision in all parts of Germany, but Bismarck held firmly to his point, that it was for those countries or States which had forced Denmark to give up these German lands to decide their future status, and not the Diet of the Confederation, which had done little or nothing to achieve that result. Hence, when the Treaty of Vienna was signed in October 1864, by which the transfer of the disputed territory was given legal sanction, voices were raised in protest on all sides, but no one took action; and in the following December the Hanoverians and Saxons who had occupied Holstein at the beginning of the trouble in the name of the Confederation marched out and Austrian and Prussian troops marched in.

By this time misgivings over what had happened were beginning to gather force in Austria. Already Bismarck had shown his real intentions when, largely in deference to the feelings of King William, who favoured on their merits the Augustenburg claims, he expressed himself as willing to agree to a nominal sovereignty for the duke, on condition that control of the armed forces and railways of the proposed State of Schleswig-Holstein should be entrusted to Prussia, so as to ensure the security of the new State from any future attacks from Denmark. The refusal of these terms by the duke had brought the king and other Prussian doubters on to Bismarck's side. Bismarck published an account

of the negotiations, so that there was no mystery in the matter.

It was obvious to everyone that a radical change had come over the posture of affairs in Germany, and that the roles played at Olmütz were now reversed. Prussia now held the initiative, and Austria was being forced to follow her lead. Two things had recently happened which pointed in the same direction. The first of these was the failure of an attempt made by Austria in 1863 to bring about a closer union of the States of the Confederation by a reform of that body. Bismarck, convinced that any plan of this kind emanating from Vienna could only lead to the strengthening of Austria's position in the Confederation and the weakening of that of Prussia, persuaded King William not to take any part in a congress of ruling princes which the Austrian Emperor proposed for a discussion of the plan. Prussia's refusal ruined the prospects of the plan, for the secondary States were unwilling to declare themselves on the side of either of the rivals, and their rulers were suspicious that any scheme of closer union might deprive them of some of their privileges and powers. Thus the whole scheme fell flat, and the congress never took place. Meanwhile liberal opinion throughout Germany made it known in various ways that no plan of union would be acceptable to the German people which, like the Austrian, did not provide for a representative German parliament elected on a popular franchise. Bismarck hastened to improve the occasion with the surprising announcement that Prussia was willing to come into line with public opinion in this respect and was desirous of seeing a reform of the Confederation which would include "an assembly made up of members from the whole of Germany, in proportion to the population, elected by direct franchise".

Few of those who remembered Bismarck's past record in these matters could have any strong faith in the reality of his conversion to liberal principles, but his action convinced Chancellor Rechberg at least that, if Austria was to maintain her position in Germany, she must keep in step with Prussia rather than oppose her. The other internal success scored by Bismarck at this time at Austria's expense was the renewal of the *Zollverein* for a period of twelve years. The Austrian Government had tried hard since 1850 to

bring about the disintegration of this institution, which, as we have seen, had been silently at work since its establishment forging the bonds of an economic interest that, despite all political differences, united Prussia with her neighbours and, in the case of the smaller States at least, helped not a little towards political friendship and understanding. Periodically the trade agreements between the various States upon which the *Zollverein* was based came up for renewal. Such an occasion occurred in the early sixties, and Austria had used every effort to detach South German States like Bavaria as well as more northerly ones like Saxony from the commercial orbit of Prussia. But economic interest proved stronger than political antipathy, and Austria failed in this respect as well as the other.

The reaction in Vienna to all these developments was decisive. Bismarck's collaborator, Rechberg, was thrown out of place and power and new men took control of affairs, who were determined to make an end of Bismarck and all his works if they could. But they were embarrassed for the moment. Hungary was rebellious and Italy was once again ready to go on the war-path for the completion of her *risorgimento* through the expulsion of the Austrians from Venice. Bismarck understood well enough what was afoot. Probably it was just at this time, when Rechberg fell, that he became finally convinced that war with Austria was inevitable unless, as in 1850, Prussia was prepared to submit to Austrian dictation and abandon once again the position she had achieved for herself in German affairs. So the wheel had come full circle, and the man who had opposed the liberals of 1848 and persuaded King Frederick William to give up his scheme for a union of Germans, with Austria left outside, now found himself planning to expel Austria from Germany altogether and save Prussia by making her the centre-piece of a new Federal state, which should grow out of that German national feeling he had formerly despised and rejected. Having made up his mind, he wasted no time in vain regrets and useless delays. The condominium in Schleswig-Holstein was working as badly as such schemes usually do, with the normal difficulties of the situation aggravated by the conditions arising out of the dispute over the Augustenburg claims, which

were now receiving support from Austrian officials. Austria talked of appealing to the Diet of the Confederation, contrary to the agreement of the two Powers made at the outset of the trouble that the Diet was to have no hand in the settlement.

In order to postpone the ultimate clash, for which Prussia equally was not quite ready, a new agreement was patched up. This was the Convention of Gastein, according to which the joint administration of the whole area was to come to an end, and each of the two States was to take a portion under its separate control. Prussia took Schleswig together with the port of Kiel in Holstein. Austria, which had no naval interest in the Baltic, gave up Kiel but secured the possession of the rest of Holstein. Having effected this stop-gap arrangement in August 1865, Bismarck took a holiday in the south of France in October. He went to Biarritz, where the Emperor Napoleon was likewise relaxing from the cares of the state. Bismarck was anxious to satisfy himself about the line the French Emperor was likely to take in the event of war breaking out between Prussia and Austria. He had already secured in advance the neutrality of Russia, and he hoped to be able to get an assurance that France would be equally accommodating. He also wanted to find out how Napoleon would regard an alliance between Prussia and Italy directed against Austria.

It was afterwards said that, during the interviews that took place between the two men, Bismarck promised Napoleon that in return for his benevolent neutrality some kind of territorial compensation on the left bank of the Rhine or in Belgium would be made available for France by a victorious Prussia, and that, when the time came for redeeming this promise, Bismarck proved faithless. There is no evidence whatever for the truth of this statement, and it is inherently improbable that Bismarck committed himself to a course of action which was likely to embroil Prussia with the South German States and with England. Besides, it was unnecessary. Napoleon seems to have held the view, which was general at the time, that of the two Powers Austria was the stronger, and that at best Prussia could only hope, with Italian help, to hold her own. He therefore looked forward to something like a tie between the two rival States after a long, exhausting struggle, when both

would be ready to accept his friendly offices in effecting a settlement, for which France would receive her due reward in the recovery of part or all of that left bank of the Rhine which she had lost when the first Napoleon crashed. It would be a glorious revenge for the House of Bonaparte, and France under the restored dynasty—at that time, after an unhappy adventure in Mexico, sadly in need of a refurbishing of its damaged prestige—would resume its rightful and historic role of mediator in the quarrels of the German tribes.

All that Bismarck had to do was to allow the French Emperor to continue to cherish these hopes—or illusions. Naturally he would tell him nothing about the new Prussian army and its General Staff—that remarkable piece of military organisation (at that time unique, though afterwards copied and adapted to its own use by almost every country in the world) which was soon to show the world how efficiently and rapidly a nation in arms could be deployed for battle, and how plans of campaign that had been carefully studied in days of peace could be ruthlessly applied to the realities of war. None of these things, we may be sure, was discussed at Biarritz, but whatever passed between the two 'conspirators', it is clear that Bismarck came away from this Conference convinced that for the moment, at any rate, France was safe and that the Emperor, in his role of patron of nationalities, would use his best endeavours to get Italy to play her part in the impending struggle, which, if all went well, was to make an end once and for all of the Hapsburg domination of central Europe.

There followed a confused period of complicated manœuvring for position. Austria sought to secure the support of those secondary States that continued to favour the Augustenburg candidature and the establishment of a single Schleswig-Holstein State. Prussia on the other hand, relying for tactical purposes on the Gastein agreement, suppressed the pro-Augustenburg agitation in Schleswig and urged Austria to do the same in Holstein. Then in April 1866, Italy forced the pace by making it a condition of an alliance with Prussia that such an arrangement should only become operative in the event of war breaking out in three months. Bismarck now took more definite action. Using as a pretext for his

next step the fact that Austria had brought to the notice of the Diet of the Confederation the disturbed conditions in the duchies, he declared the Convention of Gastein to be null and void and announced that Prussia resumed full liberty of action. Prussian troops were ordered to march into Holstein, and the Austrian Government was invited by Bismarck with a certain grim irony to act in the same way in Schleswig.

But the Austrians were not amused and did not accept the invitation. Instead, the Austrian commander in Holstein, acting on instructions from Vienna, withdrew his forces before the advance of the Prussians. At the same time a formal complaint was lodged before the Diet by the Austrian representative, who demanded Federal Execution against Prussia. Bismarck declared that this was equivalent to a declaration of war by Austria, and the Diet was warned that Prussia would regard as her declared enemies those States that voted for Austria's motion. Bismarck also counter-attacked by bringing before the Diet a plan for the reform of the Confederation drawn up on the lines previously indicated—that is to say, with Austria left out. And when this was rejected, the Prussian representative informed the Diet that as far as his State was concerned the Confederation was at an end and forthwith left the chamber. The Austrian motion in favour of Federal Execution was then carried, and the challenge to Prussia to submit was made clear and unmistakable.

But Prussia did not submit. On the contrary she took up the challenge with a speed and efficiency that astounded the outside world. There were no longer any misgivings at the court or in the country. King and people alike were behind Bismarck. He had brought them all round to his point of view at last. Of the secondary States most of the lesser ones stood aloof from the conflict; some even sympathised with Prussia; but the larger ones, Hanover, Saxony and the South Germans, had declared by their votes that they would act with Austria. Only Hanover, however, put forward any real military effort, and her army was soon cut off from her allies and forced to surrender. Saxony was overwhelmed by the main Prussian army, which moved southward to meet the Austrians in Bohemia. The others were so slow in their mobilisation that

the war was virtually over before they were properly ready to begin. Italy played what her apologists like to think was a decisive role; at any rate, although she won no battles, but rather lost them by land and by sea, she undoubtedly kept a large Austrian force busy in the south, which would otherwise have been available for service in Bohemia and might have turned the scale there. But all these things merely show how well Bismarck had laid his plans and how powerful a machine of war had been constructed by the three men who in their several ways, behind the screen of Bismarck's politics, had worked to make Prussia fit to meet her enemies when the time came. These men were King William, the War Minister, Von Roon, and Von Moltke, the Chief of the General Staff.

This Seven Weeks War ended for all practical purposes in less than seven weeks with the complete defeat of the main Austrian army in a battle fought on July 3, 1866, a hundred miles north of Vienna, in the neighbourhood of two small places known respectively as Königgrätz and Sadowa, which have no other claim to fame. Preliminaries of Peace were agreed to a few weeks later, and on August 24 the definite Treaty of Prague was signed. This rapid progress in negotiations was almost entirely due to Bismarck. The King and some of the army chiefs would have liked a triumphal march into Vienna and the exaction of some territorial gain from Austria, but this would have meant more fighting and bitter resentment on the part of Austria after the war. Bismarck wanted to avoid both these contingencies. A prolonged and stubborn defence of the approaches to Vienna by the Austrians meant that France and even Russia might intervene before the real object of the war, which, for Bismarck, was simply the reconstruction of Germany under Prussian leadership, was assured.

Already the unforeseen and unwelcome success of the Prussians had stirred public opinion in France, and when the peace preliminaries started at Nikolsburg in Moravia, Napoleon instructed the French ambassador Benedetti to go there and see that the peace terms that were laid before Austria and her allies did not go beyond those which Bismarck had very shrewdly communicated in advance to the Emperor, and for which he had secured his approval. There was no such transgression, and therefore no

ground for intervention. As far as Austria was concerned the terms were easy. There were no annexations of Austrian territory, no penal indemnities, and no humiliating conditions of any kind. Austria was merely asked to turn her back on Germany and leave Prussia to take her place as the predominant State in the new confederation that was to be set up. Prussia was to be enlarged and to become a more compacted State as a result of annexations that were to be carried out at the expense of some of Austria's allies. The Schleswig-Holstein question was naturally settled for good and all, and both duchies became provinces of the Prussian kingdom. Hanover, which had led the opposition to Prussia in the north, lost its State-hood and in its new character as a Prussian province served to link up Rhenish Prussia in the west with the old Brandenburg section in the centre. Much the same thing happened in the case of all the North German States that had sided with Austria except Saxony, which was allowed to retain its political identity and its royal House, on condition that it joined Prussia's new confederacy.

Curiously enough, it was from his master King William rather than from the French Emperor that Bismarck met with opposition to this scheme of things, when it was first outlined. The king, like the good conservative that he was, disliked this wholesale deposing of crowned heads. Twenty years earlier Bismarck would have felt the same dislike for such revolutionary changes; but the times had altered, and the Minister-President of Prussia, following the technique of the First Napoleon in order to strengthen his country against the 'Third', won the king over to his plan. The French Emperor showed no undue concern at this vast aggrandisment of Prussia: he even appeared to welcome it, at least in the early days of the negotiations, but he definitely vetoed its extension south of the river Main. Baden, Würtemberg, Bavaria, and part of Hesse were to remain outside the Prussian orbit and were either to form a separate league or to maintain each an isolated independence. Bismarck had no objection. He did not wish to force these States to come into his new United States of Germany against their will. He was content to wait until they asked to be allowed to do so. And, as things turned out, it was not long before they realised,

thanks to a false step on the part of Napoleon, that it was to their interest to move in that direction. There was a detached portion of Bavaria, known as the Palatinate, that was situated on the west bank of the Rhine, adjacent to Alsace-Lorraine. The French had yielded up this fertile region with undisguised reluctance in 1815 and had yearned ever since for the day when they might recover it. Now, when the terms of peace had been definitely settled, Napoleon instructed his ambassador to ask for the cession to France of the Palatinate together with the city of Mainz as compensation for Prussia's expansion, despite the fact that neither was Prussian territory. Bismarck refused to consider the suggestion, and in the face of his determination the French Government did not press the matter. The French, as Bismarck very well knew, were not anxious or ready for war at that time.

Nevertheless French public opinion was deeply disturbed at the trend of events (it was said, for example, that Sadowa was a defeat for France), and Bismarck began to realise that, sooner or later the demand, or something like it, would be renewed with a more dangerous insistence. To cope more effectively with such a situation, if it should arise, Bismarck informed the South German States of the French move. He was negotiating separate peace settlements with them at the time and made known to Bavaria that the French Emperor had asked for the Palatinate. The reaction was immediate. Bavaria had always in the past looked to France for support against Austria or Prussia. Now she learnt that her old friend had designs on her territory, and that her only hope of withstanding a French attack was to rely on help from Prussia. The other South German States, especially Baden just across the Rhine from Alsace, took the same view. The result was that each proceeded to make a separate (and secret) military alliance with Prussia, whereby, in case of attack from outside Germany upon either party, the lesser State would immediately place its armed forces under the command of the King of Prussia. This was but a short remove from political union. Bismarck allowed the leaven to work and bided the time when the logic of events would bring the jealous laggards completely over to the national side.

The Treaty of Prague set free both the rivals of the earlier age

to pursue their own ends in their own way. Bismarck's understanding policy in regard to Austria was now justified to the full; for the latter, turning away from the West, set her house in order and combined with Hungary to establish that Dual Monarchy, which in later days, with the favour and support of the new Germany, was to recover something at least of Hapsburg prestige by a march to the East. This made it possible for Bismarck to build the framework of his new Federal state absolutely unhampered by any hostile influences, for by recognising the barrier of the River Main he had already provided against intervention by France or objection from the South German States. The North German Confederation was a very different political structure from the old *Bund*, by which Metternich had sought to stave off German unity in 1815 and which the events of 1866 had finally destroyed. It is true that, like the old Frankfort Diet, the controlling part of the new organisation, known as the Federal Council, was an assembly of delegates from the Governments of the States, and that Prussia was merely one of these States, with seventeen votes at her disposal as against forty-three distributed among the other States. But Prussia could usually count on the support of a sufficient number of these to enable her to get her way in the end. Moreover, the King of Prussia, who was the hereditary president of the Confederation, had far more executive power than the Emperor of Austria had ever had under the former system. He was commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the Confederation, not merely of those of Prussia; he conducted its foreign relations; and he appointed, to advise him in his executive capacity, a Chancellor (who was Bismarck) and other Ministers of State.

There was here, in fact, a real Federal Government—modelled in some respects on that of the U.S.A.—and though its powers were limited, so as not to encroach unduly upon the prerogatives of the ruling princes or interfere in the domestic affairs of the States, it faced the outside world at least as the expression of a unity such as Germany had scarcely ever possessed before. Finally the new Constitution provided for that popular and elective element which Bismarck had promised to an unbelieving public in the days

before the war. This was the *Reichstag*, 'elected by universal, equal, secret, and direct suffrage' on a population basis divorced entirely from the State system. Some commentators, especially in England, have described Bismarck's *Reichstag* as a sham—mainly, it would seem, because, unlike the *Reichstag* of the 1848 constitution, it did not enjoy the powers of an English House of Commons of making and unmaking ministries. But to take this point of view is to miss the whole point of Bismarck's scheme. What he sought to do was not to establish on German soil an English institution which he regarded as unsuitable to the German environment, but rather to associate with his new order the *people* of the area covered by the Confederation, as well as their rulers. Moreover, the *Reichstag* was allowed certain considerable powers of free discussion, which the future was to show were by no means entirely ineffective, and its consent was generally required for the enactment of ordinary legislation as well as financial measures.

When this Constitution was completed and put into operation in 1867, it was revealed to the world, perhaps for the first time, what a strong, well-knit organism Bismarck had built up in Europe to take the place of the feeble one that had functioned so long at Frankfort. In France most of all it was realised that something had happened which it had always been the prime object of every French Government, from the time of Richelieu onwards, to prevent; and there were many voices which declared that the existing French Government had not merely not prevented this thing from happening, but had actually helped it to happen. Henceforth that Government, yielding to popular clamour, sought, as far as such a thing was possible, to undo what was done; and the Emperor, and still more the Empress, fearful for the stability of the dynasty, set on foot all kinds of schemes and intrigues which had for their object the humiliation of the North German Confederation and the construction of an anti-Prussian *bloc* in Europe, which would be strong enough to crush it and break it up if Bismarck should call upon it to resist. The first of these intrigues arose out of what is known as the Luxemburg question. Luxemburg, though it had often been overrun and occupied by French

armies in the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries, had never formed part of France before the great Napoleon's time. Like the rest of the non-French lands to the west of the Rhine, it had then been annexed to France. In 1815 it had been placed under the rule of the King of the Netherlands, but not, like its neighbour Belgium, as a definite part of that kingdom. As a region which, despite certain French affinities, was mainly Germanic in speech, it was given the status of a Grand Duchy and was included in the German Confederation, like Holstein under the King of Denmark or Hanover under King George of England. There was no room for States of such an ambiguous character in Bismarck's North German Confederation, and Luxemburg was not included in that new creation. Nevertheless the Prussian garrison, which by Treaty had occupied the *City* of Luxemburg as a 'Federal fortress' under the old order, had not been withdrawn.

In his desire to gain some territorial advantage out of the changes that had come about in Germany, Napoleon made secret overtures to the Dutch king for the cession to France, in return for a money payment, of all the latter's rights over the Grand Duchy. The king was induced to agree to the suggestion, for Luxemburg was separated from Holland by a tract of Belgian territory and its people had little in common with his Dutch subjects. But when it became known in Germany that Napoleon was seeking to annex a 'German' land (for though Luxemburg was not a member of the North German Confederation, it still belonged, like Bavaria and the other South German states, to the *Zollverein*), and that 'German' troops would have to evacuate one of the bastions of the German defensive system, which would then pass into the keeping of a French force, the outcry was so loud that the Dutch king hastily withdrew his consent to the scheme. French disappointment and anger at the turn of events were extreme, and for a time war seemed likely to result, which would undoubtedly have been represented throughout Germany as a piece of deliberate French aggression. In the end England, which had her own reasons for disliking any expansion of France in the direction of Belgium, intervened with the proposal that a Conference of the Powers should be held in London to deal with the knotty

problem. The proposal was accepted by all parties, and the result was the neutralisation of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg under the guarantee of the Powers, together with the evacuation of the fortress by the Prussians and its subsequent dismantlement.

The importance of the Luxemburg episode lies in the fact that it revealed to the outside world the intensity of the national feeling that had developed in Germany in the previous twenty years. But to Bismarck at least the affair revealed more than this. It showed that French policy was definitely directed against the new Germany that had grown up around Prussia, and that whatever the Emperor might or might not wish, henceforth he would be forced to return to the historic role of French rulers, substituting the North German Confederation for the Hapsburg-controlled Germany of the past. The course of events soon convinced Bismarck that he was right. A scheme for the reform of the French army was set on foot, and there were diplomatic moves, emanating from Paris, designed to establish a triple alliance of Austria, France, and Italy. These moves were not very successful. Austria was unwilling to commit herself unless Italy was ready to do so; Italy refused to play the French game until the French garrison which occupied Rome in order to defend the temporal power of the Pope against the attacks of Italian patriots was withdrawn. The French Emperor, in deference to Catholic feeling, could not make this concession to Italian nationalism. So nothing had been done when Fortune took a hand in the game.

Bismarck, of course, had been watching these manœuvres, but there was little he could do to counter them. He saw to it that the extension of the Prussian military system to the whole of the confederate area was pushed forward as rapidly as possible, but, for the rest, he could only wait until some situation developed which he could exploit, to serve his designs, by forcing Napoleon to come out into the open and make some move that would be regarded as wanton aggression by all Germans, North and South alike. But he did not want to wait too long—not, for example, until the reform of the French army was complete, or the

diplomatic situation had deteriorated from the Prussian point of view and Austria—or even Russia—had come to an understanding with France.

At last such a situation as he desired was provided by the Spanish revolution of 1868 and the expulsion of the Bourbon Queen Isabella. The Spanish leaders asked a distant cousin of the King of Prussia (Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen) to let his name be put forward as a candidate for the vacant Spanish throne. After some hesitation the Prince agreed. At once a furious outcry broke out in the French Press, and the French ambassador was instructed to approach the Prussian king with a view to securing the withdrawal of the Prince's candidature. It is sometimes said that Bismarck secretly instigated the proposal to make a Hohenzollern king of Spain, just in order to provoke such a crisis as actually developed. Whether this be so or not—and there is no certainty on the point—there can be no doubt that Bismarck welcomed the proposal, when it was made, because it exactly served the purpose he had in view of inducing the French to go so far in their aggressive attitude that they could not retreat; and he was bitterly disappointed when King William, genuinely concerned to preserve the peace if he could, offered no objection when his kinsman withdrew his candidature.

The French did not disguise their satisfaction at what was considered to be a diplomatic defeat for Prussia, and Bismarck was contemplating resignation, when fortune again came to his aid and gave him all he had asked for and more—including full support from the king. This took the form of a fresh demand from the French Government directed to King William, who was staying at the holiday resort of Ems. It was presented by the French ambassador and required that the king should give an undertaking that there should be no revival in future of the Hohenzollern candidature for the Spanish throne. The king, who considered that he had done his part in preserving the peace, was shocked by this new evidence of French intransigence and refused to give the undertaking. He then sent Bismarck a long telegram, giving him an account of what had happened and leaving it to him to make the facts public if he thought fit.

Bismarck wasted no time. He drafted a *communiqué* based on the king's telegram and sent it to the newspapers forthwith. The result was what he expected and unquestionably hoped for. The French Government, urged on by its parliament, declared war on Prussia, and all Germany, including the South German States, rallied to Prussia's side. There seems little substance in the criticism sometimes made that Bismarck should not have altered the king's telegram, but should have sent it out to the Press in the form in which he had received it. Probably, if he had done so, the result would have been much the same; for the French were not in the mood to accept a refusal of their unreasonable and arrogant demand, and there were things in the telegram which would have served as 'a red rag for the Gallic bull' almost as well as Bismarck's *précis* did. The point Bismarck had to decide was whether he should suppress altogether the story of the interview between the king and the ambassador and take the chance that the French would make no further aggressive move at this time, or should seize the opportunity now presented of uniting Germans in a new War of Liberation from French domination. To do this he was bound to condense the king's message into manageable form, and he made sure that in this form it would lose nothing of its inflammatory quality.

Having thus got his war, Bismarck proceeded to ensure that Von Moltke and the General Staff should be allowed to wage it and gather in the fruits of victory undisturbed by intervention on the part of other Powers. Russia showed no sign of coming to the aid of her old enemy France. Austria would certainly not make any move unless Prussia met with initial setbacks. Italy had her eyes fixed on Rome. England might have proved difficult despite her suspicions of French motives; but Bismarck had taken due precautions against any meddlesomeness from that quarter. When the die was cast, he sent to *The Times* a copy of a draft treaty which the Emperor Napoleon had put before him four years previously at the time when the latter was endeavouring to secure compensation for Prussia's aggrandisement. This document provided for the partition of Belgium and the annexation of a considerable portion of it to France. England apparently was not to be consulted

in the matter, and the idea seemed to be that France and Prussia should combine to compel her to accept a *fait accompli*. Bismarck had promised at the time to give the matter his consideration, but had taken no further steps in that direction. Now he had the document published in England.

The effect was all that could be desired. Not even Disraeli would have intervened on behalf of France under the circumstances. Gladstone contented himself with exacting an undertaking from both belligerents that Belgium's neutrality would be respected and then stood aloof.

So France stood alone, and the Franco-German War went on to its inevitable conclusion. The French Empire collapsed, and a new German Empire, holding in its grasp the surrendered provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, arose to take its place as the predominant power in Europe. This was the crown of Bismarck's achievement. He had foreseen that the conditions of the war would inevitably stimulate among the South Germans a desire for union with the Northern Confederacy, and that without any pressure from Prussia the Governments of these independent States, whose soldiers were fighting along with those of the rest of Germany against the national enemy, would put forward proposals for their incorporation in the Confederation. There were difficulties in the way. Bavaria, in particular, wanted to have the best of both worlds, and insisted on being accorded a privileged position in the *Reich* in such matters as the retention of her own postal and diplomatic services.

Bismarck used all his influence to secure agreement on the part of the other States to these particularistic claims: he even induced the King of Prussia to abandon the title of 'Emperor of Germany', to which the King of Bavaria took exception, and accept instead that of 'German Emperor': all this in the interests of complete German unity in the face of a Europe which was becoming increasingly alarmed at the change in the balance of power brought about by the completeness of the German victory. Then on January 1, 1871, a new German Constitution came into force embracing all those States (except Austria) which had remained outside the Constitution of 1867. On the 18th of the month, at the

Palace of Versailles, built by Louis XIV, the greatest enemy of German unity, the new Empire was proclaimed, and the King of Prussia was saluted as its first Kaiser.

Thus came into existence what the modern German calls the Second Reich.

CHAPTER IX

IMPERIAL GERMANY

BISMARCK'S FEDERAL EMPIRE lasted for the best part of half a century, and the system of government thus set up worked well and appeared to satisfy the majority of the German people. Bismarck kept the control in his own hands till the death in 1888 of the old Emperor William, who, not without reason, considered that the man best fitted to guide the new Germany through the difficulties of its early years was the man who had borne the chief part in its construction. Kaiser Frederick was a dying man when he succeeded his father and took no steps during his short reign to contest the great minister's mastery of affairs.

It was otherwise with his son William II. In 1890 this vain and self-opinionated young man forced the resignation of the man who for twenty-eight years had been at the helm in Prussian, if not German, affairs; and by a curious coincidence it was twenty-eight years later that the imperial edifice which the latter had built up crashed about the ears of his ungracious sovereign. Whether Bismarck, if he had remained in office with the full enjoyment of his faculties during this period, could have averted the catastrophe which overtook Imperial Germany is open to doubt; for he himself by the very success of his achievements had set in motion forces which he, hardly less than William II and the men who advised him, would have found it difficult to control as the years went by.

After 1871 Bismarck became obsessed by a fear that a regenerated and rearmed France, unrelenting in her determination to recover the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, would succeed

where Napoleon III had failed and build up an anti-German combination of Powers which would seek to undo his work and split up Germany again into her component parts. To prevent this he set out deliberately to isolate France. Russia and Austria were his chief concern in this respect. Britain was not likely to abandon her traditional policy of eschewing entangling alliances with Continental countries unless her interests or her naval supremacy were threatened or challenged, and before very long he observed with satisfaction that she was developing a quarrel of her own with France over Egypt. Italy too found a new grievance against France when the latter, in her eagerness to extend her hold on North Africa, stepped in before her neighbour and set up a protectorate in Tunis, where there were considerably more Italians than Frenchmen. Bismarck gave every encouragement to this move and others of a similar kind, not only because he hoped they would persuade the French people to substitute a policy of colonial expansion for the pursuit of a dream of recovering what they had lost in Europe, but also because adventures overseas could hardly fail to embroil France with other countries and particularly with her old rival, England.

Meanwhile more positive measures were needed to keep Russia and Austria friendly with Germany and with one another. Even before the victory over France was complete, Bismarck had taken the first step in this direction by supporting Russia when the latter, seizing the opportunity created by France's helplessness, announced that she considered herself no longer bound by the conditions of peace imposed upon her at the end of the Crimean War, which required that her Black Sea coast should be demilitarised. In consequence of this timely help Russia had won her point despite the protest—unsupported by any suggestion of action—of the British Government; so that, when in the period immediately after the war Bismarck proceeded to suggest a common understanding between the three Eastern Powers, he found the Czar complaisant. Thus there came into existence the so called *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* or League of the Three Emperors, in which Bismarck hoped to find the means of harmonising the interests of Austria and Russia in the Balkans.

It was over this Balkan question that Germany's superman met with his first real failure. Hitherto he had appeared to control events and make them serve his ends; but the general flare-up that occurred in European Turkey in the seventies ruined his plans. The Russians, intoxicated by the success of their single-handed intervention, imposed on the Sultan a settlement which, while it merely alarmed Britain, entirely ignored the plans of Austria for a move southward towards Salonika. Austria therefore readily supported Disraeli's demand for a revision of Russia's peace terms, and Bismarck had to make up his mind as to which side he should take in this quarrel.

It was a difficult choice for him. From his standpoint Germany had no interest in Balkan affairs, which in his own words were "not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier"; but when he had driven Austria out of Germany, he had encouraged her to look for compensation in south-eastern Europe, and if the way forward in this direction was barred, she might turn her eyes back to the west and look for an ally to help her to revive her German connections. In that case it might not be long before French schemes for revenge began to take shape. On the other hand, he had allowed the Czar to entertain the belief that when the time came for Russia to resume her push southward in the direction of Constantinople and an outlet on the Aegean Sea, German support would be available, just as it had been over the question of the re-militarisation of Sebastopol and the Black Sea coast. If the Czar were now to be disappointed in his expectations, he might swing over and cultivate the friendship even of a Republican France.

But there was no help for it. The German Chancellor had to make a decision, and as the Russian danger seemed the more remote, he chose to ignore it, for the time being at least; and though he professed to play the part of 'the honest broker' at the Congress of Berlin—which among other things symbolised the new primacy of Germany in European affairs—he none the less let it be understood that he stood by the Austrian demand that the 'Big Bulgaria' of Russia's creation, which blocked the way to Salonika, should be reduced to more modest proportions. That Bismarck

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expected that there would be early signs of a *rapprochement* between France and Russia is seen in the fact that the following year (1879) he arranged the famous Dual Alliance with Austria, which three years later by the adhesion of Italy, filled as she was with rancour against France over the Tunis affair, became the Triple Alliance.

These engagements—originally secret—soon became known, and it might have been expected that some definite counter-move from the side of Russia would speedily follow. But in 1881 the 'Liberator' Czar, Alexander II, was assassinated by Nihilists; and Alexander III, regarding all liberals and republicans as little better than the men who killed his father, could not bring himself to enter into friendly relations with the now staunchly republican Government of France. Thus an opportunity was afforded to Bismarck of rebuilding the shattered edifice of the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*. But the new League lasted no longer than the old. Fresh troubles broke out in the Balkans and Bismarck was hard put to it to keep the peace between the two great rival Powers which were Germany's 'friends'.

It was then (1887) that he made his last effort to 'keep the wire to Petersburg open' by negotiating a secret pact with Russia which was not even disclosed to Austria. This Reinsurance Treaty, as he called it, was to run for no more than three years in the first instance, but was renewable at the end of that time. Hardly was it signed, however, before the anti-German tone of the Russian press caused Bismarck himself to feel that he had gone far enough in placating Russia, perhaps at the expense of Austria, and in a speech in the *Reichstag* he declared—protesting too much, it may be thought—that "we Germans fear God and nothing else in the world". Moreover, when Russia, seeking foreign capital for the extension of her strategic railways, applied for the help of a loan to the German money-market, she was met at the instance of the German Government with a blank refusal. She forthwith turned to France, whose statesmen put no obstacle in the way of using the savings of French *bourgeois* and peasantry to win for their country escape from the position of lonely impotence to which German diplomacy had so long condemned it. Before he gave up office, in fact, the Chancellor could see that he had failed.

His successors did nothing to repair his failure. The Reinsurance Treaty was not renewed in 1890, and three years later the Czar Alexander III, his scruples at last overcome, made an offensive and defensive alliance with the French Republic.

One of Bismarck's post-war aims had thus been defeated—to keep France friendless and helpless before the armed might of Germany. The other still remained—to develop all the resources of Germany and consolidate the national unity that his genius had established. Here his success was unquestionable, and he was doubtless thinking of this success when he gave utterance to the defiant words quoted above. Nevertheless he began rather badly, for he quarrelled with the Catholic Church about the degree of control which the Prussian State was to exercise in matters hitherto regarded as outside its province, such as the marriage laws, the education of the clergy, and the inspection of monastic establishments. This struggle, the *Kulturkampf*, as it was called, was prolonged for several years and produced a good deal of bitter feeling, until Bismarck, realising that he was endangering the success of his main purpose by raising up new enemies not merely outside but inside Germany, where the opposition of the Centre or Catholic Party in the *Reichstag* had assumed a formidable character, withdrew from his extreme position, repealed the obnoxious Prussian laws, and agreed to a working compromise in the field of education and other matters.

Meanwhile, his other plans for consolidating and strengthening the political edifice that he had constructed were being put into shape, especially on the economic side. Some of the more ardent members of the National Liberal Party of the *Reichstag* would have liked to see a move made away from federalism and in the direction of closer unity, which would have had the effect of reducing the power of the individual States and increasing that of the Central or Imperial Government. But Bismarck knew only too well that such a course was impossible at that time. He himself would have liked to put into effect a scheme of national state railways, to cover the whole area of the *Reich*, absorbing those that were privately owned as well as others that were controlled by State Governments.

Apart altogether from economic considerations, this would have harmonised with the strategical design of treating Germany as a single unit for military purposes, for which the Constitution provided by making the Emperor commander-in-chief of all the armed forces of the *Reich*. However, he met with such opposition in the matter that the scheme was dropped. Prussia continued to maintain her own State system and the other States made such arrangements as seemed good to them. Even in such a matter as the post and telegraph services, which were obviously well adapted for a unified administration, the Reich Government was bound to give way before Bavaria's claim to maintain her own State post office, apart from and independent of that of the *Reich* as a whole. But he was successful in establishing a single national currency system based on the gold standard with the mark as the unit, as well as a Central Bank of Issue, the Reichsbank, over which the Federal Government exercised a certain measure of control. The economic foundations of the *Reich* had of course been laid long before in the *Zollverein*, to which reference was made in an earlier chapter; and under cover of the *Zollparlament*, as the controlling council of the Union was called, German trade and industry had made considerable progress; while the authority of the *Zollparlament* itself was sufficient, even before political union was accomplished, to enable it to persuade the constituent States to accept and enforce within their borders a uniform (metric) system of weights and measures. With the establishment of a regular Federal legislature under the new Constitution the *Zollparlament* became superfluous, and decisions regarding fiscal and trade questions fell to the *Reichstag* and the Council of the Empire.

Thus it was that in 1879 Bismarck, breaking away from the 'free trade' tendencies that had hitherto prevailed in German political circles, introduced into the *Reichstag* a new protective tariff. In due course it was passed into law, and so began the process whereby Germany, like the U.S. of America after the Civil War and under the influence of the same line of economic thought, deliberately shut out as much as possible from her home market supplies of cheap agricultural produce in the interests of the

agrarians and landowners, especially the Junkers of East Prussia, as well as cheap manufactured goods in the interest of her developing industries. Some observers have held that there was no political design, in the first instance at least, in this movement away from free trade, and that it was the inevitable result of the flooding of the country with cheap goods as the effect of the huge indemnity paid by France made itself felt in trade relations between Germany and her neighbours; in other words the flood of cheap goods *was* the indemnity, which had found its way into Germany through the many devious channels of international trade and had temporarily dislocated the balance of industry in the conqueror country and so put many workers out of employment. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that before long it became the settled policy of the German Government under both Bismarck and his successors to encourage under the shelter of a high-tariff system the growth of large business enterprises, especially in the heavy industries. Such a policy, it was believed, would tend to make Germany more self-reliant, more independent of outside supplies if the time ever came when she would have to fight that defensive war, which Bismarck ever kept in his mind's eye, against a combination of enemies, to hold what she had won.

Defence was undoubtedly the essence of Bismarck's creed at this stage in his career. Germany to him was one of the 'saturated' countries, as he described it. He had spent the best years of his life building it up as a European Power and he had no aspirations after world-power (*Weltmacht*), of which his successors talked so readily and so confidently. Nevertheless circumstances forced his hand. It was an age of rapid industrial development based on technical achievement, and large-scale capitalist organisation in Germany, as in England and the U.S.A., was bound by the law of its being to maintain, if it could, its full industrial capacity. The only way to do this, when it had supplied its home market, was to seek out foreign ones. Hence German mercantile effort soon became expansive and even aggressive, and looked to the German state organisation more and more to support it in its persistent search for new worlds to conquer. The German state machine did not fail it. Even before Bismarck left office,

Government subsidies were being given to trans-oceanic steamship companies to enable them to meet and to overcome, if possible, the competition of the mercantile marine of other and older-established nations—a policy which was developed and extended in the post-Bismarckian era.

All this meant a demand for colonies. German merchants and industrialists brought pressure to bear upon Government through the great National Liberal Party, which by this time was more national than liberal, to take over the territorial winnings of Lüderitz in S.W. Africa and of Karl Peters in East Africa; while Bismarck, who had considered Germany to be 'saturated', found himself bargaining with Gladstone and Salisbury in the 'eighties and offering German support in the quarrel with France over the British occupation of Egypt in return for a complaisant attitude on the part of the British Government to the establishment of these and other colonies, even when, as almost invariably happened, they were regarded with suspicion and dislike by British inhabitants of South Africa and Australasia.

So it went on. Togoland, the Cameroons, New Guinea, and the Pacific Islands, regions which hitherto had been appropriated by none of the colonising nations, all began to display the imperial flag of Germany and by so doing informed the world that German interests were no longer limited to the defence of the Fatherland at home. The full sequel of this progression from a European to an overseas empire, which showed itself in the building of an Imperial German Navy, came later, when Bismarck had passed from the scene; indeed, by a strange coincidence the first Navy Law was passed by the German Legislature in the very year of his death, and though he had no part or lot in this fulfilment of the efforts of the German Navy League, it was the inevitable result of the success which attended him in his task of making Germany a great nation with a Government which fostered and controlled the activities of its citizens.

There was another result of this success—still less perhaps foreseen by Bismarck and far less to his liking than that just outlined. Socialism as an influence in German affairs dates from the mid-century revolutionary epoch, when the effort to give

Germany a national democratic constitution broke down under the opposition of the restored Hapsburg despotism and the inveterate prejudices of Prussian Junkers like Bismarck. At the beginning of 1848, just before the revolution started, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, both Germans, sent forth their Communist Manifesto to the 'workers of all the world', but it was in Germany that the movement that this action initiated first took organised shape. The steady industrialisation of Prussia and other parts of Germany helped it along.

Then in 1867, just as complete political union was in sight in Germany, there came from the exiled Marx in England his masterpiece of dogmatic socialistic literature. The publication of *Das Kapital* was an epoch-making event for socialists everywhere, but it was of enormous value to the newly established Social-Democratic Party in Germany, for it gave the members an organised body of doctrine and a formal creed which made them a far more powerful force, morally and intellectually, in German politics than would otherwise would have been the case. German union and the establishment of a *Reichstag* elected by universal suffrage gave the Socialists an excellent opportunity of bringing their theories to the notice of the masses. In the *Reichstag* elections of 1877 they polled nearly half a million votes and won twelve seats.

Bismarck became alarmed. It was not so much the Marxist doctrines of the Socialists that troubled him; it was the revolutionary zeal and democratic fervour that accompanied the propagation of these doctrines that made him feel the need for countermeasures. For the new party had not merely a social programme; it had a political one as well. It carried on the tradition of the men of 1848 and demanded control of the Executive by the Elective Chamber, that is to say, by the *Reichstag*, after the fashion adopted by the new French Republic from the British model. Here indeed the German Social Democratic Party was far more liberal than most of the so-called German Liberals, and as the years passed by and the difficulties in the way of carrying into effect socialism on the Marxian model were more clearly realised, it was upon this question of Responsible Government—as the thing is called in Britain and her Dominions—that the Social Democrats

in the *Reichstag*, steadily increasing in number, concentrated their attention, until they assumed the character of something like a permanent parliamentary opposition.

All this, of course, was anathema to Bismarck, and not less so to the old Emperor William, who held strong views about his absolute prerogative both as King of Prussia and as Kaiser, though he never used the flamboyant mannerisms so beloved by his grandson in order to express himself on the subject. In 1878 Bismarck was presented with a reasonably good excuse for stamping out the movement before it assumed larger and more dangerous proportions. Two attempts that summer were made on the life of the old Emperor, who was an immensely popular figure in Germany and universally respected in the outside world. The Chancellor placed the responsibility for the crime upon Social Democracy and brought in a Bill before the *Reichstag* for the dissolution of the party and the suppression of all socialist activities. The *Reichstag* rejected the Bill—there were still too many real liberals there—and Bismarck retaliated by dissolving the *Reichstag*. In the election that followed, the Chancellor got a complaisant majority and the Bill was now passed.

Having destroyed, as he thought, the more dangerous side of Social Democracy, Bismarck now proceeded to draw the sting of its appeal to the masses—who, he believed, were mainly interested in projects for the improvement of their material condition—by bringing forward and passing into law a scheme of what to-day would be called social security. In those days and for long afterwards it was referred to, sometimes with hostile intent, as Bismarck's state socialism. It was a good piece of work of its kind, and statesmen of other countries, including Great Britain, who were tired of unadulterated *laisser-faire* in the treatment of the working classes, showed great interest in German schemes for old age pensions and sickness and accident insurance for wage-earners carried on under state control and financed in part by the state.

But neither anti-socialist legislation nor Bismarckian socialism hindered for long the expansion of the Social Democratic Party. The law of 1878, which was of temporary application only, was

renewed at intervals during the next decade, but was finally allowed to expire, without renewal, in 1890 soon after Bismarck's resignation. During this period the voting strength of the Party at *Reichstag* elections more than trebled itself over the figure of 1877, despite a not unnatural decline in the years immediately following the first enactment of the law. As for the social insurance plan, that was accepted by the workers but did not satisfy them. Moreover, it fitted in harmoniously with Bismarck's general scheme of benevolent control of the economic life of the country for the benefit of the country: government, in fact, of the people for the people, but not by the people. In short, what he did for the workers in industry was merely the counterpart of what he was doing by tariff and subsidy for the expansion of industry and the prosperity of its owners.

Bismark's work was now virtually done. It is true that his plan for giving Germany an all-embracing legal and judicial system was still incomplete; indeed, the new Civil Code after long delays did not come into force till 1900, two years after his death. But enough had been done ten years earlier to make it certain that here, as in most other departments of national life, there was to be an end of confusion and conflicting purposes. So when he withdrew from the control of affairs, Bismarck, though unsatisfied and resentful at the manner of his going, had good grounds for feeling that what he had done he had done well. Germany was a strong (in the Continental sense) and well-governed state; it was held in respect, if not exactly in high regard, by its neighbours; it had assumed the character of the leading industrial nation of Continental Europe and might easily in due time, with its expanding population, its high level of technical skill, and first-rate educational system, become a still more powerful economic force. For twenty years it had sought after and maintained peace in Europe, though possessed of the most powerful and efficient war machine then existing. In a word, Germany since 1871 had become everything it had not been before that date. Yet in another twenty years, though still unquestionably powerful and enjoying an even greater degree of economic prosperity, it had become, in a sense, isolated; it was regarded with suspicion, if not dislike, by

almost all its neighbours, as well as by other nations further afield.

The cause of all this appears to lie, in part at least, in what may be called the nature of things. A country reaching nationhood after much tribulation and suppression of its efforts in that direction would display a good many of the characteristics of what, in the case of an individual, is sometimes called an inferiority complex. Its representatives are apt to maintain a boastful and even arrogant attitude towards the outer world. So it was with Germany and the Germans—or at any rate with the business men, the professors, the officials among them, to say nothing of the soldiers and eventually the sailors, like Grand Admiral Tirpitz. Success went to their heads, and they spoke and wrote of '*Der Tag*'—the day that was coming, Germany's Day, when the old and effete nations would have to give place to the new, vigorous ones, such as their own.

These were the pan-Germans, the forerunners of the Nazis of to-day. Sometimes the Kaiser seemed to make himself their mouthpiece, sometimes he appeared to repent of his indiscretions and, remembering that his mother was an English princess, offered friendship to England; though when Joseph Chamberlain tried to turn this mood to account in 1898 and establish something like a formal alliance, he was rebuffed, and England began slowly to turn her eyes in other directions and took but little interest in similar proposals that came from the other side in 1901.

The Czar was courted as a fellow sovereign with divine rights, but German policy continued to support Austrian designs in the Balkans, and German commercial interests received every possible encouragement from their Government in their efforts to secure economic control of the Ottoman Empire, both before and after the Young Turk revolution of 1908; and economic control seemed to foreshadow something suggestive of political control. Sometimes the Kaiser went out of his way to flatter or conciliate France; but France was adamant, and so long as Alsace-Lorraine remained part of the German Reich, not even her rage against England, when Marchand had to withdraw from Fashoda, could dispose her to enter into an anti-British compact with Germany,

which some pan-Germans (though not the Kaiser at that juncture) wished to create at a time when South Africa was still something of an embarrassment to the British.

Here we get the other cause of Germany's diplomatic decline. Her foreign relations were woefully mishandled by those at the head of affairs. Undoubtedly the instability and vanity of the Kaiser were in part responsible for this condition of things, but, despite his high-sounding claim to supremacy in the state, he was not by any means the real governing force, for behind him worked other men. There were the four chancellors of those twenty-odd years—Caprivi, Hohenlohe, Bülow, and last, and perhaps least, Bethmann-Hollweg—who contrast significantly with the one Chancellor that guided the Federation and received the steadfast support of its dignified Head from 1866 to 1890.

And behind these were yet others who rarely appeared in the public eye, some constituting a court camarilla bringing influence to bear upon the Kaiser apart from his ministers. One—of the name of Holstein—was a Foreign Office official who is said to have been the real author of the notorious telegram of congratulation that the Kaiser sent to the Transvaal President Krüger after the failure of the Jameson Raid. Another was the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Kiderlen-Wächter, who, against the better judgment of Bethmann-Hollweg, succeeded in getting the gunboat *Panther* despatched to Moroccan Agadir in 1911. All these turns of policy, these manifestations of a determination to impress the world, in season and out of season, with the spectacle of the greatness of Germany, brought the inevitable reactions. Germans complained that their country was being encircled, but clearly the encirclement was something that they had brought about themselves. When Bismarck went to war with France in 1870, he saw to it that France should be Prussia's only enemy, but the men who followed him made enemies for Germany on all sides, and they brought them all together at the same time.

Bismarck had been unable to avert the coming together of France and Russia, but the Kaiser made the alliance a certainty in 1893. Britain was startled out of her complacency in 1896 by Germany's unfriendly interest in her South African difficulties,

just about the time that Japan found herself deprived of Port Arthur, which she had captured from China, because Germany chose for this purpose to ally herself with France and Russia. Then Germany began to build her new navy, and she did it in such a way and carried out her plan on such a vast scale that the world interpreted her action, as Britain did, as a definite challenge to British sea-power.

Britain and France now sought to understand one another better and endeavoured in 1904 to clear up their various misunderstandings. They might have failed, for they had much to clear up, and the French Foreign Minister, Delcassé, had by no means an easy job to persuade his fellow countrymen to give the new policy a trial. But in the spring of 1905 the Kaiser paid a visit to the Sultan of Morocco and informed him that Germany was ready to protect him, if his independence was threatened from outside: an oblique reference to France, to whose sphere of influence Britain had now agreed that Morocco belonged. This was just after Russia had sustained a crushing defeat at the hands of the Japanese. The Kaiser followed this up in the summer with a clumsy attempt to revive the scheme of an anti-British coalition, which he himself had vetoed at the time of the South African War, and actually succeeded, during a cruise in the Baltic, in temporarily winning the Czar's consent to the plan, only to find that neither his own nor the Czar's ministers thought much of it; so that it had to be dropped.

Meanwhile Bülow, the German Chancellor, went to work in a different way and demanded a Conference of the Powers to settle the status of Morocco. The Conference was held at Algeçiras, in Spain, in January 1906, the French Government yielding to the pressure of events and sacrificing Delcassé, who had opposed it. But Bülow did not win the diplomatic success that he had expected, for none of the Powers took up the German point of view with any enthusiasm, while Sir Edward Grey, the new British Foreign Secretary, supported France as strongly as his predecessor Lansdowne might have done. The upshot was that the Germans, who had hoped to isolate France, found that they themselves were isolated, and the *Entente Cordiale*, which was to have been dis-

credited, was confirmed and established in the eyes of the world. Moreover Grey, aided by French goodwill, pursued with success a like policy of clearing up misunderstandings with Russia, with the result that in the following year an agreement was reached with the Czar's Government whereby Persia, and its division into British and Russian spheres of influence, served much the same purpose as Egypt and Morocco did in the improvement of Franco-British relations.

Disappointed but not dismayed at the turn of events, Germany's rulers looked elsewhere than in Africa for compensation. By this time they had learnt to look at the Balkans and the Ottoman lands beyond through their own and not just Austrian eyes. It was about the middle nineties that the Kaiser began to assume the pose of the friend of Turkey and of Islam. Those were the days of hideous massacres of Armenians and fierce repression of insurrectionary movements in Crete, followed by a disastrous defeat of the Greeks in the war which they waged with the Turks for the sake of their Cretan brethren. In all these matters the German Government carefully abstained from taking part in the various protests and interventions of the other powers, which were initiated by Great Britain; while in 1898 the Kaiser made it convenient to make a tour of Palestine and took the opportunity thus afforded of paying a visit to Sultan Abdul Hamid, who was universally reprobated in Western Europe as the bloodstained murderer of his Christian subjects.

In the following year Germany got her reward, when the Anatolian Railway Company, a German concern which already operated a considerable length of line from the shores of the Bosphorus to the centre of Asia Minor, secured from the Sultan a concession allowing it to construct an extension of this line to Baghdad and thence in due course to the head of the Persian Gulf. The scheme was never carried out, because Great Britain had treaty rights from Turkey which enabled her to veto it, and she exercised these rights and did not withdraw her opposition until just before the outbreak of war in 1914, and then only in respect of the portion of the projected extension which ended at Baghdad. From 1907 onwards, however, the Germans became

more insistent in their demands for a settlement of this question and showed clearly their intention of securing economic penetration and control of a region in which Russia and Great Britain in an equal degree were vitally interested.

The overthrow of the Sultan in 1908 by the Young Turk Revolution seemed likely at first to endanger all these plans of Germany, for it appeared to foreshadow the revival of Turkish power in Europe and Asia alike. That, at least, was the view of the Austrian Government, which forthwith annexed outright the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which it had been administering in the name of the Sultan since 1878, thereby precipitating a first-class European crisis. The German Government took charge of the situation in characteristic style. Russia was threatened with war when she protested at this breach of the Treaty of Berlin, which put an end to the hopes of her *protégée* Servia for the reunion of the Jugo-Slav peoples and, in general, did severe damage to her own prestige. But Russia was still suffering from the effects of the Japanese War and the abortive revolution that followed it and was in no condition to fight.

The British navy was still greatly superior to the German, but the British army was just beginning to undergo the reorganisation prescribed by the Haldane reforms; and, without strong British and French support, the Czar was not disposed to press matters to an extreme. So on this occasion at least Germany had things all her own way, and the Young Turks showed their appreciation of the situation by putting themselves at her disposal, even as Abdul Hamid had done. Cheered by this undoubted success the directors of German policy presently switched their attention back to the west, and three years later (1911) a German warship put into the harbour of Agadir on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, and the French Government was informed that the vessel would remain there until the French expeditionary force which had been sent to the Moroccan capital was withdrawn. Forceful British intervention, combined doubtless with the realisation that the Kiel Canal, then undergoing extensive alterations, would not yet allow of the passage of German dreadnoughts from the Baltic to the North Sea, brought this episode to a conclusion, though only after

some not very valuable territory in the French Congo had been yielded to the Germans.

And so we come to the penultimate stage in the story of the decline and fall of Imperial Germany. The first Balkan War of 1912–1913 created a situation that neither the German Government nor anyone else had foreseen. The army of Germany's *protégée* Turkey, organised and trained by German experts, was hopelessly defeated, and, but for the intervention of the Powers, Constantinople itself would have fallen into the hands of the victorious Balkan Allies; though what they would have done with it when they had captured it can only be guessed at. But at least they had made a complete end of Ottoman power and misrule in the Balkan peninsula.

This was the situation with which German statesmanship had to deal. Broadly speaking, the German method was to let Austria make the running in the Balkans, with which the latter's political interests were so intimately concerned, while Berlin reserved for itself the oversight of the Eastern Question as a whole, and saw to it that Russia did not obstruct Hapsburg plans for putting an end to the pan-Serbian designs of the Karageorgevitch dynasty at Belgrade. Here we get the root cause of the outbreak of war in 1914. The men in control of German policy were determined that Germany's dominance in the Middle-East should be secured. Austrian control of communications across the Balkans was an essential feature of this scheme; yet Servia lay right athwart these communications and, flushed with her victories in the Balkan Wars, she made no secret of her hopes of some day creating an even greater Servia, which would absorb not merely the recently annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina but large tracts of old Austrian territory as well. Therefore, since Servia, old and new, refused to come back inside the Hapsburg orbit from which she had escaped in 1903, when the pro-Austrian Obrenovitch dynasty had been exterminated, it would be necessary for Servia sooner or later to be suppressed.

The real question was when this was to be done. The German General Staff said, 'Sooner'. They had a plan, based upon one formulated nine years earlier, at the time of the first Moroccan

crisis, by Count von Schlieffen, the Chief of the General Staff of that period. Great Britain, though on friendly terms with France in 1905, had not at that time begun seriously to reform her army and was in no condition to give much military assistance to France. Von Schlieffen, therefore, urged that the threat involved in the Franco-Russian Alliance should be met and dissipated once for all. This would be accomplished by a swift move into France through Belgium, by which the fortified line of the French eastern frontier could be turned. If this manœuvre was carried out efficiently, France could be knocked out before the slow-moving armies of either Russia or Britain could come to her aid; and if Russia, weakened by her war with Japan, was foolish enough to make an attempt to do so, the full force of the German war machine could be turned eastward and in combination with Austria make an end of Russia's military power. This was in the winter of 1905—after the failure of the Kaiser's grandiose scheme for a Continental alliance aimed at Britain—when a new Liberal Government had just been installed in London and a General Election was impending in the country; so that the time was not inopportune for such a venture as Von Schlieffen suggested. Nevertheless as we have seen, the German Government preferred at that time diplomatic methods to war, and the General Staff's advice was not followed.

Now in the spring of 1913, with the need for liquidating the Eastern Question and removing the threat to German communications, the Schlieffen plan was brought forward once more. Bethmann-Hollweg did not like it; he wanted to avoid war and was inclined to let things drift. But the General Staff pointed out that Russia was getting on with her scheme of strategic railways, which was going to make mobilisation a much speedier business for her in the not very distant future; and though Britain, despite the Haldane reforms, would still be unable to do anything to avert the early collapse of France, she was steadily improving her military organisation, and delay in this direction too was dangerous. Grand Admiral Tirpitz supported the General Staff in their plea for action. When the Kiel Canal was once more in full commission (the widening process was actually finished in August 1914), he

would be able to use his big ships in the Baltic and the North Sea indifferently, and was confident that he could, to a very large extent, neutralise the British fleet in northern waters.

The Chancellor's opposition was overborne, the Kaiser gave way and plans were made for a large expansion of the army and for meeting the cost of these preparations by raising an extraordinary levy of 1000 million marks (£50,000,000). All that was now wanted was a suitable occasion for giving effect to the plan. The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, on June 28, 1914, was a godsend; but if it had not happened, it can scarcely be doubted that there would have been other opportunities, though not necessarily as suitable. So, with a superficial adherence to the Bismarckian technique, Germany's rulers called for war in 1914, and most of their people answered the call, including the majority of the Social Democrats; but they entirely ignored the factor which Bismarck always kept in view, that the enemy should be attacked when he is isolated and friendless.

Nevertheless, the Schlieffen plan came very near to success, and perhaps if Von Moltke the second had not formed quite such a low estimate of the speed of Russian mobilisation and had made his dispositions accordingly; and if Haldane's expeditionary force had not come quite so soon into action on the French flank, he might after all have pulled off a coup in comparison with which Von Moltke the first's victory at Sedan in 1870 would have looked small indeed.

But there is little profit in considering the 'might-have-beens' of history. The onrush of the Germans was stayed, but they could not be pushed back inside their own frontiers, and while the French and the still inadequate British land forces were vainly beating against the trench fortifications of the West, the German plan was, as it were, reversed. A mighty effort was organised to shatter Russia in 1915, to be followed by an equally mighty effort to destroy France in 1916. Again the plan just failed of success. The Russians were driven out of Austrian territory, which they had invaded, and also out of Poland and the Baltic lands, which they had so long dominated; but their armies, though sorely hurt, were not destroyed and struck hard again at Austria in the following

year. Then once again the German assault was held in the West at Verdun; and the British, at last pulling their weight on land, even as they had been doing from the first at sea—to Germany's increasing economic distress—fell upon the common enemy on the Somme battlefield, where, if they suffered terrible casualties themselves, they also caused such losses to the German invaders, in that desperate struggle to drive them from the soil of France and Belgium, that they all but broke the heart of the German people.

The invaders still remained, pressed back ever so little; but a new note now began to be heard in Germany. The idea of a negotiated in place of a dictated peace began to gain ground, and the demand of the Social Democrats in the *Reichstag* for a more responsible form of government received more general support, as popular confidence in the direction of the war declined and it became realised that the men in charge of these great affairs were answerable in theory to no one but the Kaiser; which in practice often meant to themselves. An attempt was made to stave off the evil day of surrender to this demand by giving way to Grand Admiral Tirpitz, who was sure that he could put an end to the Allied blockade, which was squeezing the economic life out of Germany, if he were given a free hand to use the submarine to the limit of its powers without regard to protests of neutrals, great or small.

So, at the beginning of 1917, Germany entered upon her unrestricted U-boat campaign, against the advice of the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, now near the end of his tether. By the summer it was clear that the hopes centred on a speedy British collapse were not likely to be realised, while on the other side of the account there was the entry into the war of the U.S.A., whose soldiers, despite Tirpitz's assurance to the contrary, seemed likely to reach Europe in ever-increasing numbers, and whose sailors were already taking an active part in the anti-submarine work of Germany's enemies. Pressure on the German Government to seek terms of peace increased as a consequence of these disappointments. It came with great insistence from the unhappy ally Austria, whose economic position was far worse than that of Germany

herself; and when the Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Czernin, frankly admitting that the submarine effort had failed, proposed that negotiations for peace should be started on the basis of the renunciation of all annexations, his plea received support from many Germans, including even the Crown Prince of Bavaria and the Prussian, or German, Crown Prince. In the *Reichstag* the movement showed itself strong enough to permit of the passing on July 19 of a resolution, calling for a 'peace of understanding and reconciliation', which was proposed by the Catholic deputy Erzberger and commented on not unsympathetically by the Chancellor.

But the Kaiser would have none of this. He was now completely under the influence of the General Staff and gave them a free hand to deal with the situation. Bethmann-Hollweg was at last sent about his business, and a nonentity named Michaelis was set up in his place to carry out the will of Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and Tirpitz. Michaelis was tried and found wanting, and in three months a Bavarian Catholic, Count Hertling, was appointed Chancellor, with the evident hope of placating the Centre Party in the *Reichstag* and so weakening the demand for responsible government and peace by negotiation.

Meanwhile the General Staff had found a new hope of victory in the Russian revolution and the disintegration of the Russian armies that followed in its wake. They had smashed the much advertised French offensive in the spring, but had failed to exploit their success and the demoralisation which took hold of the French army after its defeat, contenting themselves during the summer and autumn with holding the British attack in Flanders and supporting the Austrian Caporetto offensive against the Italians. In November the Bolsheviks gained control in Petrograd and Moscow and forthwith started negotiations for peace. They had nothing to offer but submission, and in March 1918, they were forced to accept the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which, in conjunction with the earlier Treaty of Bucharest, imposed upon the Rumanians after their defeat in 1916, was intended to give Germany all and more than all that she set out to achieve in 1914. Then the German leaders massed their armies in the West with the intention of

dividing and shattering the Franco-British forces before the Americans were ready to intervene. For the last time they tried, convinced themselves that they had succeeded, and failed.

Then came Foch's series of counter-strokes, and the Germans began to fall back all along the line. The reaction in Germany was catastrophic. In September Chancellor Hertling bowed to the storm and resigned, and his place was taken by Prince Max of Baden, who accepted office on the definite understanding that he was to be the head of a ministry responsible to the *Reichstag* and dependent for its continuance in office on the support and confidence of that body and not of the Kaiser. Thus the parties of the Left and the Centre, and particularly the Social Democrats, had won their point, and Germany henceforth was to be regarded as a parliamentary democracy like France or Great Britain. It was thought that this change in Germany's political system would help to bring about peace negotiations with the western powers. The new Chancellor thought so too, and he made a move in that direction on October 5th by addressing a note on the subject to the President of the U.S.A. But Prince Max, though a liberal, was nevertheless a monarchist and a relative of the Kaiser, and while he desired peace, he was also concerned to preserve monarchy as an institution in Germany and, in particular, the Hohenzollern dynasty. Events, however, moved too fast for him. By the end of October Germany's allies, Bulgaria, Turkey, and, most significantly of all, Austro-Hungary, were beaten out of the war, and in the last-mentioned conglomerate state military defeat was followed by revolution and disintegration.

The infection spread to Germany, and the hammerblows in the West, which steadily forced back the German soldiers towards their own frontiers, increased the alarm and despondency of the civil population. Then came mutiny in the German fleet, which refused to put to sea when ordered to try a last desperate venture against the British naval forces in the North Sea, and Soldiers and Workers Councils on the Russian model were set up in the naval ports. Meanwhile the High Command in the West had recognised the inevitable: it knew that the German army was now threatened with overwhelming disaster, which in the natural

course of events could not be long delayed. Ludendorff lost his nerve: on October 1 he told his Government to sue for peace; and then on October 26, after the Chancellor, taking him at his word, had begun negotiations, he changed his mind, demanded a continuance of the war, and when Prince Max refused to follow his new advice, threw up his command.

By this time negotiations had come to a head. Early in the year President Wilson in an address to Congress had laid down in Fourteen Points the principles on which he considered a just peace should be based; and in subsequent speeches he elaborated some of these points. Prince Max had asked for peace on the basis of these utterances of the President. The latter took the matter up with his Allies, who agreed to the proposal, subject to an undertaking on the part of the German Government that Germany should pay compensation for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property. On November 5 the President informed the Chancellor of the decision of the Allies, pointing out at the same time that application for armistice terms should be made to Marshal Foch. It was generally understood that these would be hard, for the Allies were determined to make it impossible for Germany to renew the war before the final terms of peace were settled.

Prince Max hesitated to carry out the President's suggestion. He was embarrassed by the attitude of the Kaiser, who was regarded as the main obstacle to any sort of peace, and for whose abdication there were now constant calls. The Chancellor at last urged upon the Kaiser his personal abdication in the interest of the dynasty, but the latter, who had escaped from the unpleasantly revolutionary atmosphere of Berlin to the Army Headquarters, demurred and declared his intention of using the army to crush all opposition among the civil population. Prince Max left it to the generals to break it to their sovereign that the army could not be relied on to obey his orders in this or any other respect. Then at last on November 9 William II wrote out his abdication as German Emperor (though even then he refused to abdicate as King of Prussia) and forthwith took his way to a place of refuge in Holland. The news of the Act of Abdication was at

once communicated to the Chancellor in Berlin and made public by him. He tried hard, but in vain, to persuade the leaders of the *Reichstag* majority to accept a young son of the Crown Prince as Kaiser and so continue the Empire as an institution, as well as the Hohenzollern line. Then he laid down his office, and the Social Democratic leader, Frederick Ebert—one-time saddler of Heidelberg—somewhat irregularly took it up. The irregularity, such as it was, was soon put right, however; for Ebert and his friends that same afternoon proclaimed the Republic from the steps of the *Reichstag* building, with themselves acting as a Provisional Government, of which Ebert was to be the President, until such time as an elected National Assembly could be brought together to make an new Republican Constitution. The next day a delegation was sent to Foch's Headquarters with full powers to accept armistice terms, however severe.

So ended the Second Reich. Its pomp and parade, its military power and pre-eminence had already passed away in the disaster that overtook it in the war. In other words, Imperial Germany was not betrayed by its republicans; rather its republicans took charge of it when it had clearly broken down under the stress of military defeat, and sought to save for the German nation as much as possible from the wreck.

CHAPTER X

THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

THE FIRST AND principal object of Germany's new rulers was to preserve the fabric of German unity, which was being threatened from more than one quarter. Ebert and the majority of the Social Democrats who supported him were Germans first and Socialists afterwards, and they believed that unless matters were carefully handled, Germany under the strains and stresses of the time would break up again into a number of separate parts and social and economic chaos would result. The first essential was to bring home the soldiers and demobilise them in an orderly way rather than allow them to straggle across the Rhine in an undisciplined and demoralised crowd, causing terror and confusion wherever they went and followed by the avenging hosts of the Allied Powers. Hence an armistice was inevitable, even on such hard terms as those offered by Foch and accepted by Erzberger and his fellow commissioners on November 11.

The demobilisation of the German army began without delay, but some of the more reliable elements among the returning soldiery were retained for service in areas where opposition to the Ebert policy of co-operation with the 'bourgeois' parties and the election of a National Assembly had turned to armed resistance.

Ebert and his colleagues, Scheidemann and Noske, were 'majority' Socialists. They had supported the war effort, though critical of its direction and of the existing system of government. The 'minority' Socialists, on the other hand, had opposed the war as likely to injure the cause of Socialism and the international working-class movement. It was the more extreme partisans of this section of the Social Democrats that now, as devotees of Marxian orthodoxy, determined to exploit the confusion of the

moment and set up a Dictatorship of the Proletariat, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks had done the year before in Russia. Noske, the Minister of Defence, dealt efficiently but ruthlessly with this menace to bourgeois order and to the hopes which the Government entertained of the establishment of a republican and parliamentary regime. There was savage fighting in the streets of Berlin for some days, in the course of which Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, two of the leaders of the Spartacists,* as these zealots called themselves, were captured and then killed 'while attempting to escape'. By the middle of January the Spartacists were crushed; but if Noske's victory won him credit with the supporters of law and order, it brought small political advantage to the Socialist members of the Government, who were reprobated by many of their own followers for using 'monarchist' officers to hold down the workers. However, the Government was able to go forward with its plans for creating a new republican Germany.

A National Assembly was duly elected in January, but as a precautionary measure against possible interruption of its work, it met not at Berlin, where the atmosphere was still stormy, but at Weimar, famous as the home of the national figures of Goethe and Schiller. It set to work at once, and by August the new Constitution was ready. This preserved in its main outlines the federal structure of Germany, as it had existed under the Empire, though the number of States was reduced from twenty-five to eighteen, and in all these a republican form of government took the place of the petty monarchy that had collapsed after the Kaiser's abdication. The federal executive power was to be exercised by a President elected by universal suffrage, who was to hold office for seven years, and there was to be a two-chambered legislature consisting of: (1) a *Reichstag*, to represent the whole nation, also elected by universal suffrage, but on the basis of proportional representation, to which the President's Ministers, with the Chancellor at their head, were to be responsible, and (2) a *Reichsrat*, or Senate, which was to be chosen by the States, to represent their interests as opposed to those of the Federated Body (*Bundesstaat*). It is worth noting that the name *Reich* was retained in the

* Spartacus was the leader of a slave revolt in Italy in the year 72 B.C.

new organisation, but only in the sense of the whole nation as opposed to an individual or constituent State.

It is clear that the men who devised this framework for the new Germany's political life wanted to assimilate its institutions to those of Great Britain, France and the U.S.A. without breaking away too sharply from the pre-war structure. That the various democratic elements in the Assembly were animated by a genuine desire to establish a democratic regime in Germany there can be no doubt; but it is equally undoubted that the former ruling class, the Conservative Junkers of old Prussia, the industrialists, the higher grades of the Civil Service, the officers of the pre-war army—or such of them as had survived the war, most of whom would now be 'de-militarised' against their will—disliked the new political order intensely. For the moment they were helpless, but it was morally certain that if the political machine creaked badly, and if the Government of the republican *Reich* proved itself unable to bring back prosperity to Germany and revive its lost prestige, these elements would sooner or later combine to organise a counter-revolution with the object of restoring an authoritarian regime.

As for the mass of the German people, middle and working class alike, they were indifferent in the matter. They wanted food and they wanted peace more than anything else in the world; if the republican leaders by turning towards democracy could win fairly generous treatment from the victorious Allies and bring back some of the lost happiness which the war had banished, they would be ready, though without perhaps any great enthusiasm, to accept and retain a republican form of government, with or without a Socialist President. Nothing of this kind happened. The terms of peace laid down at Versailles in the summer of 1919 may not have been altogether unjust, having regard to all that had happened, but from the point of view of the German people they were certainly not generous. Germany was deprived of all her overseas possessions. She was to have no big ships, no submarines, no military or naval aircraft, none of the paraphernalia of modern war—big guns, tanks, frontier fortresses and fortifications. All the elaborate military organisation which had been spread over

the *Reich* during the previous half-century was put on the scrap-heap, and the army was limited to a small professional body of 100,000 men recruited on a voluntary basis, whose duties were to be those of an armed constabulary rather than of soldiers. And to ensure that among other things there should be no attempt on the part of recalcitrant elements in the conquered country to repudiate these conditions, or at least no attempt that could have any chance of success, an Allied army of occupation was to be established for fifteen years in the Rhineland, holding bridgeheads on the east bank of the Rhine. Naturally Alsace-Lorraine reverted to French sovereignty; and apart from any question of sentiment and the wishes of the inhabitants (which in any case were not tested), this gave an additional guarantee of the power of the Allies to enforce their decisions.

Such a complete de-militarisation of a great state had never before taken place in European history. Inevitably there were adjustments of frontiers—in addition to the transfer of Alsace-Lorraine already noted: minor ones in the west in the interest of Belgium, but far more extensive ones in the east, where the restored Polish state was given West Prussian lands which Frederick the Great had taken a century before in the First Partition of Poland; and arrangements were made for holding plebiscites in North Schleswig, East Prussia and Upper Silesia with a view to cessions of Prussian territory to Denmark and Poland. As for the almost wholly German city of Danzig, of medieval foundation, which lay at the northern end of the so-called Polish Corridor near the mouth of the Vistula, and served as a natural outlet for the trade of the almost wholly Polish region through which that river flows, that too was severed from the Prussian State and in the final draft of the treaty was constituted a Free City under the supervision of the new League of Nations set up under the treaty, in which Germany was not allowed to participate. The League of Nations was also assigned a similar supervisory part in connection with the temporary detachment from Germany of the industrialised area of the Saar Valley in the west, whose coal mines were to be handed over to France in compensation for the French mines which had been destroyed or damaged during the war. As Germany was

denied membership of the League at this stage, the nominal transfer of Danzig and the Saar Valley to that body instead of a clean-cut cession to Poland and France respectively, as was desired by those countries, was regarded by most Germans as a very empty gesture.

These terms, or something like them, though naturally painful and even humiliating to patriotic Germans, could scarcely have been unexpected by them; for Germany, after all, had been vanquished in the war, and she or her military rulers had shown the world the year before at Brest-Litovsk what a victorious country was entitled to do to one that had been defeated. None the less, when the terms of the Treaty became known, there was a strong and even violent reaction against them in Germany, and it was maintained that they violated or ignored in several particulars the conditions of Germany's surrender, which were based on President Wilson's Fourteen Points, notably in the matter of the cession or, as the Germans called it, the annexation of *Reich* territory in Europe and the assignment of German colonies to one or other of the Allies under the title of Mandated Territories.

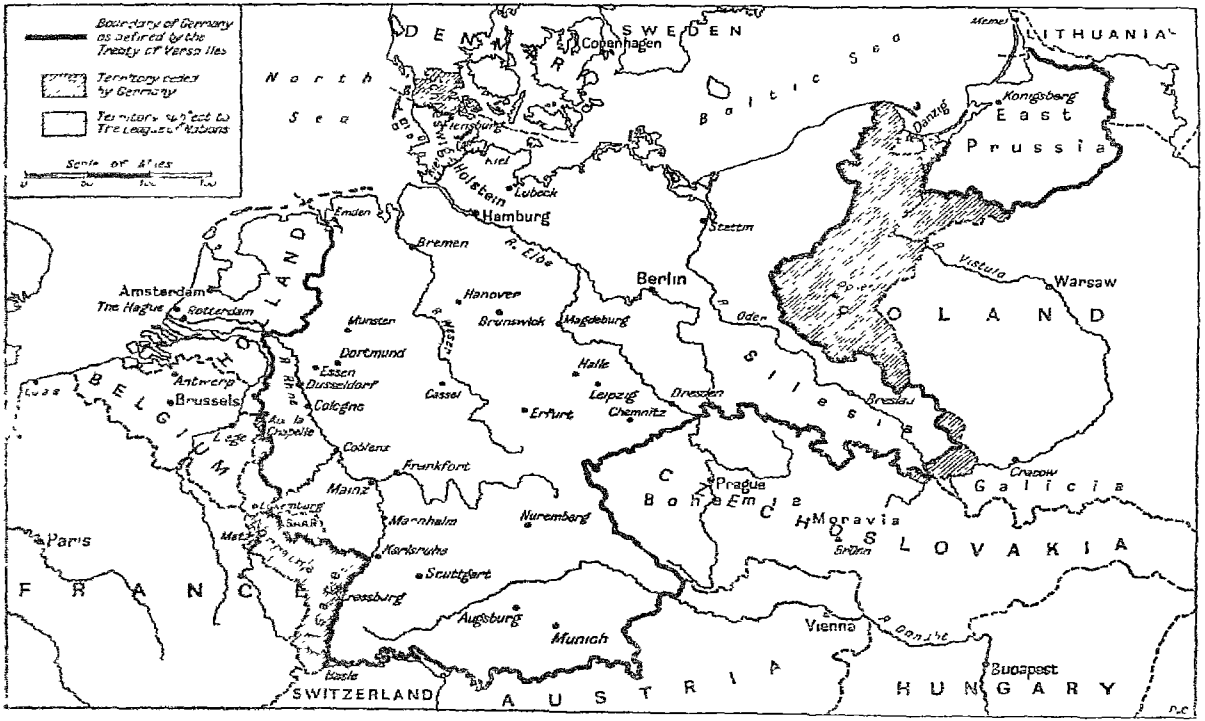
Even greater resentment was aroused by the so-called 'War-guilt' clause of the Treaty. This appears as Article 231 at the beginning of the section which deals with Reparations, and runs as follows: 'The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.' The Germans interpreted this to mean that their Government was required to admit that Germany and her allies were alone responsible for the war, and that France, Great Britain, and above all Russia were entirely guiltless in the matter. No German Government, it was said, could honestly make such an admission. German publicists forthwith began to labour at the task, which was continued long afterwards, of proving to their own people, if not to the world at large, that 'war-guilt' was shared by all the belligerents and was not attached solely to Germany and her allies. They appeared to believe that

by doing this they would undermine the whole case that had been built up in Allied countries for exacting large sums by way of Reparations from the defeated countries.

The demand for Reparations, however, was not based on the war-guilt clause (though it was obviously supported by it), for, as we have seen, it had been made perfectly clear in the pre-armistice negotiations that "compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and to their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air." The German Government had accepted this interpretation of those of the President's Points which insisted on the restoration of invaded territory; hence Germany was clearly liable for payment of a heavy bill for Reparations of some kind, though not necessarily for all that was eventually included under that head. The exact amount of this liability in terms of cash was not fixed in the Treaty: this was to be assessed by an Inter-Allied Reparations Commission after it had made an estimate of Germany's actual and potential resources. May 1, 1921, was fixed as the date by which the Reparations Commission was to make its report, and in the interval Germany was to pay on account the sum of £1,000,000,000.

When these terms were presented to the German Delegation at Versailles—under conditions which were evidently intended to emphasise the purpose and meaning of the war-guilt article—they were told by the French Premier, Clemenceau, in his capacity as president of the Peace Conference, that there was to be no discussion and that any comments they chose to make might be submitted in writing. This was done, and certain changes were made in response to these submissions; but in all essentials the terms of peace which the Germans were called upon to accept remained unaltered. After the final form had been settled, the delegates were informed that unless they signed the Treaty within five days the armistice would be denounced and war would be resumed. This, of course, would have involved military operations inside Germany and the continuation of the blockade of German ports, which had not yet been lifted.

The Socialist Chancellor, Scheidemann, refused to accept any



GERMANY IN 1919, AFTER THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

responsibility in the matter and resigned. His successor, another Social Democrat named Bauer, decided to submit, and the Delegates at Versailles were told to sign. This they did on June 28, 1919, and in due course the German Government with the support of a majority of the National Assembly ratified the signature. There were loud complaints from the Nationalist and Conservative groups or parties in the Assembly and from their henchmen in the press; but it is difficult to see what else any German Government at that time could have done except submit, for apart from the new Defence Force or *Reichswehr*, as it was called, whose numbers and equipment were strictly limited, and perhaps certain hidden stores of rifles and other small arms, the Germans had no means of resistance to put up to the formidable army which France still kept on a war footing. But the Nationalists and anti-Democrats did not forget or forgive, and the more ruthless and desperate elements among them did not shrink from plotting assassination in their endeavour to punish the men whom they considered responsible for their country's humiliating surrender. Thus the Catholic Erzberger was done to death in 1921, and in the following year the same fate overtook the high-minded and scholarly Jew, Walter Rathenau, who, though an industrialist, was a Radical member of the Government and, as Foreign Minister, worked for an understanding with the Western Powers.

The difficulties of the Government of the Republic at this time were indeed very great. In May 1919, before the Treaty was signed, there was a recrudescence of Communist activity, this time in Bavaria, and after the assassination by Nationalist desperadoes of the Minority Socialist Prime Minister of that State, Kurt Eisner, a Soviet regime was set up in defiance of the Central Government, and once again Noske employed the *Reichswehr* to suppress these extremists of the Left. In the autumn, after the new Constitution had been adopted by the National Assembly, the Government gained some ground, for Ebert, whose Presidency had so far been merely provisional, was formally elected to that office by a majority of German citizens. The increased authority thus gained, however, was soon put to the test. Up and down

Germany at this time there were constantly being formed and, as often as the means allowed, dissolved by Government order what were known as 'Free Corps'—bodies of disbanded soldiery who, under some self-appointed leader, took part in the disordered politics of the day, usually in opposition to the new Republican order.

In March 1920, one of these bodies, headed by a monarchist ex-colonel named Kapp, who is said to have acted under the now discredited General Ludendorff and to have had the backing of some senior officers of the *Reichswehr*, resisted the order for its disbandment and then by way of retaliation attacked and occupied Government buildings in Berlin, with the apparent intention of restoring the monarchy. This was known as the Kapp *Putsch*. The rebels had a short-lived success, and the Government withdrew from the capital to Dresden; but when President Ebert appealed to the workers to rally to the support of the Republic, the latter declared a general strike and the *Putsch* collapsed. An additional reason for the fiasco was undoubtedly the fact that the High Command of the *Reichswehr* refused to yield to the solicitations of Ludendorff and obeyed the orders of the Government. The ringleaders were arrested and punished, but Ludendorff was not touched on this occasion and was thus able to continue his plottings elsewhere.

Almost immediately after this event a new Communist outbreak took place in the great industrial district of the Ruhr. There were complications here, for the Ruhr was within the demilitarised zone established by the Treaty on the right bank of the Rhine, and the French objected to the employment of German troops in the area even for the suppression of Communist revolutionaries, who in themselves were as odious to the rulers of France as they were to those of Germany. Nevertheless *Reichswehr* troops entered the forbidden zone, suppressed the Communists and then withdrew.

The effect of all these disturbances was seen shortly after this last incident, when a General Election was held for a *Reichstag* under the rules prescribed by the new Constitution. The Constitution provided for a system of proportional representation, and as

a consequence no less than six parties were found to have won a respectable number of seats. Of these the two extreme ones, that is to say the Communists on the one hand and the Nationalists on the other, had increased their numbers as compared with their position in the National Assembly, while the parties which supported the Government had lost ground. The position of the Government was naturally weakened, and from this time to the end of the Weimar Republic no Cabinet was able to command for long the firm support of a *Reichstag* majority. Indeed, as time wore on, this difficulty of the multiplicity of parties became worse, and at one time there were as many as twenty-four parties or groups acting more or less independently of one another in the *Reichstag*, a situation which did much to discredit the parliamentary system of government in the minds of many sections of the German people.

Meanwhile, and as a consequence of this state of affairs, Chancellors came and went only too often—there were, in all, fifteen during the fourteen years that elapsed between the fall of the monarchy and the coming into power of Hitler—and it became increasingly difficult to form a really strong executive, able as well as willing to enforce respect for law and bring under control the various political bodies which sprang up and organised themselves on semi-military lines. One of these bodies came into existence in Munich after the suppression of the attempt to set up a Soviet system in that city in 1919. This was the genesis of Hitler's movement of so called National Socialism.

Up till 1921 Hitler was a soldier on the pay-roll of the *Reichswehr*. Before that date he was released from ordinary military duty by his commanding officer, Colonel (afterwards General) von Epp, and allowed to engage in certain obscure activities for the *Reichswehr* Intelligence Service in Munich, where he joined an insignificant organisation that called itself the German Workers' Party. When he was formally discharged from the *Reichswehr* he devoted himself to turning this body into a National Socialist Party—Nationalist because it demanded the repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles, which, as it claimed, had wronged and humiliated the German nation; and Socialist because it promised social

and economic betterment to the workers through Government action. Some of Hitler's military patrons supplied him with funds, with which he bought a newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

Hitler now became the Leader (*Führer*) of the movement, and his skill as a mob orator brought him an increasing following. He designed the Swastika emblem and called to his aid a ruffian named Röhm, still at that time an officer of the *Reichswehr*, who organised for him a sort of private army, the notorious S.A.—that is, *Sturm Abteilung* or Storm Detachment—whose members turned out in their thousands, in field-grey uniforms and steel helmets, at the Party Congress held at Nuremberg, in 1922. At the same time the Party busied itself with more legitimate political activities (though with little sympathy from Hitler himself at this stage) and succeeded in getting thirty-two of its candidates elected to the *Reichstag*, thus achieving a national instead of a merely Bavarian importance. All this progress seemed to be thrown away in November 1923, when Hitler made his unsuccessful 'Beer-cellar *Putsch*', which aimed at overthrowing the Republican Government and setting up a National Socialist one with Ludendorff at its head. Once again the *Reichswehr* refused to side with rebels, and Hitler and Ludendorff found themselves in prison, where the former spent his time in writing the first volume of *Mein Kampf*.

The behaviour of the *Reichswehr*, or rather its High Command, at this time is interesting. It maintained the Prussian military tradition of strict obedience to lawful authority and did not appear to hesitate in suppressing armed revolt, whether it came from the right or the left; yet it was certainly unsympathetic to the Republic as such, and according to some accounts it exercised a kind of *imperium in imperio* like the General Staff in the old days of the Empire, forcing the Government to comply with its will in these difficult and uncertain times. The truth seems to be that the *Reichswehr* generals were in agreement with the Government upon one extremely important thing. That was that civil war or anything like it should be avoided, and that Germany should be held together even by a republican form of government, if that was the only way to do it, until she had recovered from the

disorganisation due to war and defeat. In the meanwhile it would seem to have been their object to encourage the conservative elements in the country to assert themselves in a constitutional manner in preparation for taking over the control of the Government from the democratic parties when the time was ripe. When that was done, Germany could begin to resume again her rightful position in European affairs and take advantage of any favourable conditions that might have developed externally.

While the German Republic was being subjected to these internal stresses and shocks, it was also finding itself faced with a situation of extreme difficulty in its external relations arising from the demands of the Allies in the matter of payment of Reparations. As we have seen, no precise figure had been laid down in the Peace Treaty of the amount which Germany was to be called upon to pay. All sorts of extravagant expectations of what the country 'responsible for the war' could and should be made to contribute to the 'cost of the war' had been encouraged among the peoples of the victorious nations, and little attention had been paid to the warnings uttered by knowledgeable authorities of the dangers involved in laying upon the defeated countries economic burdens which they would find it impossible to discharge. Men like the financier Bernard Baruch in America, who had played a notable part in helping to mobilise his country's war effort, and the economist Maynard Keynes (the late Lord Keynes) in England had expressed their views in forcible terms; and even the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, himself, while the treaty negotiations were in progress at Versailles, had endeavoured to restrain his more ardent followers at home, as well as Allied politicians and statesmen in Paris, from pitching their hopes too high.

After the Treaty had been signed, a period of nearly two years elapsed before the Reparations Commission was able to give its decision as to the total amount of Germany's debt. The figure then fixed was £6,600,000,000 (in gold value). In the interval there had been discussions between the Allied Governments and the Germans as to the amount which the debtor should pay on account before the actual total was fixed, and how this sum was to be divided between cash and 'deliveries in kind'—mainly coal. After

much haggling the Germans agreed to pay in one way and another the £1,000,000,000 demanded by May 1, 1921. By March of that year they were much in arrears, and partly for this reason and partly, too, on account of their failure to carry out some of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty, French troops, with the somewhat reluctant assent of the British Government, occupied the three towns of Düsseldorf, Duisburg, and Ruhrort on the east bank of the Rhine.

Shortly afterwards the Reparations Commission announced its decision, and a Conference of the Allied Powers was held in London to deal with the situation thus created. The figure of £6,600 millions was generally regarded by economists, as distinct from politicians, as impossible of realisation; but the Conference nevertheless formally accepted it. At the same time in drawing up a schedule of payments the Allied representatives carefully subtracted some two-thirds of the nominal total and removed this amount from their immediate consideration, basing their scheme of annual instalments upon a working total of about £2,500,000,000. Even so it was decided that Germany should be called on to pay over £100,000,000 a year for about thirty years, with a proviso that, as her economic position improved, the scale of payments should be adjusted to allow of increased annuities and an extension of the period during which they would operate.

The reason for this attempt to temper the wind to the shorn lamb was the fact that Germany's finances were in a very bad way. Like all the other European belligerents she had been forced off the gold standard by the exigencies of the war, but unlike the victors she had also been subjected to a rigorous blockade, which was continued throughout the armistice period and was taken off only when she accepted the peace terms in the summer of 1919. She was then desperately in need of raw materials for her industries as well as of foodstuffs for her population, and what remained of her gold reserve and holdings of foreign exchange was virtually expended in the effort to supply herself with these essentials of her economic life; so that the balance of trade went heavily against her, and the mark depreciated still further. This state of affairs, combined with the uncertainties of her position—the

undetermined but apparently vast money claims of the Allies (who at the same time, with embarrassing inconsistency, refused to admit to their markets German goods except in small and carefully regulated quantities), and the instability of her political system, attacked by extremists from within and viewed with a lack of sympathy and perhaps even with some degree of suspicion from without—all these things undermined her financial credit. By the middle of 1920, a year after the signature of the Treaty, the value of the (paper) mark (*i.e.* its purchasing power in the international market) had sunk to 250 to the pound sterling. To realise what this meant it should be remembered that the exchange value of the 1914 (gold) mark was 20 to the £. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that when the 'bill' of the Reparations Commission was presented to the German Government in April 1921, the latter reacted rather violently and declared that they could not possibly pay it; and later on, when they were informed that it was proposed to postpone the demand for payment of two-thirds of the whole sum until such time as Germany's improved position made this additional payment reasonable, the Germans pointed out that to hold this enormous liability over their heads for an unspecified time could only have the effect of delaying their country's economic recovery. This intransigence, as it was called in some quarters, was due no doubt in part to the domestic difficulties of the German Government, whose members throughout these negotiations were looking over their shoulders, as it were, at what was going on in their own country.

There their critics were steadily increasing in numbers and urging that the time had come for the Republican Government to stand up to the Allies or, if they would not, to make way for some other Government that would. Nationalists in Bavaria and the *Stahlhelm*—a definitely monarchist organisation—in Prussia were gaining ground as a result of the alleged submissiveness of the republicans to Allied pressure. Hence on this occasion the Government actually did make a stand, and when the Allies issued an ultimatum declaring that, unless the scheme of payments was accepted by May 12, their troops would occupy the whole of the industrial region of the Ruhr, the German Cabinet resigned.

However, a new one was soon formed, and this gave in to the Allies' demand on May 11. This surrender was interpreted in some quarters on the side of the Allies, particularly in France and Belgium, as indicating that German opposition was purely political, and that the Reparations plan was perfectly feasible and could be applied quite successfully, if the necessary degree of firmness were used. The course of events showed that this optimism was not well founded. Almost immediately after the German submission to the ultimatum, the mark, which had been fairly steady for about a year, began a new descent, and six months later the rate of exchange stood at 1000 marks to the pound. Half-way between these two dates (August 21, 1921) the German Government had managed by various methods, including the raising of loans in foreign money markets, to collect sufficient foreign currency to pay the first instalment of £50,000,000 due under the scheme. This fact alone indicates the real difficulty in connection with the problem of Reparations (and also of war debts), namely that of the transfer of these huge sums from one country to another. For if the debtor country's credit is low and her economic position demoralised—if, for instance, as was Germany's case, her creditors have no use for her currency (because they do not want to buy her goods), while she wants as much of theirs as she can get—then clearly a transfer becomes impossible: a fact which is duly registered in the rate of exchange; and, bullion on the requisite scale being obviously out of the question, the debt must remain unpaid unless foreign 'moneylenders' can be induced to supply some accommodation at a high rate of interest: in which case a new—commercial—obligation takes the place of the political one and the sum total of indebtedness is unchanged. This sum of £50,000,000 was the last cash payment that Germany made under the Reparations Commission's plan, though she continued to make deliveries in kind during the following year. Meanwhile her currency was rapidly becoming useless for anything except internal transactions, with disastrous results in that direction as well. By the end of 1922 it was valued at 35,000 marks to the pound.

It was just about this time that Germany was found to be in default in her deliveries in kind. The default was too small to be

really intentional or deliberate, and had there been no other grounds of offence, it is unlikely that anything would have been heard of it. But tempers on all sides had been rising in the past twelve months. The French Prime Minister, Briand, had been thrown out of office in January because he was thought to be too susceptible to the blandishments of his British opposite number, Lloyd George, whom Frenchmen generally had come to regard as the enemy of France and the friend of Germany. Poincaré took Briand's place. Poincaré was a legalist. He told his fellow-countrymen, in season and out of season, that Germany had promised to pay and she had not paid a centime since August 1921. Therefore she must be made to pay, and if she did not do so of her own accord, then soldiers should be sent into the Ruhr to seize the factories and the mines—'productive guarantees', as he called them—which could then be operated under Allied control and the profits used for the purpose of Reparations.

Frenchmen at least listened with approval to this thesis. They were angry at the tales that were told, some true and some no doubt exaggerated, of German industrialists taking advantage of the depreciated mark to make fortunes by increasing their sales of extensively cheapened goods abroad, and then building for themselves new and better factories, which of course would not fall in value with the mark; of German municipalities which found it possible to put up fine public buildings, baths, opera-houses and the like. Then they looked at their own devastated areas, which, if Germany failed to pay her just dues, they would have to repair themselves. British opinion was divided. From the political, or perhaps the ethical, standpoint most people in this country sympathised with the French in their demand that the Germans, who in the Treaty were declared to be responsible for the war, should make good as much as possible of the damage wrought by the war; but as a 'nation of shopkeepers' they felt that Lloyd George was not far off the mark when he told the French that Britain too had her devastated areas in her mass unemployment; and they had come to the conclusion that this could only be cured by the restoration of their trade with Continental Europe and especially with Germany, who before the war was one of Britain's

best customers and was likely to become so again when the Reparations question had been settled and economic order had been re-established within her borders.

This friction between the Allied Powers was the more marked, perhaps, because they were at the same time taking up different lines of policy from one another in other directions, notably in such matters as the settlement of inter-Allied debts—a thorny problem not unrelated to that of Reparations—and the war that was being waged in Asia Minor between the Greeks and the Turkish Nationalists under their leader, Mustapha Kemal. The Germans were not slow to take note of these trends in international relations, and they began to assume a bolder and more independent attitude in their dealings with their former enemies. A good example of this is seen in their pact with Russia, known as the Rapallo Treaty. The position was this. A World Economic Conference was held in Genoa at the beginning of 1922, where it was hoped by the British Prime Minister some of the major obstacles to a revival of trade throughout the world could be removed. Both Germany and Soviet Russia were invited to send delegates to this Conference, for it was beginning to be felt in many quarters that both these 'pariah' countries could make some contribution to the general welfare if they were brought back into the comity of nations. The French representatives, however (Poincaré himself did not attend the meetings), were not very helpful in the discussions that ensued, and after a time the Germans and Russians went off to the neighbouring sea-side town of Rapallo and made an agreement of their own. It was the first definitely independent action taken by Germany in the international sphere since her defeat, and the announcement of what had been done came as a rude shock to France and Britain alike. Coupled with the fact that the Germans maintained that the exchange position still did not permit of any further cash payments of Reparations, it tended to confirm the belief, held widely in Allied countries and most of all in France, that Germany was now looking round for friends to support her when she deemed it safe to rid herself of the various controls and burdensome conditions imposed upon her and resume her freedom of action.

That something of this nature was in the mind of many Germans was obvious, for talk of this order was the stock-in-trade of the anti-republican parties and of organisations like the *Stahlhelm* and Hitler's National Socialists, though Hitler of course had no love for Bolsheviks; but it is unlikely that the responsible men who were still trying to maintain a system of democratic government against heavy odds were contemplating anything more dangerous to the Western Powers than a plan for stealing a march on Germany's trade competitors by supplying Russia with the manufactured goods which she needed and so in some measure strengthening Germany's own economic position. But amid the suspicions and disappointments of that time all such explanations were largely ignored in France, and the demand for decisive action grew in insistence. As long as Lloyd George remained at the head of the British Government, his influence was strong enough to prevent the French from taking independent action, but in October he resigned, and the coalition of parties which supported him broke up. Poincaré appears to have expected that a purely Conservative Government in London would join hands with him and that a military occupation of the Ruhr would have the same success as the much less ambitious effort of a similar kind that had taken place with British consent eighteen months before. In this expectation he was disappointed. The new British Government, not without the strong disapproval of some of its supporters, asserted that the deficiency in timber deliveries, which Poincaré made the excuse for action, was no more than a technical default and instructed its representative on the Reparations Commission to vote accordingly. The other members of the Commission voted that the default was wilful and called for sanctions. Armed with this judgment Poincaré on January 11, 1923, ordered his generals to march into the Ruhr. The Belgians marched with them, and the Italians sent some sappers as a token force. No British troops took part in the enterprise.

There was no armed resistance to this invasion, as the Germans called it. But there was a very successful passive resistance—at least for a time. This was organised by the German Government. The first thing that happened was that all deliveries in kind on

Reparations account stopped. Next, all work in the mines and factories of the invaded area ceased, and railwaymen refused to handle banned goods. Management and workers were told that they must refuse to co-operate with the enemy or give him any assistance whatsoever in carrying out his plans. As long as they obeyed these instructions, they would receive their salaries and wages from the Government, while the owners could claim compensation for loss of profits from the same quarter. What it amounted to was a huge strike, kept going at Government expense, as long as the Government resources were equal to the strain, and its agents were able to circumvent the barriers set up by the French and Belgian authorities to stop the passage of supplies.

The invaders retaliated: industrialists were imprisoned, workers and their families in large numbers were deported from their homes, and French and Belgian technicians were put in charge of the plant and railways, with which in many cases they proved quite unable to cope. When sabotage broke out and trains were wrecked, executions followed, and fierce passions were engendered on both sides. National Socialism gained many recruits at this time, and the executed saboteurs were acclaimed by Hitler as martyrs in the struggle against foreign domination. On their side the French gave their patronage and protection to a movement which was designed to establish one or more separate Rhineland states in the occupied territory on the west bank of the river.

In the autumn the Separatists, growing bolder with their protected immunity, proclaimed the independence of the Bavarian Palatinate, the region immediately north of Alsace, which Napoleon III, it will be remembered, sought to acquire by a 'deal' with Bismarck in 1867. The German officials were expelled, and in due course the Allied High Commission, which controlled the occupied area, recognised the new Separatist Government by a majority vote, the British representative being in the minority. By this time, however, things had reached such a pass in Germany itself that the Government had to admit defeat and call off the passive resistance in the Ruhr. It was the state of the currency that made this move necessary. As we have seen, the mark had

already declined to a meaningless figure before the occupation of the Ruhr began. Thereafter the action of the Government in causing the Reichsbank to print more and ever more paper money to meet the costs of passive resistance in the Ruhr, without any apparent regard for the economic consequences of such a policy, plunged the mark into the abyss, and there it remained. By the end of 1923 the fantastic sum of 50,000 milliards of marks could be purchased for one English pound. Long before this point was reached, many hundreds of thousands of middle-class German families were plunged in distress. Their holdings in Government loans and other fixed interest securities lost all their value. So did the savings of many humbler people, unless they had been turned into some form of real property. Salaried persons also suffered heavily, for prices rose far more quickly than the adjustments in their rates of pay, while older people living on their pensions found that their sole means of existence had completely disappeared and were thrown back on their embarrassed relatives or the charity of their more fortunate friends.

The same thing was true of the working classes, though not to quite the same degree, for their wages were adjusted more frequently. The upper classes came off best, for much of their wealth consisted of landed property, which necessarily retained its value amid all this currency chaos, and mortgages on their estates were paid off with ease. Meanwhile some industrialists and speculators—by no means all of them Jews, as the Nazis asserted—were actually able to secure a considerable profit from the misfortunes of their fellow-countrymen, and the Government itself took advantage of the situation to pay off the whole of the National Debt. But business in general began to come to a standstill, and the utmost distress and confusion prevailed.

At last a deliverer appeared—or at least a man who thought he saw a way out of the *impasse*. This was Gustav Stresemann. Stresemann was neither a Socialist nor a Catholic Centrist: on the contrary, he had been a member of the National Liberal Party in the Imperial *Reichstag*, and during the war he had been a strong advocate of its vigorous prosecution. But when Germany

met with hopeless and crushing defeat, he seems to have come to the conclusion that to refuse to face that reality and to adopt an attitude suggestive of recalcitrance or opposition to the conditions laid down in the Treaty were bound to worsen the position of his country and hinder the restoration of her trade and general prosperity. When, therefore, in the summer of 1923 President Ebert entrusted him with the task of forming a new Government and finding a way out of the tangle of difficulties in which Germany was involved, he accepted the commission on the understanding that he was going to pursue a policy of 'fulfilment', as it was called: fulfilment, that is to say, of the lawful requirements of the Treaty, as far as it was possible to carry them out, and a frank recognition of the unwisdom of antagonising Allied opinion by resorting to anything suggestive of subterfuge or hesitation.

At first he took over the double burden of the Chancellorship and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but soon gave up the formal headship of the Government and devoted himself exclusively to the work of cultivating better relations with Britain and France. In spite of this, however, he remained the dominant figure in German politics till his premature death in 1929. Whether, if he had lived a few years longer, he would have been able to weather the storm that swept away his successors and the republican regime they were trying to preserve may well be doubted, for the forces that had been let loose in 1930 were far more powerful than those that Stresemann had to contend with in 1923. But one must suppose that he would at least have fought hard to save from ruin that structure of international understanding and goodwill through which he had achieved a large measure of success in restoring Germany to what he regarded as her rightful place among the nations of the world.

The first and most obvious thing that Stresemann had to do in 1923 was to restore Germany's finances, which had broken down so completely under the double strain of post-war difficulties —including demands for Reparations—and the policy of Government-supported passive resistance to the invasion of the Ruhr. As we have seen, this policy had to be abandoned, and Stresemann realised that, quite apart from the impossibility of its continuance

through failure of Government resources, such a step was necessary if any progress was to be made in the direction of an understanding with France and the withdrawal of French and Belgian troops to the original treaty zone of occupation. Moreover, although the occupation of the Ruhr had been entirely unproductive as a means of enforcing Reparations and had indeed had a serious effect upon the finances of France herself, it was not to be expected that Poincaré, at least, would lose face by giving up the enterprise before some prospect were offered him of an alternative method of getting what he wanted. There was also the pressing need for the reconstruction of the German currency, not merely for the purposes of internal trade, but because, until that was done, there was no possibility of putting into operation any plan of Reparation payments at all.

It was to deal with these difficulties that the Dawes Plan was evolved. The Dawes Plan was the work of the Dawes Committee, which consisted of a body of financial experts appointed by the various interested Governments, including that of the U.S.A., for the express purpose of settling the Reparations problem on non-political lines. General Dawes, an American of high repute, was the chairman. It started work in January 1924, and on May 11 of that year it presented its Report to the Reparations Commission. By a curious coincidence on this same day a General Election was held in France, which resulted in the defeat of Poincaré and the appointment in his place of the Radical leader Herriot. This paved the way for the acceptance of the plan by the French Government. The entry into office, a few months earlier, of Ramsay MacDonald as the head of a British Labour Government also helped. The Dawes Plan was put into effect not by any means as a scheme of benevolence towards a stricken Germany, but rather to set the wheels of German industry turning again, so that economic conditions in Europe and America could benefit. A new currency was established in Germany, whose unit was to be known as the Reichsmark, based on the gold standard; and to give it the necessary backing, which in the conditions then existing the German Government could not give it unaided, the latter was recommended to issue, with the approval of the Allied Govern-

ments, a loan of £40,000,000. Arrangements were made for various foreign banks to receive subscriptions to this loan in their respective countries. More than half of this sum was allotted to the U.S.A. and more than a quarter to Great Britain, and the rest was distributed between France and other European countries. The loan was over-subscribed by the investing public everywhere except in France, where it was taken up privately by the banks. It was a purely commercial transaction, a high rate of interest being payable, and the Governments of the countries concerned had no hand at all in the raising of the money, nor did they guarantee the loan. The League of Nations, of course, had nothing whatever to do with it. The rest of the 'Plan' was concerned with Reparations. Here again the idea was that as far as possible the obligations of Germany should be treated as commercial debts. Instead of a vague charge on the German state as a whole, the agreed annual payments were secured on specified assets, such as the German State Railways, certain industrial enterprises, and the product of certain taxes, though some degree of political control was maintained by virtue of the fact that the Reparations Commission was allowed the right of appointing some of the members of the Boards of Management of the Reichbank and the other concerns affected. The Germans did not like this last feature, but they had to accept it if the plan was to go through.

The plan went through, and proved a great success, at any rate in its immediate effects. German industry revived, and for the next few years Reparations were paid punctually, and apparently without much difficulty. This was the time when Stresemann won his great diplomatic triumphs, and foreign statesmen like Austen Chamberlain, in England, and Briand, in France, were beginning to hope that Germany had broken with her aggressive past, and that the Weimar Republic, strengthened and established at last in the favour of the German people, could be trusted to play its part in schemes of international co-operation. The swift and easy defeat of the attempted National Socialist revolution of November 1923, was regarded as making an end of a crazy fanatic's dream, and Adolf Hitler after some months in prison seemed to pass out of sight and therefore out of mind. On the other side the French.

even before Poincaré's fall from power, were induced to withdraw their support from the Separatists of the Palatinate, and that particular piece of political make-believe was brought to an end by the local inhabitants without any difficulty. Then, when the Dawes Plan was accepted and put into effect, the French and Belgian troops began to leave the Ruhr, and by the end of 1924 *the evacuation was complete.*

But it was the events that followed that proved the crowning mercy of Stresemann's policy of fulfilment—or so it seemed to the men of that day. For when the German Foreign Minister put before Lord D'Abernon, the British Ambassador in Berlin, the outline of the plan which ultimately took shape in the Locarno Treaty of 1925. the idea was taken up with enthusiasm by Austen Chamberlain and Briand. Locarno was followed next year by the entry of Germany into the League of Nations, and after some hesitation she was accorded a permanent seat at the Council of the League and so received formal recognition of her return to the status of a Great Power.

There were, however, certain significant developments in German internal politics at this period which threatened for a time to cloud the prospect. They arose out of the death of President Ebert in 1925, This event necessitated a presidential election. There were no less than seven candidates, none of whom secured an absolute majority. A Monarchist headed the poll with 10,000,000 votes; the Social Democrats came second with 8,000,000; the Catholic Centre third with 4,000,000; and the Communists fourth with 2,000,000. The remaining candidates, representing minor parties, polled so few votes that they dropped out of the running on the second ballot, which now became necessary. One of them was General Ludendorff, who was put up by the Nazis but found little more than 200,000 persons to support him. This was the end of Ludendorff's political adventures, and to most onlookers it seemed the end of National Socialism also.

The general results of the voting, however, encouraged the Conservative and Nationalist forces in the country to make a supreme effort to get control of the machine of government by installing as President a man who might be regarded as the repre-

sentative of the monarchical rather than the republican and democratic elements of the nation. Hence, for the purpose of the second ballot, they withdrew the original Conservative and Monarchical candidate Jarres and in his place brought forward the popular war hero Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. This move called forth counter-measures on the part of the so-called Weimar Coalition, which closed its ranks in the face of what looked like a threat to the Republic. The Social Democrats and the Radicals abandoned their separate party candidatures and accepted William Marx, the nominee of the Catholic Centrists, as the single Democratic and Republican candidate. An attempt was made to induce the Communists to adopt the same line of action, but the Communists, as devotees of the Soviet system, were as hostile to the 'bourgeois' republican order set up at Weimar as the most rabid Monarchist. They therefore held aloof from the democratic *bloc* and ran their own candidate, Thälmann, as before.

This decision was probably responsible for Hindenburg's victory. The old Marshal secured rather more than 14½ million votes, Marx was less than one million behind him, and Thälmann retained the two millions that he had scored on the occasion of the first ballot. Hindenburg therefore became President despite the fact that he polled a minority of the votes cast. The Monarchists were naturally elated at the result: they persuaded themselves that the days of the Republic were now numbered, and that in due course the old Marshal would vacate the Presidential Chair in the interest of one of the Hohenzollern princes or at least head a national resurgence which would abandon Stresemann's fulfilment policy. But Hindenburg did neither of these things. Once elected, he apparently conceived it to be his duty to play the part of a constitutional monarch with dignity and impartiality, and during his first term of office at least he made no attempt to obstruct his ministers in the pursuit of the policy which they had adopted and persuaded the *Reichstag* to support. Soon everyone was breathing freely again, and the sole result of the interlude seemed to be a clearing of the air. At any rate it was in December of the same year that the Locarno Agreement was put into regular treaty form and signed in London.

Stresemann now set his heart on freeing Germany from the various Allied controls, and above all in bringing to an end the military occupation of the western Rhineland. Something was done about the first of these matters early in 1927, when the Inter-Allied commission which had been appointed to supervise German disarmament was withdrawn. This of course did not mean that Germany was free to arm beyond the limit set by the Treaty, but merely that for the future it was to be left to the German Government to honour the bond without the intervention of Allied inspecting officers—a task which it does not seem to have carried out with any great efficiency or care. On the other hand, the evacuation of the occupied territory before the date laid down in the Treaty was the subject of long and complicated negotiations, which were skilfully conducted by Stresemann from the German side but only completed a few months before his death in 1929. Thus he did not have the satisfaction of actually seeing the conclusion of this part of the task that he had set himself. The problem was linked up by French insistence with that of Reparations. The Dawes Plan, though in the main successful, had proved in practice to be open to certain objections. One of these objections was its provisional character; that is to say, it was not a definite settlement. The French wanted such a settlement before they would agree to withdraw their troops from the Rhineland. Responsible Germans wanted it too, but for a different reason. They said that the absence of finality in the matter and uncertainty as to when the last annuity was to be paid were harmful to Germany's financial position. Economic experts of all countries agreed with them. It was pointed out that as long as the idea was current among Germans that the more they saved the more they would be asked to pay in Reparations, they would not save: on the contrary they would spend lavishly and even uneconomically. And this indeed is what they were doing at this very time, and so creating an illusion of prosperity.

Moreover, the apparent ease with which the Dawes Loan had been subscribed had led to further borrowings on an excessive scale from foreign sources, principally American, alike by Government, municipalities and private undertakings. In fact, the total

amount of these foreign loans exceeded by a considerable margin that paid out in Reparation annuities; so that Germany was not really paying her dues out of her own resources, but out of the product of an expanded or 'rationalised' industrial economy which had been artificially stimulated in this way. This at the time did not worry the French very much, who were chiefly concerned with getting what the Dawes plan promised them, but it gave rise to a certain amount of apprehension in the minds of those people who wished to see Germany settling down and paying her way in a more sober fashion. To deal with these matters a new committee of experts was appointed in 1928. Another American, Owen D. Young, was the chairman. It made its report in the following summer, and after a somewhat acrimonious Conference at the Hague its proposals were accepted by all the interested Governments. The most important feature of this new Young Plan was the fact that it put a definite limit to the period during which Germany was liable for Reparation payments, and fixed 1988 as the last year for this purpose, though, unlike the Dawes Plan, it contained no provision for scaling down annuities in case of a fall in world prices, such as actually began about this time. Dr. Schacht, the President of the Reichsbank, who was one of Germany's representatives on the Young Committee, told the Conference that the amounts of the annuities to be paid during this period of fifty-eight years would prove to be beyond Germany's capacity, but the Conference disregarded his opinion, and the Committee's figures remained part of the scheme.

The only other notable feature of this last but short-lived Plan was the removal, in accordance with Stresemann's hopes, of Allied control of Germany's finances, together with the establishment, in place of this control, of a Bank of International Settlements. This institution was to receive Reparation payments (as well as Inter-Allied Debt payments) and arrange for transfer to the various Allied Governments in such a way as to avoid exchange difficulties; and, for the purpose of facilitating the transfer, the Bank was given power to issue an international loan secured on the annuities which Germany had agreed to pay. Germany was to share equally with the other Powers in the management of the

affairs of the Bank by having her representatives on the Board of Directors. The way was now clear for the evacuation of the Rhineland by the armies of occupation. Britain had already declared through the mouth of her new Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, that her troops were to be withdrawn. At the close of the Hague Conference France and Belgium agreed to adopt the same course, and by the end of the following June the last foreign soldier had left German soil. The Stresemann policy of 'fulfilment' appeared to be completely justified, and the world regarded the Weimar Republic as firmly established.

CHAPTER XI

THE COMING OF HITLER

THE THIRD REICH

IT WAS A great day for Germany when President von Hindenburg went in state to Cologne and the other Rhineland towns to celebrate their return to the Fatherland. But something seemed to have gone wrong with Stresemann's policy of fulfilment and reconciliation. For a little later, in September of that same year, 1930, while the Assembly of the League of Nations was holding its annual sessions at Geneva, with such subjects on its agenda as general disarmament and a scheme put forward by Aristide Briand, still for a little while longer French Foreign Minister, for a United States of Europe, the startling news came through that Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party had won 107 seats at a General Election in Germany.

This was the more surprising because two years before the despised Nazis had been unable to get more than 12, while even when circumstances were strongly in their favour, in 1922, they had come off with only 32. It looked as if the withdrawal from the Rhineland as an act of grace had come too late, and as if the baser sort of extreme nationalists were now making capital out of it and winning support for their programme of repudiation of Versailles and all its works.

But there was more in it than that. Just about the time of Stresemann's death in October 1929, there had been a panic on the New York Stock Exchange. The effect of this was soon felt in other countries and especially in Germany, where the illusion of prosperity that had spread abroad since 1924 as a result of the

habit of raising foreign loans now began to dissolve. Foreigners, and more particularly the hard-hit Americans, not merely ceased to lend to Germany, but tried their best to get their invested capital out of that country while it was possible to do so, even on the most disadvantageous terms. Inevitably German industry suffered and the usual features of a slump appeared, with a steady increase of unemployment. The German people, taken by surprise by this sudden change in their fortunes, from the abounding prosperity of the Stresemann era to this new descent into adversity, were frightened. They remembered only too well the miseries and hardships of the crisis of eight years before, and they called for a new saviour. The middle-classes, the people with fixed incomes, the shopkeepers and the professional men, who had fared so badly on that occasion, and who now found that it was becoming increasingly difficult to give their sons a good start-off on a business or professional career, were especially angry and disturbed; they heard too with dismay how the Communists were urging the working-classes to follow the example of their Russian 'brothers' and were gaining many recruits for their party.

In March 1930, President von Hindenburg appointed a new Chancellor to deal with the situation. This was Heinrich Brüning, one of the leaders of the Catholic Centrist Party. Brüning's Government was the first since the establishment of the Republic which did not contain a single Social Democrat. It might therefore be described, not unfairly, as a Government with a middle-class bias, though when its existence was threatened, as it often was during its two years' tenure of office, it usually received the support of the Social Democrats. Brüning himself was obsessed with the fear that the situation might get entirely out of hand, as in 1923, and the new currency go the way of the old. To prevent such a catastrophe he adopted precisely the opposite policy to that of those days. Then inflation was allowed to take its course, if not deliberately encouraged. Brüning put his faith in *de*flation, and in that way sought to preserve German credit until the storm should blow over. He put pressure on the bankers to induce them to restrict their advances, and when they hesitated he obtained from the President and the *Reichstag* emergency powers to issue

decrees that had the force of the law. In other words, he gradually assumed something like the position of a dictator, and so, according to some of his critics, prepared the way for the real dictatorship of Hitler which followed. But there was this difference, that Brüning thought he was saving the Weimar Republic, while Hitler was bent on destroying it.

Meanwhile things were happening that brought Hitler right into the front of the stage and gave him just the opportunity he had dreamed of in his less fortunate days of carrying out his avowed purposes. The industrialists of the Ruhr had soon realised that Germany would be affected by the financial collapse in America; and as the depression spread, some of these men who had political affiliations with one or other of the Nationalist groups conceived the idea that Hitler and his broken and impoverished Nazis might be used to stir up trouble for the Government. So they decided to subsidise them. They were not looking very far into the future, perhaps, and were thinking not so much of putting Hitler into power as of getting Brüning out; and wild though some of the 'socialist' schemes of the ex-Austrian n'er-do-well must have seemed to men of their stamp, they evidently regarded his 'nationalism' as above reproach and thought it worth while to finance him in his efforts to persuade the German masses that their distresses were all due to foreigners and the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. So Hitler was set on his feet again, and when Brüning, misjudging the situation, persuaded Hindenburg to dissolve the *Reichstag*, the Nazis were able to organise a successful election campaign, with the result we have already noted. About this time, too, Hitler received a new accession of strength when Schacht, disagreeing with Chancellor Brüning, resigned his post of President of the Reichsbank and gave his support to the Nazi Party. Through the influence of Schacht the Party obtained fresh financial backing in the form of contributions from some of the latter's business associates.

With all this substantial and influential support Hitler and his lieutenants went to work to build up a formidable organisation, which had its headquarters at the Brown House, at Munich, but had ramifications all over the country. Röhm, who after the

earlier eclipse of the party had quarrelled with Hitler and gone off to South America, was summoned home and found a rich field of recruitment for a much enlarged brown-shirted S.A. among the unemployed workers and the middle-class youths who were denied a more natural expression of their energies by the circumstances of the times; while from the same source Hitler collected round himself a more specialised bodyguard of *black*-shirted S.S. (*Schutz Staffel* or Defence Corps).

The course of events during 1931 helped him enormously in his propaganda; for while the depression deepened, Brüning's deflationary policy, so far from staying the unemployment which spread throughout the country, had the effect of aggravating it, and by the end of the year the number of unemployed persons had reached the figure of between six and seven millions. Moreover, in the course of the year Germans had had a sharp reminder that the Treaty of Versailles was still very much in force. This arose out of an attempt on the part of Dr. Curtius, Stresemann's successor in the post of Foreign Minister, to arrange a Customs Union with Austria. In January he had attended a Committee of the League of Nations which met at Geneva to consider Briand's plan for a United States of Europe. From the political side of the subject the discussion, not unnaturally in the conditions of those days, turned to the economic, and while this aspect of the question was being studied, Curtius and the Austrian Chancellor, who was also a member of the Committee, after some secret conversations signed a treaty establishing such a union, to which other adjacent states in the Danube basin were to be invited to adhere. When this arrangement was made public, the French Government took strong exception to it; so did the Governments of Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Jugoslavia, which formed the Little Entente. They represented it to be a thinly disguised *Anschluss* or political union of Germany and Austria, which was forbidden by the Treaties. British opinion was for the most part favourable to the scheme as likely to increase the stability of both countries and especially of Austria, which was showing signs of imminent collapse. This virtually occurred in May, when a famous Austrian bank became unable to meet its obligations and had to be supported

by large advances from the Bank of England. The Bank of France at first refused to help in staving off what was regarded as a European disaster, and only consented to do so if Austria gave up the Customs Union project. This she eventually did on September 3.

In the meantime the legal position had been brought before the Council of the League of Nations and by it referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague. The Court's judgment, which was delivered two days after Austria had announced her abandonment of the scheme, upheld the contention of France and the Little Entente, but the fact that it was based on a majority vote of eight to seven, and that the French, Italian, Polish, and Rumanian judges were included in the majority and the American and British in the minority, created the impression that political rather than legal considerations really decided the issue. In Germany, such a belief was universal, and as a consequence the League of Nations, in which Stresemann had urged his countrymen to put their faith, lost what little respect it had ever had among them, while Curtius, who was regarded as the disciple as well as the successor of Stresemann, was driven from office. The whole affair in fact may be regarded as marking the end of the policy of fulfilment in Germany's foreign relations, if not as sealing the doom of the Weimar Republic.

Early in the following year Brüning himself, urged on partly by the financial difficulties produced by the World Economic Crisis and partly by the pressure of his political enemies and the force of nationalist propaganda, announced that Germany neither could nor would make any further payments of Reparations. This time even France had to recognise the inevitable, and in the summer of 1932 a Conference of the Powers was held at Lausanne in Switzerland, at which it was agreed that at the end of a four-year moratorium and subject to the cancellation of the war debts of the Allies—a purely face-saving condition, for which the attitude of the U.S.A., the chief war creditor, gave no warrant whatever—all claims on Germany should be written off in return for a lump sum of £150,000,000, to be raised by the issue of redeemable

bonds bearing interest at 5 per cent. Even this arrangement did not stand up to the shock of later events, and a year later, after Hitler had come to power, Schacht, by that time restored to his former position as President of the Reichsbank, announced, in the fashion of the day, that as foreign countries would not buy German goods, the German Government was compelled to reduce payment of interest to existing foreign bondholders. After such a pronouncement the flotation of any new Government loan in foreign markets was obviously out of the question, and consequently the Lausanne Plan became inoperative and nothing more was done about it. Hitler was thus able to claim at a later date, with some measure of truth, that he had put an end to Reparations and to Germany's dependence upon foreign financiers.

By the time the Lausanne Conference met Brüning was out of office, and things were moving to the climax of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. To appreciate how this actually came about it will be necessary to go back a little way. While the controversy over the Customs Union project was raging, the American President Hoover, thoroughly alarmed at the continuance and extension of the economic crisis in central Europe and the likelihood of a financial breakdown in Germany, which would have serious effects upon American interests no less than upon those of other countries, suggested a moratorium of inter-government debts and obligations of every sort, including Reparations. France, already angered over the Customs Union affair and at that stage not so seriously affected by the crisis as Britain and other European countries, objected, and by the time her objections were met or overruled it was too late, and the crash began in Germany with the failure of one of the biggest banking establishments. Brüning now took complete charge of Germany's economic affairs. The Reichsbank was put under Government orders, a system of strict currency control was set up, and all dealings in foreign exchange except through the Reichsbank were forbidden. In short Brüning, to meet a tremendous emergency, did all, or nearly all, those things which two years later Hitler's economic advisers, including Schacht, elevated into something like a system for the purposes of their New Order.

Meanwhile the German people became more and more bewildered and frightened. There was no sign yet of any improvement in trade and employment, while the Nazi orators continued to proclaim in loud and confident tones that only Hitler could save the country, only Hitler could give work to the workless and bread to the hungry. The Nazis used violence too towards their opponents, and with 600,000 men enrolled in Röhm's S.A. their intimidating tactics had considerable effect. At the other extreme there were the Communists, who claimed that salvation for the German worker could only be found in the Soviet system, as developed in Russia, and who also marshalled semi-military formations and drew to their side many former adherents of the Social Democratic Party. Not infrequently there were clashes between partisans of the two extremes, in which shots were exchanged and serious casualties occurred.

The Government did little or nothing to put an end to these displays of lawlessness and left it to the other parties to make their own arrangements for the protection of their meetings and their leaders from attacks organised by hooligans. Two of them were able to do this very effectively. The Monarchists had had their *Stahlhelm* for a long time and were well able to take care of themselves; and the Social Democratic *Reichsbanner* had come into existence soon after the assassination of Walter Rathenau in the *Reichstag* in 1922, for the express purpose of protecting the leaders of that party from similar attacks in the future. This semi-military body was now reorganised to include members of the Centre Party, and under the new name of the 'Iron Front' it made its plans to defend the Republic against attacks from within, from whatever quarter they were delivered. The smaller parties fared badly in the clash of opposing forces; while the ordinary citizen, who was attached to no party and only asked for a quiet life, came off worst of all, if he was unlucky enough to fall foul of any of the extemist gangs. At last, just before he fell from power, Brüning was bold enough to take the step, with the President's consent, of dissolving the Nazis' S.A. and S.S. But this measure, one-sided as it was, came too late, and Brüning's successor, Papen, seeking for an accommodation with the Nazi Party in the

Reichstag, reversed it; and Hitler's 'private army' reappeared—more powerful than ever.

While all this confusion and disorder were gathering head, in the spring of 1932, it became necessary, under the Constitution of the Republic, to hold a Presidential Election. Marshal von Hindenburg was nearing the completion of his seven-year term of office, and Germany was faced with the prospect of providing itself with a new Chief of State or re-electing to that position a man of 84. It was announced that Hitler would be a candidate. The old Marshal could not bear the thought of the 'Bohemian corporal', as he called the Nazi leader, sitting in his seat, so despite his great age and failing powers he allowed himself to be nominated for a second term. Chancellor Brüning did all he could to secure the President's re-election, and all sections of the Weimar Coalition backed his candidature, while the Iron Front was held in readiness to meet Nazi force with force. Nevertheless Hindenburg just failed to secure an absolute majority over the other candidates. These included, besides Hitler, the Communist Thälmann and a representative of the extreme Monarchists, who considered that the Marshal had betrayed their cause.

In the second ballot the Monarchist dropped out, and the final figures were: Hindenburg, 19,300,000; Hitler, 13,400,000; and the Communist Thälmann, 3,500,000. This result gave rise to fresh complications in the political situation. Although Hitler had been defeated by a large majority, the size of his poll surprised and alarmed many people who had no love for Brüning and his democratic-coalition Government and regarded the Iron Front almost as objectionable as the S.A. and S.S. of the Nazis. As for the Communists, law-abiding and respectable Conservatives disliked and feared them most of all, and they noted that this party too had made a considerable advance in voting strength since the previous presidential election. The rather small party in the *Reichstag* who represented this point of view would have liked to see the President use his very considerable powers to place in office someone who would prevent either brand of socialism, whether that of the 'Bohemian corporal' or the Red variety propagated by the Communists, from being forced upon the

country and completely overturning the order of society for which they stood. Brüning tried to do something in this direction when, as we have seen, he secured Hindenburg's assent to a decree suppressing the S.A. and S.S. This was three days after the election, when the old man was still very conscious of the power wielded by these organisations. After that came a change, and in a few weeks Brüning's day was done, and the President, showing little gratitude for all that the Chancellor had done to secure his re-election, forced him to resign by declaring that he would give his assent to no more of those emergency decrees—'Orders-in-Council,' as we should call them—by which Brüning carried on his government.

This change of attitude on the President's part seems to have arisen out of a kind of 'palace plot', the arch-plotter being General Kurt von Schleicher, who at that time held an important position in the Reichswehr Ministry (or War Office), where his Chief was General Gröner, Ludendorff's successor as Chief of Staff to Hindenburg in the last stages of the war. Schleicher was a born intriguer. He had contacts with leading personalities of all parties, including Hitler, whose henchman, Röhm, had formerly worked under him in 'Intelligence'. He was also in close touch with the President through his friendship with the latter's son Oskar von Hindenburg. It was not the first time he had taken a hand, behind the scenes, in the political drama of these days. Two years before he had had a good deal to do with the establishment in office of Brüning as a man who might be expected to get on better with the parties of the Right than his predecessor, the Social Democrat Müller. That experiment had now failed. Brüning's party, the Centre, drew most of its strength from the Christian (that is Catholic) trade unions of the industrial Rhineland and the peasants of the south, and these bodies were just as antagonistic to the 'big business' and Junker (or landowning) interests which opposed Brüning as the members of the more ordinary unions which backed the Social Democrats.

There was a conservative element in the Centre, it is true, but this was not strong enough to break the alliance between the party as a whole and the Socialists, upon which Brüning relied to

support him in his struggle to maintain himself against the attacks of the Conservatives and Nazis on the one hand and the Communists on the other. Schleicher therefore determined to try again. He knew that the President was uneasy in his mind about the continuance of Brüning's method of government by decree and wanted an early return to the more constitutional usage of government and legislation based on a Reichstag majority. Schleicher's plan was to secure such a majority for a Government of the Right by bringing together the various right-wing groups in the *Reichstag* and splitting the Centre, so that its Conservative section would combine with these groups. Such a coalition, he expected, if it adopted a strong 'nationalist' foreign policy and stood up well to France over Reparations at Lausanne as well as in the great Disarmament Conference then in session in Geneva, would secure the support of the Nazis in the *Reichstag* against the democratic parties. Thus a strong parliamentary Government could be formed, which would put an end to the prevailing disorder without having recourse to the intervention of the *Reichswehr*, which Schleicher considered would be prejudicial to the discipline and morale of the force.

The man he had chosen to head such a Government, and commended to the President for the purpose, was Franz von Papen, a soldier-diplomat who had achieved a certain notoriety during the war by being expelled from the U.S.A., while that country was still neutral, for instigating acts of sabotage in the armaments industry. Papen was a Catholic Centrist, but he belonged to the conservative wing of the party, and was connected by marriage with a great industrial family. He therefore seemed an ideal man for the part for which Schleicher had cast him; and when Brüning resigned, the President, on June 2, 1932, appointed Papen Chancellor and gave him a pretty free hand in the composition of his Cabinet, though he stipulated that the choice of Reichswehr Minister should be left to himself as Commander-in-Chief. For this office Hindenburg had already named Schleicher. Gröner had incurred the old man's displeasure by what he regarded as a scandalous marriage and had been virtually removed from his post shortly before Brüning fell.

But this carefully devised scheme of Schleicher's did not achieve the success he had hoped for. Papen made the initial mistake of giving nearly all the key positions in his ministry to members of the nobility, and the name *Herren Kabinett* or the 'Lords' Cabinet' damned it from the start in the eyes of the Centrists. The Nazis too, or at least the more socialist members of the party, led by a man named Gregor Strasser, were not impressed, for they were 'democrats' in their way and felt no love for Junkers and plutocrats. Papen did not test the strength of all this feeling in the existing *Reichstag*; he persuaded Hindenburg to dissolve it and arranged for a General Election. Then he tried to secure a promise of support from Hitler in return for a cancellation of Brüning's decree for the suppression of the S.A. and S.S. Hitler gave the promise somewhat unwillingly, and on June 15 the ban was lifted. Thereafter the Nazis proceeded with their election campaign as if no such pledge had been given, and reverted to their former violent methods of propaganda on behalf of their Leader and the National Socialist programme. How far Hitler considered himself bound by his 'promise'—given, it should be noted, verbally in a personal interview with Hindenburg on the afternoon of the day (May 29) of Brüning's dismissal as well as later at a meeting with Schleicher after the *Reichstag* had been dissolved—may be judged from the fact that on June 26 he himself spoke contemptuously to his followers of the Government of the Barons, and after the conclusion of the Lausanne Agreement on Reparations he referred to this as 'Papen's failure of Lausanne'.

The adjournment of the Disarmament Conference just a week before the elections without recognition having been accorded, even in principle, to Germany's claim for equal rights was also exploited by Nazi orators to weaken the prestige of the Chancellor and to magnify that of Hitler as a truly national spokesman. Even an important success that Papen managed to achieve at this time against the 'democratic front' was represented as damaging to German unity, although as a party the Nazis profited immensely from the affair. It was really a kind of *coup d'état*. There had recently been an election for the Prussian Diet, as a result of which the Social Democratic Government of that State found

itself in a minority in the new Diet. As, however, the majority was made up of two mutually hostile parts, one Nazi and the other Communist, the Socialist Prime Minister, Braun, urged on by his Minister of the Interior, Severing, decided to continue in office, despite the fact that a Communist motion of non-confidence had been carried on July 3 with the help of Nazi votes. A couple of weeks later Papen, assuming the title of Reich Commissioner, arbitrarily summoned the Prussian Ministers to vacate their offices under threat of the use of force if they offered resistance to his order, the force in this case being that of the *Reichswehr*. The ministers quietly submitted, and the Reich Commissioner appointed his deputies to take over their various departments and especially the all-important Ministry of the Interior, which controlled the highly efficient Prussian (and therefore Berlin) police. It was a shrewd blow at democratic government in Germany, and perhaps, more than anything else that happened in these disordered times, it opened the way to the eventual establishment of Hitler's control of the *Reich*. Nevertheless Hitler and his propaganda chief Göbbels strongly condemned Papen's action on the grounds that it had alarmed the Governments of the other States and particularly Bavaria, whose Catholic Prime Minister threatened to resist with force any attempt of a Reich Commissioner to meddle in a similar way with the affairs of his State.

It was in this spirit that the Nazis and their supporters went to the poll on July 31, and the result of the election immediately shattered the illusion that Schleicher and Papen had allowed themselves to entertain, that Hitler would lend them his party votes to build up a Nationalist and Conservative majority in the *Reichstag*, while he himself remained docile and obedient outside. The Nazis increased their number from 107 to 230 and became the largest single party in the *Reichstag*. This was a great success, and not unnaturally it encouraged in Hitler the belief that in due course he would be called upon to head a ministry which would be predominantly National Socialist and would thus secure control of Germany.

But though Hitler stubbornly stuck to this belief, until he was at last justified by the event, there was much to make the issue

extremely unlikely on the morrow of the election. For, after all, in a house of 607 members the Nazis were still in a considerable minority, and if the other parties and groups were too broken and divided to come together and form a stable anti-Nazi Government, they could at least by their combined voting strength make a Nazi one, in theory, impossible. Moreover, Hindenburg at this stage was strongly opposed to accepting the Bohemian corporal as his Chancellor. Thus there was a deadlock. Papen tried to resolve this by proposing to bring Hitler into the Cabinet and so making him share the responsibility of government and the restoration of order,—a move which, if adopted, might even damage his credit with the wilder elements of his party. He even persuaded the President to send for Hitler for the second time and offer him the Vice-Chancellorship if the Nazi members of the *Reichstag* would co-operate with the small Nationalist Party, which was the only one on which Papen could count.

Hitler refused the bait and decided to bide his time. This was the more remarkable because at this time his own position was being undermined from two opposite directions. On the one hand his wealthy industrial backers, frightened by the very success of their efforts on his behalf and in some cases hard hit by the continuance of the trade depression, decided to stop supplies and thus caused him serious financial embarrassment. This affected the loyalty of many of his followers, who, otherwise workless, were stimulated in their political activities by payments out of party funds. On the other hand, a quarrel had developed inside the Party itself, and the more radical elements, headed by Gregor Strasser, complained that Hitler was falling away from the pure Nazi faith and allowing himself to come under the moderating influence of some of his newer recruits, who belonged to a different social circle from themselves. In the end the malcontents were suppressed and Strasser was forced out of the Party, but not before much harm had been done to the morale of the rank and file.

In spite of these difficulties Hitler's political strategy remained unaltered. He was out for nothing less than the mastery of Germany, and unlike his wild men, who would have preferred to carry the fortress literally by assault, as he himself had intended

to do in the days of his beer-cellar *Putsch*, he wanted to achieve his end by strictly constitutional means. He sought to use the forms provided by the Weimar Republic to overthrow that republic. The new *Reichstag* met on August 30, and he then gained a considerable tactical advantage from the fact that the Nazis as the largest party were entitled by custom to nominate the president of the assembly. Hitler's choice was Göring, not Strasser, as the latter thought it ought to have been, and Göring was elected against the opposition of the Social Democrats and Communists (united for once in a while) and prepared to use the influence which this high position gave him to help forward Hitler's plans.

It soon became apparent that Papen could do nothing with such a *Reichstag*, and in less than a fortnight after its first meeting it was dead. The Communists moved a vote of non-confidence in the Chancellor, which was carried by an overwhelming majority, and the President dissolved the Chamber. Papen however did not resign; he believed that the Nazi movement had passed the zenith of its popularity, and that its disintegration was about to set in. For two months he governed without parliamentary authority, simply as Hindenburg's man. Then on November 6 the German people went to the poll for the third time that year and elected yet another *Reichstag*. The voting this time seemed to show that Papen was not far out in his estimate of the position, and it is possible that if the election could have been put off a little longer—for trade was now showing signs of revival—the Nazi wave would have rolled back a good deal further than it did on this occasion. As it was, the Nazis lost 33 seats, though they still formed the largest party in the new *Reichstag*, and consequently Göring retained his position as president of the Chamber. On the other hand, the Communists came back 100 strong, nearly as many as the Nazis were when they astounded everybody by their success in the autumn of 1930. They apparently made their gains at the expense of the Social Democrats, who now numbered 121.

The Conservative German Nationalists—Papen's supporters—also made some gains, presumably from the Nazis, but their muster was no more than 50. In this *Reichstag*, therefore, which lived long enough to see Hitler installed as Chancellor and then

received its quietus, the Centrists, who with the various fragmentary parties that still survived numbered 139, held the balance between the Nationalist forces of the Right (if indeed Hitler's followers could be said to belong to the Right) and those of the Left, whose internecine strife led to their confusion and ultimate destruction; and it was the weakness and vacillating policy of the leaders of the Centre that eventually gave Hitler the opportunity he waited for of seizing control of the machinery of government and using it ruthlessly for the elimination of his political opponents.

Meanwhile Hitler had to put up with further delay and disappointment. He was short of cash for the reason already indicated, and his quarrel with Strasser was assuming the character of a personal feud, which tendened to weaken his position as head of the movement. While matters were in this state, he had yet another interview with the President. Hindenburg had refused to let Papen resign, despite the weakness of the latter's parliamentary position, and decided to try once more to induce Hitler, while his fortunes were at this low ebb, to enter the Government in a subordinate capacity. But Hitler would have all or nothing. Moreover, he objected to the line taken by the Papen Government at the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, and he knew that a plan of Papen's for dealing with unemployment by subsidising employers and cutting wages was as unpopular with the Nazis as it was with the Parties of the Left. So this attempt to win him over to co-operation failed like the others.

By this time a new intrigue had been set on foot by Schleicher, who considered that the plan for a Coalition of the Right had definitely failed and with characteristic suppleness began a series of moves which had for their object the displacement of Papen and the formation of a new Coalition Government, whose affinities would be with the Left. He even contemplated the possibility of bringing Strasser into such a Government, though nothing came of this particular manœuvre. When all was ready, the necessary pressure was put upon Papen to resign by Schleicher and other ministers who associated themselves with him in the scheme. Hindenburg very unwillingly accepted this resignation and on December 3 he appointed Schleicher himself to take Papen's

place, without requiring him to give up the all-important Reichswehr Ministry, which he had held under Papen. At the same time the old man impressed upon his new Chancellor the necessity of securing the goodwill and support of a majority in the *Reichstag*.

At first it looked as if the President's strange appointment of a man who had no party ties of any kind might succeed after all, for everybody was tired of the political turmoil and the never-ending din of election campaigns, from which the most outrageous violence seemed inseparable; and a Reichswehr general seemed to offer a guarantee that at any rate disorder would be repressed. He had the good fortune, too, to be able to claim a diplomatic success for Germany when he had been Chancellor for little more than a week, for on December 11 the representatives of the Great Powers at the Disarmament Conference, France included, agreed at last that in any Disarmament Convention that might issue from the Conference Germany should be accorded 'equality with the other Powers'. This decision meant little at the moment, but its implications were of great significance, for it indicated that yet another of the 'servitudes' that the Treaty of Versailles had laid upon Germany was to be removed in due course by general agreement. It was represented as a triumph for a policy which Schleicher as Reichswehr Minister had specially championed. Hitler disapproved, because he wanted much more than this, but the country was pleased, and so was the President. Nevertheless, when it came to domestic problems, the Social General, as Schleicher was called, was no more able than Papen with his Cabinet of Barons to control the *Reichstag* and base his rule upon a reliable majority. Papen, too, paid him back in his own coin and intrigued against him.

By a piece of clever manœuvring the ex-Chancellor brought about a meeting between Hitler and some of the industrial magnates, and in return for an undertaking by the Nazi *Führer* that his extremists should be kept in check, the Wolffs and Thyssens agreed to put up enough money to get him out of his financial difficulties. Revitalised in this way, the Nazi high command recovered its poise, and the Strasser mutiny was suppressed.

At last, on January 28, after less than two months of office,

Schleicher went to the President and asked for the dissolution of the *Reichstag*, with power to rule for the time being by emergency decree. Hindenburg refused, and Schleicher resigned. The President now turned once more to Papen, with whom he had kept in close touch all these weeks of the Schleicher experiment. But this time, though he planned a ministry, Papen did not head it himself. His choice for the Chancellorship was Hitler, while he would be content with the Vice-Chancellorship. In this way the Nazi votes would be joined with those of Papen's own party, led by Hugenberg, in support of the Cabinet. This would not give the Government an absolute majority in the *Reichstag*, but Papen thought that a workable one could be secured on most matters. Hindenburg disliked the plan, because it gave Hitler the first place in the Government, but after much persuasion the tired old President allowed himself to be convinced by Papen that it would be possible to control the Bohemian corporal if the majority of the Cabinet offices, including the Vice-Chancellorship and the Foreign and Reichswehr Ministries, were held by non-Nazis. Hitler of course had no intention of being a pawn in the hands of Papen or anyone else, but he accepted the latter's overtures and even promised to rule 'constitutionally' as the head of a coalition ministry. On this understanding the President offered him the Chancellorship, and he accepted it.

The Weimar Republic was obviously at its last gasp, but it had not yet been put out of its misery. This Hitler now proceeded to do. But he did it in due form—constitutionally, as it were: there was drama enough and to spare, but there was no dramatic *coup d'état* after the style of certain famous dictators of other days. Thus, when the Social Democrats and the Centre Party in the *Reichstag* proved troublesome and obstructive, he persuaded Papen and his non-Nazi colleagues in the Cabinet to agree to yet another General Election. Before this was held, however, a good deal of preparatory work was done. In forming his Cabinet Hitler accepted without demur Hindenburg's decision that the existing Foreign Minister, von Neurath, should continue to hold that office, and that General von Blomberg, Germany's chief military representative at the Disarmament Conference, should

take Schleicher's place as Reichswehr Minister. He also agreed to Papen's suggestion that the Conservative leader, Hugenberg, should be given a special post as Minister for Economics and Agriculture.

But he insisted on his side that the key post of Reich Minister of the Interior should be held by a very able Nazi named Frick, and that a new Air Ministry should be created and put in charge of Göring. He stipulated further that Papen, who combined the functions of Reich Commissioner for Prussia with those of Reich Vice-Chancellor, should appoint Göring as Minister of the Interior of that State and thus ensure that the control of the Prussian Police was in good Nazi hands. All these arrangements were duly carried out, and in this way the Nazi Party was given an assurance that it would not be unnecessarily hampered in its activities by the forces of the law. In Prussia Göring went a good deal further than this. He armed the S.A. and S.S. men and gave them the status of special constables, and similar measures were taken in certain other States where the Nazis had secured control of the Government. These men gave a taste of their quality as keepers of the peace by doing nothing to stop, when they did not actually aid and abet, the attacks that were made by mobs on Jews, whom Nazi propaganda had always branded along with foreigners and 'international capitalists' as responsible for Germany's economic distresses. Such treatment discouraged Jews from voting at election time.

Then, very conveniently, on February 25 occurred the famous Reichstag fire. Whether this was the result of accident or design, and if the latter, whether the incendiaries were Nazis acting under the orders of Göring or Communists screening themselves behind the poor imbecile Dutchman, Van der Lubbe, there can be no doubt that this event served Hitler's purpose admirably. He went to Hindenburg, now losing his grip of things, and demanded extraordinary powers to deal with an alleged Communist conspiracy. The President gave way and issued the emergency decrees which the Constitution permitted for a period of one year when the State was in danger. This was all that Hitler needed for the moment, for it enabled him perfectly legally to arrest and detain

without trial any opponent of his Government whom he chose to regard as conspiring against constituted authority. Less than a fortnight later, on March 5, the German electors went to the poll, with Röhm's gangs of ruffians let loose throughout the country, terrorising peacefully disposed citizens into submission to their orders and caprices and proclaiming by voice, press and radio the immense and imminent danger of a Bolshevik revolution. The surprising thing about this crucial election is that in a country like Germany, where submission to authority was traditional, and where on this occasion the presence of armed Nazi Storm-troopers at the polling stations made the secrecy of the ballot ineffective, so many persons voted against the Government. The total anti-Nazi poll, amounting to 17,300,000, actually exceeded that of the Nazis by 200,000. The trouble was that whereas the Nazi mass was homogeneous, their opponents, who included Social Democrats, Communists, Catholic Centrists and a few others, were not. Moreover 3,100,000 Conservatives and Monarchists, who followed the banner of Papen and Hugenberg and who had the support of the *Stahlhelm*, as the Nazi voters had that of the S.S. and S.A., were on this occasion the allies of Hitler.

In this way Hitler won the election. But he still had to carry out his plan of destroying the Weimar Republic by ostensibly legal means. The *Reichstag* was due to meet at the end of the month. In the interval he strengthened his position still further. Even before the election Göring as Prussian Minister of the Interior had ordered the arrest of all Communist members of the *Reichstag* found on Prussian soil on suspicion of complicity in the Reichstag fire. That process was now speeded up, and the 81 newly-elected Communists were either rounded up or went into hiding or exile. The same thing happened in the case of 26 of the 120 Social Democrats who had won seats. Next the State Governments of Baden, Würtemberg, Saxony and Bavaria were treated as the Prussian Government had been treated by Papen in the previous summer, and Reich Commissioners—in most cases District Leaders (*Gauleiter*) of the Nazi Party—were appointed to take over the control of State affairs and act in the same ruthless way in those regions as Göring had done in Prussia. Finally Göbbels

was brought into the Cabinet and made Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. Besides giving strong support to his chief in Government circles, he set to work forthwith to get as much control as possible over the press and radio and so prepare the country for the new regime that the *Reichstag* was to be asked to sanction.

The *Reichstag* met on March 21, and Göring was again chosen to be its president. Two days later Hitler addressed the members and told them what he wanted them to do. This was to pass a new constitutional law transferring all legislative power for a period of four years—a transparently futile safeguard—from the *Reichstag* and *Reichsrat* to the Government, which for all practical purposes would be Hitler himself, for by this time the old President was ceasing to exercise much influence over the course of events. The solid block of 298 Nazis, even with the support of its Nationalist allies, was not large enough to carry the Bill by the two-thirds majority of members present required under the Constitution. There were, of course, no Communists present and only 94 Social Democrats. But if to these were added the votes of 92 Catholics of the Centre and the Bavarian People's Party, the Government proposal would be lost. Partly by trickery, but perhaps even more by intimidation—for armed Nazi Storm-troopers were posted all over the building, including the actual Chamber—the Catholics were induced to give their votes on this occasion to Hitler. Only the Social Democrats—a forlorn hope in this losing fight for the maintenance of the Weimar Republic—voted against the Government's proposal; and after this decision had been endorsed without much difficulty by the Upper Chamber, the Bill became law. Henceforth the *Reichstag* met only when the Chancellor summoned it and lost all initiative in legislation.

Hitler was now in a position to recast the whole machinery of government in accordance with his ideas and to remove from his path any person or thing that obstructed him, if that were humanly possible; and this he proceeded to do in the most thorough way. One of these ideas seems to have been borrowed from Lenin and the Bolsheviks of Russia, where the Dictatorship of the Proletariat required that one party only should be permitted to exist and that

all the key points in the state should be held by members of that party. In Russia this was the Communist Party; in Germany Hitler's personal dictatorship required that the only party should be that of the National Socialists. During the next few months this policy was vigorously, if informally, carried out. Communists and Social Democrats were hounded down by S.A. men, especially if they were Jews. Sometimes they were killed outright or driven to suicide; more commonly their fate was consignment to a concentration camp. To destroy the foundations of the Social Democratic Party organisation the trade unions were also attacked, their funds confiscated, and an entirely new organisation set up under Government control called the Labour Front with one of Hitler's faithful supporters, Robert Ley, as its head.

At last, in June, the Social Democratic Party was formally and officially suppressed by the Government. Similar, if not quite such forceful, tactics were also employed to bring about the dissolution of the Centre and even of Hugenberg's Nationalist Party, though both these bodies were allowed the privilege of dissolving themselves. The seal was put upon this policy by the issue of a decree of the Government on July 14 forbidding the formation of any other party than the 'National Socialist German Workers' Party'. Hence arose the necessity for an organisation which would counteract and, wherever possible, destroy all attempts to carry on 'underground' political activities of a socialist or even a liberal kind. Göring had already set up such an organisation in Prussia. This Secret State Police, abbreviated from the German form of the name (*Geheime Staats-Polizei*) to Gestapo, was so successful in its place of origin as a means of eliminating opponents of the regime that similar bodies were established in other States, notably in Bavaria, where Heinrich Himmler first came into notoriety as the local chief. In this way the whole *Reich* was eventually covered with a network of Government agents and spies, whose sole purpose was to investigate and suppress by any convenient means, however ruthless, the activities of those persons or organisations that came under suspicion of being opposed to Hitler's new National Socialist State. The logical result of this policy of the single party was the elimination of those members of

the Government who did not belong to that party. Hugenberg went the day before his German Nationalist Party dissolved itself, and his place was taken by a Nazi. In due course the rest of the non-Nazi ministers resigned—with three exceptions. These were the Foreign Minister von Neurath, a professional diplomat, General von Blomberg, the Reichswehr Minister (who incidently was a warm admirer of Hitler and eventually joined the Party), and Papen. All three were Hindenburg's own nominees, and Papen was his particular favourite; and as Hitler did not want anything in the nature of a quarrel with the old man, whose failing health suggested that he might soon pass from the scene altogether, they were allowed to remain at their posts for the time being. Otherwise the Cabinet soon became an entirely Nazi body.

Meanwhile the 'co-ordination' (*Gleichschaltung*) of the various State Governments went steadily forward. In other words, the federal structure of the German Republic, as established under the Weimar Constitution, was virtually abolished, and the 18 States were brought under close control of the Central Government of the *Reich*. This was effected through the appointment by the Government of the *Reich* of a *Statthalter* or Governor of each State, generally a highly placed official of the Nazi Party. He in his turn appointed the Prime Minister of the State and to all intents and purposes the *Staatsrat* or State Council as well. This was a body which functioned as a kind of State legislature, but it had little power and was virtually under the orders of the *Statthalter* In Prussia the *Statthalter* was Hitler himself, Papen's Reich Commissionership being abolished to make way for the new office. Hitler then appointed Göring as Prime Minister, thus putting him in supreme control of the whole life of the key State and at the same time depriving Papen of the only position of real authority that he possessed.

This was Hitler's famous 'Third Reich'—or rather its framework, round which he and the men he gathered to his side organised the German nation on what has come to be known as 'totalitarian' lines. There is no need to describe this Nazi system at any length. Most people are only too familiar with its main features: how the state took possession of the individual German, body and

soul, and planned his life from the cradle to the grave; how it controlled all his interests and activities; how education and religion, the press and the radio, literature, art, music—everything in fact that might influence his mind and his spirit—were brought under strict control and made subservient to the will of one man, who claimed to be Germany's Man of Destiny. The parallel conception of *Autarkie*—self-sufficiency in economic matters—naturally required that trade and industry should be directed to the single end of serving the material interests of the state by the supermen appointed by the *Führer* for this purpose.

All this, no doubt, was due in part to a desire to put into practice the specific features of the Nazi creed with its pseudo-scientific crudities and its absurd racial theories, but it was also the result of Hitler's determination to free Germany from the last shadow of submission to the restrictions placed upon her by the Treaty of Versailles. To do that might mean war; and Hitler, perhaps again learning from the Russians, realised much sooner than the rulers or peoples of the Western democracies that modern war involves totalitarianism in a greater or less degree for all who take part in it; and he appeared to conclude, not altogether unreasonably, as the event showed, that the country that organised itself most thoroughly and efficiently on totalitarian lines in peace was most likely to win in war. The simplest way therefore of appreciating what happened in Germany after Hitler came to power is to recognise that the people of that country in a period of profound peace, when no threats of any kind were levelled against it from outside and when even the burden of Reparations had been virtually removed, were called upon to submit to all the rigours of a war-time economy and war-time restrictions on their personal liberty, and that the men responsible for this state of things were fanatically determined to stamp out every form of opposition to their all-pervasive plan. In any case, this 'planned economy' served admirably as a means of dealing with the problem of mass unemployment which had baffled Hitler's predecessors from Brüning onwards, and which he himself had promised faithfully to solve; and in this respect at least the planning appeared to be justified in its results.

All the time that he was constructing this new system at home, Hitler was endeavouring to take advantage of the international situation to achieve the other, and complementary, part of his programme. He wanted, as we have seen, to put an end to all those disabilities which the Versailles Settlement had imposed on Germany—the *Diktat* of Versailles, as he called it—and which put her in a position of inferiority to her neighbours. In particular and as a first step towards the rest, he wanted Germany to enjoy the same acknowledged right as other Powers to settle her armaments in accordance with her own conception of her needs; and he wanted this recognised not merely in principle, as the Disarmament Conference had already done at the instance of Papen and Schleicher, but as a condition which was immediately effective. The other Powers which were represented at the Conference were not prepared to allow this: they wanted Germany to submit to a further period of probation, or 'quarantine', as it was called in the political slang of the day, and they proposed that this period should be one of eight years, at the end of which she might re-arm by stages, until she reached a certain prescribed level in men and equipment, while other countries would *dis*arm by similar stages, until the agreed level of equality was established.

Hitler, knowing that immediate equality was, in the nature of the case, impossible for Germany, offered to accept a five-year waiting period on condition that the double movement of German re-armament and other countries' disarmament should begin forthwith and should be completed at the end of the specified time. He made this proposal in a speech delivered before a specially summoned meeting of the *Reichstag* on May 17, in which he expounded the foreign policy of his Government and proclaimed a message of peace and goodwill to the world. None the less he let it be known that, if his proposal was outvoted when it came before the Disarmament Conference, Germany would withdraw from that body and also from the League of Nations, of which it was an organ. He then asked the *Reichstag* to approve of his policy as set out in his speech, and it did so unanimously. Even the Social Democrats voted for the motion, though it is probable that some at least did so with the fear before their eyes of internment in a

concentration camp if they did otherwise; at any rate, many of their absent colleagues who had managed to find refuge from the Nazi terror in other countries expressed their complete disbelief in Hitler's sincerity. On the whole, however, the reaction of the outside world to this declaration of policy was favourable even in quarters where such an attitude might have been less expected; and Hitler was encouraged to proceed with his plans for the restoration of Germany's power and prestige. In the autumn his judgment and determination were put to the test. On October 14 the Disarmament Conference rejected his five-year plan in favour of the eight-year quarantine one. Hitler lost no time in carrying out the threat he had made in his speech to the *Reichstag* in May: the German delegation forthwith withdrew from the Conference, and notice was given that Germany would resign from membership of the League of Nations.

In taking this action Hitler was throwing down the gauntlet to the formerly Allied Powers, who were pledged to uphold the terms of the Versailles Treaty. For his gesture could only mean that henceforth Germany would do what she liked in the matter of armaments, and if she openly and deliberately began to re-arm in defiance of her treaty obligations, there was a risk that the League Powers, or some of them, would wage a 'preventive' war against her. But Hitler took this risk. He knew of course that Germany was not ready for a major war. Her heavy industries, it is true—thanks to her borrowings from foreign investors—had been largely reconditioned and could soon be turned over to war purposes; her secret General Staff, too, had formed plans for supplementing the professional *Reichswehr* with a new short-service army; while 'air-mindedness' had been cultivated by the production of civil aircraft (not forbidden by the Versailles Treaty) and the formation of popular glider clubs among the younger generation.

But time was needed for all these necessary elements of a modern army organisation to be developed; and if the Powers struck swiftly and with precision, they could dislocate and destroy Germany's war potential from the start and thereafter re-impose all the 'servitudes' of Versailles. Hitler, however, had rightly

gauged the situation. The Powers did not take up the challenge. Great Britain had no liking for 'preventive' wars: they were clean against her traditional outlook on foreign relations; and the trend of opinion in all her political parties at that time was away from war and towards peace, even if peace meant abating some of the rigour of the Versailles Settlement. France, rent by faction at home, would nevertheless have favoured a policy of 'sanctions' towards Germany if the British Government had been ready to approve of such a course, but after her unfortunate experience in the Ruhr ten years before, she was not prepared to repeat that performance without British support. The other two military Powers who were signatories of the Treaty, Italy under Mussolini and Poland under her new dictator Pilsudski, were already making motions of friendship to Germany and could be trusted not to react offensively to Hitler's gesture. Indeed, Mussolini followed the latter's example so far as to take his country out of the Disarmament Conference, deferring resignation from the League to a more appropriate season in the years ahead. As for the U.S.A. and Soviet Russia, though they had been represented at the Disarmament Conference, they were bound neither by the Treaty nor by membership of the League, and consequently they could be written off the list of possible interventionists.

Thus Hitler won the first of his many diplomatic successes, and his prestige rose immensely at home and abroad. In the field of domestic politics he was quick to exploit the situation in the interest of his own hold on power, and followed up the stroke which filled the European Cabinets with dismay by dissolving the *Reichstag* and ordering new elections. This time, however, he employed a new technique. As there was now only one political party, it followed that only members of that party, with a few very special exceptions, would be permitted to offer themselves as candidates, and the electors could consequently only vote yea or nay.

The result, of course, was a foregone conclusion, and on November 12 a *Reichstag* of none but Nazis or avowed supporters of Hitler's Government was elected. Some bold spirits did indeed cast negative votes, but these made no difference to the

return of the selected Nazi champion in any constituency. Furthermore, Hitler used the occasion for securing, by that time-honoured device of dictators, a plebiscite, an explicit approval on the part of German citizens of his foreign policy. Again he received an apparently emphatic answer in the affirmative. Armed with this dubious consensus of opinion on the part of the German nation he now went forward with his plans for re-armament at his own pace. Foreign Governments, especially those of France and Britain, made strenuous efforts all through the following year to bring him back into the League, but he was deaf to all appeals. Though still professing devotion to the cause of peace and hatred of war, he would have nothing to do with schemes of 'collective security' centred in Geneva. On the other hand, he expressed himself as ready and willing to make non-aggression pacts with any and every country on terms of complete mutual equality; and he was successful in bringing about several such agreements—notably with Poland. It seemed as if he had won an unchallengeable position of influence and authority in the eyes of the outside world as well as among his own people; and it now only remained for him to attain the formal as well as the actual headship of Germany, as he presently did on the death of President Hindenburg in August 1934, for his domestic ambitions, at least, to be satisfied.

Before that event, however, his regime suffered two severe shocks. The first occurred in June of the same year, when a plot against his authority appeared to develop inside the Nazi Party. What the true facts of this affair were has never been officially stated, but it is generally believed that though Gregor Strasser had given up politics for a business life, the discontent of the radical extremists, of which he had been the mouthpiece, had smouldered on under the surface of things, and that just at this time Röhm decided to make use of it for his own purposes. It is said that the latter wanted the S.A., of which he was the Chief of Staff, to have equality of status with the *Reichswehr* without being subject to Reichswehr control and discipline, and that when the Reichswehr Command objected, Hitler took the side of the soldiers and disbanded the S.A.; whereupon Röhm determined to

resist, and, if posssible, force Hitler to give in to his demands, and in such resistance he believed he could count upon the support of those elements in the Party who considered that Hitler had succumbed to the 'plutocrats'. But this alleged revolt of Röhm and his S.A. supporters is not the whole story. Hitler, with Göring at his ear, seems to have made up his mind—whether on good or bad grounds it is impossible to say—that it was part of a vast conspiracy to remove him from place and power, and that Schleicher, the maker of Chancellors, was busy at his old game and was bringing into his web of intrigue anyone and everyone who had ever set himself to hinder Hitler's advance to power. Besides Röhm and Schleicher, Strasser and Brüning were regarded as participating in the plot, as well as many other less well-known personages. Even Vice-Chancellor Papen for a time came under suspicion.

As soon as Göring's Gestapo brought in news of what they thought was afoot, Hitler acted with vigour and utter ruthlessness. He did not wait for judicial processes: that was never the Nazi way; he struck forthwith at all and sundry who he thought might be concerned in this attempt at his overthrow. According to some accounts he shot Röhm, the friend and comrade of his early days of struggle and disappointment, with his own hand. Gregor Strasser was sought out, jailed, and then shot in his cell. Schleicher was killed by S.S. men in his own house, so was his wife; so that there was no available evidence as to what exactly happened on this occasion. The S.S. men also paid a visit to the office of the Vice-Chancellor, but found only Papen's secretary there; Papen himself had been forewarned and remained at home that day. They undoubtedly killed the secretary, and the inference seems to be that if the Vice-Chancellor had been present, they would have killed him too. However, Hitler seems to have been satisfied with the sacrifice of the servant in this case, and Papen lived on to become at a later time, when he had resigned his useless office of Vice-Chancellor, one of Hitler's principal assistants in the sphere of foreign policy.

Only Brüning, of the four 'conspirators' mentioned above, wholly escaped the attentions of Göring's minions; but that was

because he too had been given timely warning and had managed to get over the Dutch frontier in disguise. How many were summarily executed in this 'purge' of June 30 is unknown, but it is clear that the number and quality of the victims were sufficient to paralyse whatever revolt had been planned, and thus, as Hitler claimed, to prevent civil war.

Less than a month after these dramatic, if conscienceless, events, Dollfuss, the Austrian Chancellor, was assassinated in Vienna by Austrian Nazis. Austria, of course—that is, the original German duchy of that name, not the Empire—had formed part of Germany till 1866, when Bismarck broke up the Germanic Confederation and excluded Austria from his new Federal State. Hitler himself, despite Hindenburg's bitter gibe, was a native of Austria, not of Bohemia. These facts had given rise to a movement inside the Austrian Republic parallel with that of Germany and drawing its inspiration from it and from Hitler. To an Austrian Nazi, therefore, the idea of the reunion of Austria (since 1918 shorn of all its non-German dependencies) with Germany was an article of faith. Hitler naturally encouraged this faith, and Austrian and German Nazis alike trumpeted everywhere their slogan—*Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Führer* (One Nation, One People, One Leader). This was the motive behind the killing—in true Nazi style—of Dollfuss, who, dictator though he was in a small way, was clerical where Hitler was anti-clerical; and though hated with good reason by his own Social Democrats and Communists, who had suffered hard treatment at his hands earlier in this very year, he refused to merge his Corporative State (modelled on Mussolini's Italy) in the Greater Reich of Nazi aspiration. This was the reason for his slaughter by the Austrian Nazis. But Austria was the *protégée* of the Treaty Powers and not least of Italy, and while they had quailed or lacked unity of purpose when Hitler flouted them over the question of Germany's right to re-arm, there was no quailing and no disunion (or very little) when it appeared as if Germany were about to intervene forcibly in Austrian affairs. What Hitler would have done then, had he dared, can be realised in retrospect by what he did four years later. But now, when Italian and Jugoslav troops moved from different quarters towards

Vienna and France and Great Britain stood by, as it were, to give support, not in a 'preventive' war, but in an effort to resist aggression, the *Reichswehr* did not march. Hitler was still not ready for adventures outside the bounds of the 'home front' and still anxious to convince the world of his peaceful intentions. So, when called upon to disavow his too zealous Austrian admirers, he obeyed, with some loss of prestige, and retired, as he had done on previous occasions, when faced by unpleasantly heavy odds, to bide the time, which he had determined should come, when the design of the Greater Reich would be accomplished.

But he soon received no small measure of consolation for his disappointment, for by the old Marshal's death on August 2 the way was opened for the union of the two offices of Chancellor and President in his own person. The formality of an election was ordered—which, in effect, was another plebiscite. The question was submitted to the German people whether or not they would have Adolf Hitler for their *Führer* and Chancellor. There was no alternative choice. The answers committed to ballot papers, officially declared to be secret, were in the vast majority of cases 'yes'. The title of President, which bore a faint flavour of Weimar, was deliberately dropped, and that of *Fuhrer*, instinct with the pure gospel of National Socialism, took its place. The Nazi revolution was now complete, and the chosen head of the Third Reich prepared to challenge Fortune on a wider field.

CHAPTER XII

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE THIRD REICH

HITLER'S ELEVATION TO the formal headship of the German nation made no real difference to his power except in so far as it enabled him to establish a firmer control of the armed forces and impose on them an oath of loyalty to his person; but it increased enormously his prestige both at home and abroad and encouraged him in his pretentious belief that he was the representative interpreter of Germany to the world. More than 38 million Germans had voted for him on August 19, 1934, and less than 4½ millions against him, and though these figures showed a decline of 20 per cent from the number who gave him their support in November of the previous year, they were still enough for his main purpose. That was now, as he had always proclaimed it to be, to free Germany from the various disabilities imposed upon her by the Treaty of Versailles and to set her on an absolute equality with the other nations of the world.

Whether at this stage he had an even wider prospect before him and looked forward to a day when he through Germany might dominate Europe and even the world we need not stop to consider. It is not the way of dictators to take long views, but rather to allow themselves to be dazzled by their momentary successes and then to reach out for new prizes, as they come into sight: to be carried forward, in fact, by that vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself—and falls. But however that may be, there is little doubt that in the autumn of 1934 Hitler's objective was limited in the foreign field to one thing. That was the recovery of the Saar Valley for

Germany. Here the much abused Versailles Treaty came to his aid, for it had provided that in the year 1935 the inhabitants of that region were to decide by plebiscite whether they wished it to be restored to Germany, from which it had been detached in 1919; or to be incorporated in France; or, as a third possibility, to *remain under the authority of the existing Governing Commission* of the League of Nations. Long before Hindenburg's death Nazi propaganda had been vigorously directed to influencing opinion in the territory in favour of the first of these proposals; but as soon as Hitler assumed his new title and office, the campaign started in real earnest. Nazi technique in these matters left nothing to chance, and though the aid of S.A. and S.S. men could not be invoked on this occasion, there were other ways of bringing home to Saarlanders the fact that it was a matter of their personal interest as well as their duty to vote straight on the appointed day. Hitler wanted not merely a majority for a return of the Saar to Germany—that was expected anyhow; he wanted an overwhelming majority. So every form of pressure was exerted to convince the timid, the indifferent, and the venal that, after the territory had been transferred, their fortunes might be mended or marred according to the way in which they had conducted themselves during the plebiscite campaign. The voting took place on January 13, and two days later the result was declared. It showed that 97·9 per cent of the electorate went to the poll, and that of this number 477,119 persons voted for Germany, 46,513 for the *status quo*, and only 2,124 for France. Hitler's first objective was won in grand style.

His next was achieved more quietly and with no previous advertisement of his intentions. On March 16 he issued a proclamation to the German people which announced that conscription was to be re-established forthwith. Other Governments expressed their shocked or pained surprise at this open defiance of the Versailles Treaty, but this did not disturb the *Führer*, for it was the main purpose of his foreign policy to go on defying that instrument until such time as world opinion would come to regard it as entirely obsolete. Moreover, although the actual time and manner of the announcement had been kept secret, there was

nothing in its substance that had not been foreshadowed by Hitler when he withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. Since that time German re-armament, as was well-known, had gone steadily forward, and it had recently been declared that Göring's new Air Force was officially established on March 1.

There was much coming and going in Europe after this. The British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, went to Berlin to see Hitler, accompanied by his assistant Anthony Eden. Nothing happened at the interview to induce Hitler to abandon the line of policy he had set himself, but it was an unusual experience for Germans of that generation to find a British Cabinet Minister paying a call on the Head of their Government. Such a thing had never happened in Weimar days, and it was measure of the change that had overtaken the fortunes of their country since the *Führer* of the Nazi Party had assumed control. From Berlin Eden went on to Moscow. Soviet Russia was now a member of the League of Nations. She had been admitted in the previous September, and, as British Minister responsible for League affairs, Eden wished to find out how the all-powerful Stalin was reacting to the turn of events. A little later Sir John Simon accompanied the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to Italy, where at the Stresa Conference (April 11–14) they met Mussolini and the French Premier Pierre Laval. Here again the recent action of Hitler and his presumed purposes and plans formed the chief subjects of discussion. The three Powers represented at the Conference were afraid that Hitler might soon feel encouraged to intervene once again in the affairs of Austria, and they let it be known that, if he did, they would act together to uphold Austria's independence. But they took no steps to undo what Hitler had done on March 16. That for all practical purposes was accepted as a *fait accompli*. The Conference decided, however, to bring the matter to the notice of the League of Nations, and on April 17 the Council of the League formally condemned Hitler's violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler replied to all these diplomatic moves in a speech to the *Reichstag* on May 21. It was conciliatory in tone, but firm in its refusal to admit the right of the League to intervene. There were

some kind of words for other Powers except Russia, and Germany was declared to have no aggressive designs against any country. On the subject of Austria Hitler was quite definite. "Germany", he said, "neither intends nor wishes to interfere in the internal affairs of Austria, to annex Austria, or to conclude an *Anschluss*." That was the end of the matter, and the substance, if not the honours, of a diplomatic victory seemed to lie with the *Fuhrer*.

It was not long before the world received fresh evidence of Hitler's determination to restore Germany to the place from which the *Diktat* of Versailles had cast her down. And this time, as it appeared, she had an accomplice among the very Powers who had imposed that *Diktat*. On June 18 it was announced that a Naval Treaty had been signed between Great Britain and Germany, by which the latter undertook not to build warships exceeding in gross tonnage 35 per cent of that of the fleets of the whole of the British Commonwealth. In his speech of May 21 Hitler had thrown out the suggestion that such an arrangement would be welcomed in Germay. He then sent Ribbentrop, his future Foreign Minister, on a special mission to London to follow up what he had proposed. The result was this Agreement. The announcement was received with dismay in many countries. Even in Britain there were not wanting voices which disapproved. But it was in France that resentment was felt most strongly. Frenchmen said roundly that Britain had, as usual, sold the pass. Britain's new Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, represented the Agreement as a contribution to naval disarmament, but the French would have none of this argument. To them it seemed clear that the British Government had formally condoned Germany's breach of the Versailles Treaty in the matter of her general re-armament. For if she might build a new fleet with Britain's full assent, what was the purpose of condemning her for establishing her new air force and expanding the *Reichswehr* by conscription. Germans saw the force of this reasoning too—Nazis and non-Nazis alike—and Hitler was more popular than ever among the more nationalist sections of the German people. He was clearly keeping his promise to break the shackles of Versailles. But French reaction to the news of the Naval Agreement was welcome in Germany on other

grounds. It was not merely the actual Agreement that France resented, it was the way in which the thing was done. The French Government, it is true, had been kept informed of the fact and progress of the negotiations, but it had not been consulted, in the full sense of the term; still less had France's assent been sought. Here was the first sign of discord in the Stresa harmony.

Soon a real discord broke out among the Stresa Powers. This time Hitler was in no way responsible for what happened, but he seized with both hands the opportunity that presented itself for improving Germany's diplomatic position and exploited it to the full. The occasion was the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia, which developed into war in the autumn of this year. Italy was put to the ban of the League of Nations, and under the unfamiliar name of 'Sanctions' a system of economic boycott was directed against her under the auspices of the League. For various reasons the plan failed in its purpose of compelling Italy to abandon her campaign of conquest against Abyssinia, but it had the effect of driving her into the arms of Germany, the one big European country that had abstained from applying the boycott. Austria too, as a *protégée* of Italy, had also held aloof from Sanctions and was accordingly swept along with her patron into the orbit of Germany, from which it had been the principal object of the Stresa 'front' to preserve her. On the other hand, the relations of Great Britain and France had decidedly worsened as a result of the episode. French sentiment already embittered over the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, was further exasperated by the conviction that French interests had been sacrificed to the imperialist designs of Great Britain, masquerading under a pretence of devotion to the League and the rights of one of its less civilised members. At the same time strong feeling manifested itself in Britain over the way in which the Sanctions plan had miscarried. The French press, it was asserted, had shown anything but a friendly spirit, while the French Premier was suspected of double-dealing as a result of a secret compact which he was alleged to have made with Mussolini on the subject of Abyssinia at the time of the Stresa Conference. Popular resentment came to a head in

December, when it was announced that Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Foreign Secretary, had agreed to a plan put forward by the French Premier Laval for winding up both the war and Sanctions, which involved handing over the greater part of Abyssinia to Italy. The British Parliament incontinently rejected the plan, and Hoare resigned and was succeeded by Anthony Eden, whose record as a champion of the rights of the League was unimpeachable.

This was the international scene which the New Year set before the attention of Hitler. He made up his mind to take advantage of it without undue delay. The Rhineland, though no longer occupied by foreign troops, was still 'demilitarised'. Soldiers, fortifications, and army establishments of all sorts were banned in the area. This was one of the Versailles 'servitudes' which the French had always been specially concerned to maintain intact, and when the Locarno Treaty was being negotiated in the days of the Weimar Republic, they insisted that in this matter at least there should be no change in the prevailing order of things. The German Government of that time accepted the situation, and thereafter the demilitarisation of the Rhineland had been regarded as something voluntarily agreed to by Germany. Even Hitler had interpreted the position in that way and had publicly declared on more than one occasion that he drew a distinction between the *Diktat* of Versailles and the freely negotiated pact of Locarno. Nevertheless he determined that the time was now ripe for Germany to resume unfettered control of all the territory of the Fatherland and use it in her plans for national defence in any way which seemed appropriate. Not all his advisers agreed with him. Some of his generals told him that Germany was not yet ready for war, if war should result from what he now proposed to do. He told them that there would be no war, and, as the event showed, he had rightly judged the situation. Italy obviously had enough on her hands already, and she was likely to have more than enough if in some access of passion Mussolini was led to commit some hostile act against one or the other of his former allies. England and France were on bad terms with one another, and in any case neither was any better prepared for a major war than Germany herself.

Moreover, Hitler thought he now had a colourable excuse for repudiating Locarno as well as Versailles, and one too which would excite a certain degree of sympathy even in Great Britain. Seven months previously representatives of France and Russia had signed what was called a Mutual Assistance Agreement. It was said to be aimed at no particular country and to be entirely consistent with France's obligations under the Locarno Pact as well as with membership of the League. Shortly afterwards Hitler told the *Reichstag* that he doubted whether French action in this matter was in keeping with the spirit of Locarno. He did not take the question further at the time, though it was vigorously discussed in the German press, obviously with official approval, and the argument was advanced that this pact, like a similar one between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, which was signed a little later, was aimed exclusively at Germany. The Franco-Soviet Pact was now, at the beginning of 1936, due to be ratified, and Hitler decided to use it as his justification for declaring that Germany would no longer be bound by the terms of the Locarno Treaty. On February 27 the French Chamber ratified the Pact with Russia. Hitler did not wait for the Senate to complete the ratification. On March 7 he ordered German troops to occupy the 'demilitarised zone' and sent to each of the Locarno Powers a memorandum 'denouncing' the Treaty. In this he explained at length why he had taken this step and concluded with an offer to enter into a new Pact which would run for twenty-five years, and even, on conditions, to let Germany return to the League. He then summoned the *Reichstag* and told the members what he had done, and Göring, as President, read the memorandum. The *Reichstag* was then dissolved and a General Election decreed, "in order to give the German people an opportunity of giving their approval to what had been done in the past three years."

The perturbation in Europe caused by this bold stroke was tremendous, but, as Hitler had foreseen, the forces in favour of peace were stronger than those making for war. The forts on the Maginot Line on France's eastern frontier were manned and all leave was stopped in the French army; but few people in Great Britain at that time thought that a war to drive the Germans out

of German territory would be justified, and without British support the French Government was unwilling to go to extremes. So once again Hitler had his way, and Germany applauded him. All that was left for the one-time victorious Powers to do was done decently and in order. The Locarno Powers met in London and referred the whole matter to the Council of the League of Nations. Germany was invited to send a representative to the meeting, and Ribbentrop, soon to be appointed German Ambassador in London, attended and stated Germany's case. Then the Council passed a Resolution condemning the action of the German Government. A few weeks later Hitler in a new memorandum to the Locarno Powers set out his views as to the best way of securing a lasting peace in Europe, but he said little in this that he had not said before. In effect he asked for the virtual annulment of the Versailles Treaty and a promise of an adjustment of Germany's colonial claims, and on this basis he declared that Germany was ready to return to the League and to enter into a new non-aggression pact. Nothing came of this German peace plan. The French Government ridiculed it, and Hitler told his people that another of his 'peace offers' had been rejected.

For two years after the occupation of the Rhineland Hitler made no major move against the Versailles settlement. He did contrive, however, during that period, without more than a mild protest from the Powers concerned, to make an end of what remained of the economic 'servitudes' imposed by the Treaty. Thus on November 12, 1936, he denounced the arrangement under which all German rivers and waterways (including the Kiel Canal) had been put under the control of an international commission. Henceforth, it was declared, German waterways were to be controlled by purely German authorities, and a little later the Kiel Canal passed into the keeping of the German Admiralty. Similarly, on January 30 of the following year, in the course of one of his speeches to the *Reichstag*, the *Führer* announced that the international element which had persisted from the days of the Dawes Plan till then in the control of the Reichsbank and the State Railways was to be abolished forthwith. "I hereby declare", he said, "that the portion of the Versailles Treaty which took

away from our people their equal rights and degraded them to a second-rate nation has now come to a natural end."

But Hitler's main purpose at this time was to get the utmost advantage out of the extraordinary complications that had arisen in the international field. It has already been shown how the Abyssinian question had separated Italy from her former allies. By the flight of the Emperor of Abyssinia from his country on May 2, 1936, the war virtually came to an end. In July the Assembly of the League put an end to Sanctions against Italy, though, without admitting the validity of her conquest or recognising the new title of her king. On October 20 Germany officially gave that recognition, thereby proclaiming to the world her new-found friendship with Italy and assuring herself that the days of her isolation were past. By that time a new chance of fishing in the troubled waters of European diplomacy had come to Hitler. In July a 'Fascist' rebellion against the Republican Government of Spain had broken out. Mussolini, the begetter of Fascism, immediately showed his sympathy with his Spanish 'comrades' by allowing Italian airmen—and eventually many thousands of soldiers as well—under the specious disguise of 'volunteers' to give timely aid to the insurgents. Russia, less happily situated geographically, was no less willing to give material as well as moral support, up to the limit of her opportunity, to the Spanish Government, which, if not as 'Red' as its opponents would have had the world believe, was driven to rely in an increasing degree, as the conflict continued, on partisans of the Left and their sympathisers in other countries. In this 'ideological' war Hitler now took a hand. It gave him an opportunity, not to be missed, of asserting Germany's newly-established 'independence' and right to make her voice heard along with the voices of other Powers in any decisions that were taken to settle the Spanish conflict; it also indicated a way of winning for Germany a new friend in Western Europe if the Republican Government were overthrown and a Falangist one set up in its place; and finally it enabled Hitler to pose as a champion of resistance to the infiltrating Communism of Russia, which was the constant theme of his public utterances at this time, and so win sympathy for Germany

in other countries. So he too sent 'volunteers' to Spain. They were mainly technicians and airmen. The latter very effectively showed the mettle of their pasture on many occasions, and particularly on October 26, 1937, when in a few hours they completely destroyed the ancient Basque town of Guernica. Thus the technique of Göring's *Luftwaffe* was tried out under realistic conditions, and it was advertised to the world what Germany's enemies might expect when Hitler went to war in real earnest.

Mussolini was so pleased with Hitler's behaviour over the Abyssinian question that in July 1936 (just when the Spanish revolt was on the point of breaking out) he sent his daughter, Countess Ciano, wife of the Italian Foreign Secretary, on a visit to Germany to help in bringing about an improvement in the relations of the German and Austrian Governments, which had continued to be strained ever since the murder of Dollfuss two years before. The result was the signature on July 11 of an Austro-German Pact, which was supposed to put an end to this constraint. A little later, in October, Count Ciano went to Berlin, doubtless to tie up some of the ragged ends of the arrangement, and then in September 1937, after Germans and Italians had worked together so well and so successfully to defeat the plans of the 'democratic' Powers for ending foreign intervention in the Spanish civil war, Mussolini himself paid a visit to Hitler. Times had changed since the last occasion when the two dictators met. Then, in the summer of 1934, Hitler arrived in Venice almost as a suppliant and came away empty-handed; and when a few weeks later Austrian Nazis under Hitler's patronage tried by methods of violence and murder to bring about the overthrow of the established Government and effect an *Anschluss*, it was Mussolini's threat to send an Italian army to Vienna that brought the *Putsch* to a speedy end. And now the *Duce* had come to pay his respects to the *Führer*. He was fêted wherever he went in Germany; and thus was established the famous Rome-Berlin 'Axis', which was regarded by its authors as an effective counterpoise to Anglo-French 'intrigues' as well as a rallying-point for all those lesser states that feared the advance of Bolshevist Russia. No formal

treaty was signed by the two dictators; they understood one another.

Meanwhile on the other side of the world Germany had secured yet another friend. In northern China the Japanese were seeking by a state of undeclared war to extend the hold they had secured in Manchuria in 1931, when they defied a ruling of the League of Nations. Japan had set an example to Germany by leaving the League when she found that it would not conform to her wishes; and she now looked with suspicion, if not with fear, at the revived Russian colossus which had taken her place on the Council of the League and might, in its new Communist garb, once more (and this time when she had no Western ally by her side) try and break her hold on the Asiatic mainland, while it spread the poison of Communism into the Japanese homeland. Under these favourable conditions Hitler offered to let Germany assume the role that once belonged to Great Britain, and in November 1936 an agreement between the two countries was signed. Unlike the famous Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902, however, this Anti-Comintern Pact purported to be not so much political as ideological. The two signatories agreed to resist the machinations of the Communist International that was centred in Moscow and so create a nucleus of a wider combination of states which should have the same end in view. None the less it was a political achievement of the first order for Hitler and appeared to make Germany once again a world, as well as a European, Power.

Nor was it only in its diplomatic relations that the Third Reich had grown stronger during these years; it had also become more closely knit and more completely totalitarian in its internal organisation. Hitler did not formally abrogate the Weimar Constitution when he obtained his sweeping powers from the *Reichstag* in 1933: he virtually destroyed the federal structure, but he retained a kind of façade of the building and allowed the various State Governments to continue to function each under the control of its Nazi *Statthalter*. In the summer of 1936, however, he determined to make an end of the formality and abrogate the Constitution as such, and with his usual sense of the dramatic he selected a meeting of local Nazis in the city of Weimar as an

appropriate setting for the announcement of his intentions. Later in the year, at a great Party Rally at Nuremberg, he informed his followers that he had carried out these intentions. So simple was the method of constitutional legislation under the Third Reich.

It was at this same September Nuremberg Rally that Hitler proclaimed the inauguration of a Four-Year Plan for German industry. In Germany, he told his audience, unemployment figures had fallen from six millions to one million since he had taken control, and the Plan would eventually wipe out even that residue. The Plan, of course, like the Russian Five-Year Plan, which it flattered so sincerely by its imitation, was intended to stimulate production generally, but the appointment of Göring to supreme control, which was announced a few weeks later, guaranteed that the full development of Germany's war potential to meet the needs of her expanding re-armament programme would certainly not be neglected, and in the months that followed the German people were exhorted by the leaders of their one and only Party, as indeed the Russians were by theirs, to tighten their belts and submit to restrictions in the present that they might be strong in facing all possible enemies in the future. 'Guns not butter' was the succinct slogan of this unresting time. The means of financing all this totalitarian effort was left to Schacht, the President of the Reichsbank and Minister of Economics, who towards the end of 1938 openly claimed the credit for having made Germany's rearmament possible by his system of financial and currency control. Trade with the outside world was carefully directed to secure the least possible dependence upon overseas supplies and all dealings in foreign exchange were regulated as rigidly as if a state of war existed. At the same time every effort was made to create an economic *bloc* consisting of the countries to the south and south-east of Germany—including Hungary and the Balkan States—so that such surplus of the raw products of these countries as Germany could employ might flow easily in her direction. An economic *Mittel-Europa* in fact was Schacht's design; it would not give Germany simple *Autarkie*, but it would add greatly to her economic strength.

Finally, the ideological campaign inside the *Reich* was carried

on at high pressure. Weariness in Nazi well-doing was vigorously rebuked, indifference was chastised, and opposition, if it showed its head, was crushed and, where it was secret, was uncovered and as far as possible eliminated. Anti-Semitism of course never ceased to inspire Government action and policy, and it was hardly less dangerous for a German man or woman to have a record as a Communist or a Social Democrat or even as a consistent Liberal than to be classed as a non-Aryan. Teachers were dismissed from their posts in schools and University professors from their chairs, if they were believed to hold opinions out of harmony with those of the Nazi hierarchy; while in the Hitler Youth (which now became a state and not merely a Party organisation) and the Reich Labour Service the rising generation was carefully indoctrinated with ideas which not all the many voices of the Ministry of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment could always make acceptable to its elders, who could recall a Germany of other and more humane associations.

But it was in its dealings with the Christian Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, that the Government of the Third Reich found itself most seriously thwarted in its ideological aims and was least successful in beating down opposition. Catholics were to some extent protected, or at least aided, in their resistance to what they regarded as anti-Christian laws and regulations by the 'Concordat' which Hitler had made with the Vatican soon after his rise to power in 1933; but even so, many Catholic priests and some bishops were made to feel the weight of Nazi vengeance for their outspoken condemnation of the 'new paganism'. The case of the Protestants was very different. They had no support from any outside ecclesiastical authority, least of all from one of such prestige and influence as the Papacy. Moreover, it had always been the practice of the Lutherans from the days of Luther himself to submit to the civil power. Hence, when Hitler sought to hand over their Church organisation to the control of a 'Reich bishop' appointed by himself (with similar functionaries in charge of the other Protestant communions), through whom it would be possible to weed out more thoroughly the recalcitrant clergymen and even use the pulpit to help forward his designs, it came to him

as something of a shock that resistance developed and spread throughout the country. Not only Protestant dignitaries and men like Niemöller, whose record as a submarine commander in the war had made him something of a popular hero, and who had since become the pastor of a fashionable Berlin church, but hundreds of humble pastors, often supported by their equally humble congregations, defied the decrees of the Reich bishop or other Government agent and paid the penalty of their boldness by being deprived of their livings and in only too many cases by being subjected to the horrors of concentration camps like Dachau. In the end this resistance was borne down, or rather smothered, and the process of subordinating the Churches, like other institutions, to the demands of the totalitarian creed was carried out with every appearance of success. Nevertheless it ought not to be forgotten, especially in English-speaking countries, that there were many brave men and women in Germany at this time who kept their faith to the end and 'endured hardness' of a kind which people living in those countries to-day have never experienced, and for which a parallel can be found only in the religious persecutions of bygone centuries.

At the beginning of 1938 Hitler seems to have come to the conclusion that he was now in a position to make another attempt to bring Austria under his control. He had, of course, pledged his word after the march into the Rhineland that he had no intention of doing anything of the kind; and he could hardly be in any doubt that France at least, to say nothing of the countries of the so called Little Entente, particularly Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia, would wish to take some definite action in reply to this challenge to what, to her and her allies, was one of the fundamentals of the Versailles order; while even Great Britain could scarcely remain completely passive in the face of such a manifest repudiation of his promise. Britain, indeed, must have been a source of disquietude to Hitler at this time on other grounds. She was re-arming at last in real earnest, despite the opposition of her socialist politicians, who disliked the principles and practice of the Third Reich, but were disposed to put their faith in a lightly armed League of Nations as a means of keeping it in check.

And a change was taking place in her attitude to the question of Austria's relations with Germany. Before the Nazis gained control in Germany and had then shown their intention of doing the same thing in Austria, there had been a good deal of sympathy in Britain with the idea of a union of the two countries and with those Austrians—probably a majority at that time—who saw the best hope of establishing the solvency and prosperity of their country in the *Anschluss*. But Hitler's advent to power and in particular his anti-Jewish policy had altered all that. The more liberal elements in Austrian political life, and especially the Social Democrats, of whom a very large proportion were Jews, were naturally antagonised by what had happened in Germany since the collapse of the Weimar Republic, and were now prepared to put up with the hated semi-Fascist regime which Dollfuss had instituted and the monarchist Schuschnigg had continued with Italian support since 1934 rather than see themselves overwhelmed by the same fate as their German counterparts. The liberal sentiment that was strong in all British political parties had naturally responded to these developments, and consequently the suggestions formerly made for settling Austria's difficulties by letting her unite with Germany no longer won the same degree of favour.

German military opinion seems to have been divided as to the wisdom of taking a decisive step at this time. Some generals pointed out that the complicated system of defence works begun in the Rhineland soon after its 'remilitarisation' (later to be known as the 'Siegfried Line') was still far from complete, and that the expansion of the army had not yet reached the stage when it would be safe to put it to the test of a war in which the Soviet Pacts with France and Czechoslovakia might be invoked. These counsels were rejected, and herein perhaps lies one explanation of the reorganisation of the High Command of the army at the beginning of this year. On February 4, Hitler accepted the resignation of Generals von Blomberg and von Fritsch, the two men who had done so much to make the post-war *Reichswehr* an efficient force, and appointed Keitel and von Brauchitsch in their place as chiefs of the new *Wehrmacht*. Hitler clearly put his

faith in the durability of the Axis. He was confident that there would be no repetition of Mussolini's 1934 move and felt assured that, if Italy disinterested herself in the fate of Austria, neither Great Britain nor any other country would make the *Anschluss* a *casus belli* once it had taken place. At any rate, he determined to obey his intuition, as he had done before, and take the risk.

His method, if characteristically unscrupulous, was simple enough. On February 12 the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg at his invitation went to see him at his home at Berchtesgaden just over the Austrian border. The subject to be discussed was the condition of affairs in Austria as this affected the Austrian Nazis. Between 1934 and 1936 the Nazi Party had been banned in Austria, and leading Nazis had fled to Germany. After the Pact of the latter year they had come back and began straightway to resume their former habits and practices in contravention of the spirit if not the letter of the Pact. The Austrian Government, anxious not to provoke trouble and realising that it could no longer look for Italian support, turned a blind eye to much that went on, but could not entirely ignore some of the worst examples of Nazi-inspired disorder. Hitler's remedy for this embarrassing situation was that some of the Austrian Nazis should be invited to join the Government. He proposed this to Schuschnigg at the Berchtesgaden interview, and when the latter demurred, he stormed at the unfortunate man and browbeat him until at last he consented. The result was that Seyss-Inquart, a devoted admirer of Hitler, became Minister of the Interior, with full control of the police, and various other ministerial posts were given to avowed Nazis. Possibly this was as far as Hitler intended to go at that particular time, but Schuschnigg played into his hands. By March 9 the Austrian Chancellor seems to have repented of his abject submission, for on that day he announced that he intended to hold a plebiscite throughout the whole country in four days time, at which voters would be asked to say whether or not they wished Austria to be free and independent. Hitler rose in his wrath when he heard this and declared that Schuschnigg had broken faith with him. He ordered Seyss-Inquart to present an ultimatum to the Chancellor demanding the latter's resignation and the post-

ponement of the plebiscite; failure to do these things, he was told, would result in a German invasion of Austria. Schuschnigg did as he was bidden to do, but before he disappeared into private life, and ultimately into confinement, he managed to make a radio broadcast to the Austrian people telling them what had happened. The President of the Republic, Miklas by name, was then induced to appoint Seyss-Inquart as Chancellor, and the latter, losing no time, telegraphed to Hitler (the form of words being drafted by Göring) asking him to send troops into Austria "to preserve order". All this happened on March 11. Units of the German army crossed the frontier that very night, and the next day large forces were moving through the country without meeting any resistance. Two days later Hitler himself arrived in Vienna and was greeted with every appearance of popular enthusiasm. On the following day he proclaimed the incorporation of Austria into the *Reich* and appointed Seyss-Inquart as *Statthalter* of the province. As to the postponed plebiscite, it was announced that it would be held on April 10, and not in Austria only but throughout the *Reich* as well, and that voters would be asked to say whether they agreed to the reunion of Austria with the *Reich*. When the day arrived, 99.73 per cent of the Austrian voters and 99.02 per cent of all the German said yes. On the same day as the plebiscite was taken there was also an election for a new *Reichstag*, in which deputies from Austria (where no election of any sort had been held since 1930) were to take their seats along with those from the other provinces of Germany. Of the 49 million votes cast 99.08 per cent were for Hitler's candidates and less than half a million persons ventured to record their opposition. Thus was the *Anschluss* concluded and the Nazi dream of a 'Greater Reich' realised.

There were no difficulties with foreign powers, and once again Hitler's reading of the situation proved correct. There were consultations between foreign statesmen and diplomatists, but no concerted action was taken even of the mildest kind. The British Government alone ventured on a formal protest, as soon as it was known that German troops had crossed the Austrian frontier, but its ambassador was told without any circumlocution that the relations of Germany and Austria were no concern of any

third Power, and that the protest was "inadmissible". Not long afterwards— before even the plebiscite was held—Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, publicly declared that the League of Nations could not "compel Germany to turn back on the course on which she had embarked, and the Government were bound to recognise that the Austrian state had been abolished."

The absorption of Austria into the *Reich* made it certain that sooner or later Hitler would direct his attention to conditions in the adjoining Czechoslovakia. This was not a homogeneous state. It had been formed out of parts of what had once been the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it bore the mark of the same mixture of races that characterised that political conglomeration. Of a total population of nearly 14½ millions, well over 3 millions were Germans, who were scattered over the fringes of the regions once known as Bohemia and Moravia. The name 'Sudeten Germans', which was applied to these people, was not a very accurate one, for by far the larger part of them, in fairly dense concentrations, inhabited the northern and western fringes on the borders of Bavaria and Saxony, while the Sudetens proper had their homes among the Sudeten mountains in the east. However, in the course of the dispute that developed between the Czechoslovak Government and its German citizens, the term 'Sudeten' came to be used of them all. There were also more than half a million Hungarian Magyars in the south on the borders of Hungary and about the same number of Ruthenians (or Ukrainians) in the extreme east, together with a much smaller number of Poles, who were concentrated at the corner of Polish Silesia round the mining centre of Teschen. Even the Czechoslovak core of the population was by no means a harmonious whole. The Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, numbering about 7½ millions, had formerly been the unwilling subjects of the German rulers of Austria; whereas the Slovaks had submitted far more easily to the domination of the Magyars of Hungary. Both peoples spoke similar (but not the same) languages, but their cultural standards and outlook were different, and they did not always find it easy to co-operate with one another.

Nevertheless the experiment of holding together all these racial elements inside one sovereign state, first under the Slovak

President Thomas Masaryk and after his death under his successor Edward Benes, was remarkably successful, and the Czechoslovak Republic was generally regarded as one of the most prosperous and best-governed states in Europe. At the beginning of its history, it is true, there was much opposition from both the German and the Magyar minorities. The former wished to be included in Austria and the latter in Hungary, and demands were made for plebiscites to settle these questions. But the Czechs were opposed to this solution alike on strategic and on economic grounds; and indeed a glance at the map will show how difficult it would have been to incorporate the German fringes at least, which run all round three sides of the Bohemian quadrilateral, with the territory of the new Austrian state which had emerged from the *débris* of the old Hapsburg monarchy. So at the Peace Conference in 1919 nothing came of these suggestions, and, as troubles thickened for Austria in the years that followed, the agitation for union with that unhappy country died down, and the 'Sudetens' seemed disposed to concentrate their attention upon securing recognition for their special position as a racial minority within the Czechoslovak state. Then came the Nazi rise to power in Germany, and a new situation developed. As in Austria, a political party was built up in 'Sudetenland' which was Nazi in all but name and was encouraged in every possible way by the German Nazis, by whom the idea was carefully propagated that the only way for the inhabitants of the German fringes to secure justice and freedom to live their lives in their own German fashion was through union with the German Fatherland. The Austrian *Anschluss* naturally intensified the campaign in favour of this solution of the question, for there was now no hope of reverting to the earlier plan of union with the Austrian Republic, and except for the Social Democrats and certain Catholic groups (and of course the Jewish community), the Sudeten Germans under their leader Konrad Henlein became steadily more attracted to the Nazi plan.

Hitler himself had been quite outspoken on the subject, and as far back as February 20, that is, before the march into Austria took place, in a speech to the *Reichstag*, he had practically invited the Sudetens to look to him for 'protection'; while in October,

when his troops were taking over control of the ceded areas of Czechoslovakia, he publicly announced that he had intended from the first to 'bring back to the *Reich* the 10 million Germans outside it' (*i.e.* the 3 million Sudetens as well as the 7 million Austrians). It was little wonder therefore, that after a visit to Rome in May, which was represented as a return of Mussolini's courtesy in coming to see him in the previous autumn, he began what was called a 'war of nerves' against Czechoslovakia. The German press and radio were constantly reporting stories, some sheer inventions and others gross exaggerations, of outrages perpetrated by Czechs upon Germans. Britain and France were seriously disturbed. The case of Czechoslovakia was different from that of Austria. The latter country's independence had been covered by the general guarantee given by the Covenant to all members of the League of Nations as well as by the embargo placed on an *Anschluss* by the Versailles Treaty, and both had failed; but Czechoslovakia had special treaties with France and Russia, and since Hitler's repudiation of Locarno, France and Great Britain had entered into a new engagement to support one another, if either should be attacked by a third Power. Hence, if German troops marched into Czechoslovakia, as they had marched into Austria, and France went to the rescue, Great Britain might easily find herself involved in the conflict. At the beginning of August at the instance of the British Government, Lord Runciman, a well-known Englishman, went out to Czechoslovakia in an 'unofficial' capacity to act as a mediator between the Czechoslovakian Government and the Sudeten leaders. It was hoped that he would be able to bring about a settlement between the two parties which would make it unnecessary for Hitler to intervene. He failed, of course, for Henlein, acting on instructions from Hitler, refused the very considerable concessions that President Benes was prepared to make to allow a kind of 'Home Rule' to be set up in the Sudeten areas. After this the crisis came rapidly to a head. Henlein went to the Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg, where he had an interview with Hitler, and the latter in an address to his followers made a violent attack upon the Czech people and President Benes. Meanwhile the Czechoslovak Government had ordered a partial mobilisation,

and after Henlein's departure for Germany a warrant was issued for his arrest and the Sudeten Party was suppressed.

This was how matters stood on September 15, when Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, decided to intervene in person in an attempt to prevent the war which seemed on the point of breaking out. Chamberlain made three journeys to see Hitler with this end in view. On the third occasion, at Munich, he was joined by Daladier, the French Premier, while Mussolini was also invited by Hitler to attend the discussions and did so. No representative of Czechoslovakia or of Soviet Russia was present; Hitler refused to invite or meet a 'Bolshevik' leader. Not since the Congress of Berlin had Germany seen such a notable gathering of foreign statesmen on her soil. But there was a difference. At Berlin in 1878 Bismarck played the part both of host and of 'honest broker', and if any one dictated terms on that occasion, it was Disraeli, the British Prime Minister, 'the old Jew', as Bismarck called him. Sixty years later at Munich another German Chancellor was the host of another British Prime Minister, but Adolf Hitler was not a mere broker of terms, honest or not—he left that role to his friend Mussolini; he was the man who virtually imposed his own conditions on his guests, who had come from the countries that had forced Germany to pass under the yoke at Versailles. Germany was more than ever impressed. Hitler was greater—far greater—than Bismarck. And the conditions were hard. Czechoslovakia was to give up within a fortnight all the border districts where a large majority of the inhabitants were Germans and submit a little later to a plebiscite, to be held in certain other districts under the direction of an international commission, with the consequential possibility of further transfers of territory. Chamberlain agreed to recommend these terms to the Czechoslovakian Government, and the latter reluctantly accepted them.

Such was the famous Munich Agreement signed on September 30, 1938. It deprived Czechoslovakia of all her well-planned frontier defences and a large part of her most important industrial plant. Moreover, it involved further surrenders of territory on a smaller scale to Poland and Hungary. The resultant Czecho-

slovakia was a weak and strategically helpless state which would be quite incapable of offering effective resistance to any of her neighbours if at some future time they made new demands upon her. It is true that the Four Great Powers undertook to guarantee her independence when the new frontiers had been finally fixed and the position stabilised, and Hitler publicly declared that he had no further territorial ambitions for Germany. But before any such treaty of Guarantee had been drawn up and signed, complications arose in the new Czechoslovakia as a result of quarrels between Czechs and Slovaks, which were certainly fomented by Nazi intrigues. Then suddenly, on the plea that the Czechoslovak Government was incapable of maintaining order and that the disturbances that were going on in Bohemia and Moravia, which "have for thousands of years belonged to the *Lebensraum* of the German people", constituted a danger to Germany and European peace, Hitler decided to put an end to the hard-pressed state altogether. The time was March 1939, the day the fateful 15th. On the previous evening the President of Czechoslovakia, no longer Edward Benes, who had resigned soon after the Munich catastrophe and then left the country, but a much weaker vessel named Hacha, arrived in Berlin in response to a summons from Hitler. His conference with the *Führer* was carried on far into the small hours of the next day, and at the end of it he was physically prostrated. He was met with the demand that he should there and then sign away his country's independence. When he protested that he had no power to do such a thing, Hitler stormed at him, as he had stormed at Schnuschnigg the year before, and told him that he was in the presence of the greatest German who ever lived. Finally Hacha gave way and telephoned to his ministers in Prague to tell them what he had done. They accepted the inevitable, and by 9 a.m. German troops had occupied Prague. Later in the day a proclamation was issued by Hitler, in which he announced that Bohemia and Moravia were constituted a German 'Protectorate'. Slovakia had for some time enjoyed a form of autonomy inside the Czechoslovak state, and the autonomous Government now begged that that country too might be taken under Hitler's protection. The day's proceedings closed with the seizure of the

National Bank of Czechoslovakia and the appropriation of its gold reserves to the value of £18 millions, by agents of the Reichsbank.

The destruction of Czechoslovakia was not, strictly speaking, a blow at the Versailles Treaty, for that state had been formed by the leaders of the Czech and Slovak peoples immediately after the collapse of Austria in 1918 and before the Peace Conference of 1919 had even assembled in Paris, but it came none the less as a kind of climax to the process of nullification, which Hitler had deliberately undertaken, of the settlements made or endorsed by the victorious Allies of that time. In its final stages, however, it was more than that, for it nullified even the agreement signed and sealed by Hitler himself in the previous September, and that too without the pretence of consultation with the other signatories. It was this last feature of the affair that roused the strongest condemnation on the part of the outside world and particularly of Great Britain, whose Prime Minister, disillusioned at last as to the real purposes of Nazi foreign policy, adopted henceforth an entirely different attitude towards the Axis group of Powers. Before the British Government, however, had defined its position, Hitler gave one more example of his determination to impose his will upon states adjacent to Germany irrespective of the provisions of general treaties and without consultation with other Powers. On March 21 he sent an ultimatum to Lithuania demanding the return to the *Reich* of the Port of Memel, which bore much the same relation to that country as Danzig did to Poland. Both cities were German in character and both had been detached from Germany by the Versailles Treaty. Lithuania immediately complied with the demand, and three days later Hitler arrived in Memel in a German warship. Thus Hitler had for the second time disregarded the undertaking he had given in September that he had no more territorial ambitions in Europe once the Sudeten lands were incorporated in the *Reich*. It seemed more than likely that his next move would be in the direction of Danzig.

Great Britain now decided on strong action. In the past, unlike France, which by its treaties with Poland and the countries of the little Entente had always accepted certain responsibilities in those

areas, Britain had avoided specific engagements in eastern Europe outside the Balkans. By March 31 it was clear that she had changed her mind in this respect, for on that day Chamberlain announced to the House of Commons that "in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power". The British Prime Minister followed this up a week later with a further announcement that the two Governments had agreed to enter into a Mutual Assistance Pact with one another. This was specific enough. Hitler decided to treat it as such. On April 28 he 'denounced' the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 on the ground that Britain's guarantee to Poland was inconsistent with the underlying basis of this Agreement. At the same time he informed the Polish Government that he considered that in accepting this guarantee it had entered into "an alliance directed against Germany", and that consequently the German Pact of Non-Aggression which he had made with Poland in 1934 was no longer in force.

The crux of the matter was, of course, Danzig. The revival in a modernised form of the half-forgotten claims of the Polish monarchy of other days to a suzerainty over the almost wholly German city, together with the establishment of a 'Free City' under the nominal guardianship of the League of Nations, had always been a very sore point with Germans of all parties, and in Weimar days a good deal of sympathy was felt and often expressed in Britain, if not in other countries, with the German point of view. In Danzig itself the existence of a representative Assembly and a Senate elected by it, to carry on the government of the Free City under the shadow of the High Commissioner of the League, gave an opportunity to the local German Nationalists to keep alive their opposition to the arrangement, and disputes between the Danzigers and agents of the Polish Government, which enjoyed certain privileges in the Port, were not infrequent. Hitler at first, for his own purposes (he wished to draw Poland out of the French orbit by cultivating good relations with Pilsudski,

the Polish dictator, who had no more love for Russia than Hitler himself), made no attempt to meddle in these matters; but he none the less nourished a Nazi Party on the spot, and at a later period, using the technique which proved so successful in Austria and the Sudetenland, he stimulated a kind of political civil war among the Danzigers which ended in a complete victory for the Nazis in 1937. Thus by the time he was ready to take up the Danzig question in the summer of 1939 the Party was wholly in control of the Assembly and Senate of the Free City, and a totalitarian regime modelled on that of the Third Reich had been set up there. The question of the so-called 'Polish Corridor', which separated the province of East Prussia from the rest of Germany, was brought up by Hitler at the same time. When he spoke to the *Reichstag* on April 28 about these matters Hitler said that "some months" earlier he had made an offer to Poland "as a concession in the interests of European peace". His "offer" was that Danzig should return "into the framework of the *Reich*" and that Germany should have "a route and railway of her own through the Corridor", while Germany for her part would be prepared to recognise the special rights of Poland in the Port of Danzig and to conclude a 25-year treaty of non-aggression with her.

Meanwhile the British Government was endeavouring throughout the summer months to come to an agreement with Russia with a view to the formation of a three-power pact, embracing Britain, France and the Soviet Union, which was pledged to resist any repetition on Germany's part of the kind of action which had led to the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia. In Germany this was called a policy of 'encirclement of the *Reich*', and the people were told that Britain and France were seeking to do once more what they had done before the last war. Government and people, in fact, were alarmed at the prospect of 'war on two fronts'. But the British negotiations with Russia were not going well. There were difficulties about the Baltic states and Finland, who were more afraid of aggression from Russia than from Germany; and even Poland objected to the presence of Russian troops on her soil. In spite of these delays in the conclusion of a treaty, British and French military and naval

missions went to Moscow at the beginning of August and began discussions with the Soviet High Command. Then Hitler played his trump card. On August 21, to the astonishment of the whole world, including even the Italian and Japanese allies of Germany, it was announced that Ribbentrop was going to Moscow to sign a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, and two days later he travelled there by air, was welcomed by Molotov, the Foreign Commissar, who had been conducting the negotiations with Great Britain, and duly signed the document, which on September 29 was expanded into a 'Treaty of Friendship' between the two states.

This double political somersault put an end, as it was intended to do, to the attempt to bring Russia into the scheme for the 'encirclement of Germany'. The military men packed up and went home and the world waited to see what Hitler would do next. It had no long time to wait. Hitler was now assured that if Britain and France persisted in fulfilling their pledges to Poland when he made his final move against her, there would be no 'Eastern front' beyond that point; but he seems to have convinced himself that they would act in this case as they had acted over Czechoslovakia. This time, however, Hitler was mistaken. On August 30 Ribbentrop told the British Ambassador that the Polish Government had been asked to send a representative to Berlin to receive, and give an answer to, Hitler's terms for a settlement of the dispute over Danzig and the Corridor. He then read over to him 'at high speed' a statement setting forth these terms. They were much the same as the 'offer' to which Hitler had referred in his speech of April 28, with the addition of a proposal that a plebiscite should be held in the Corridor to decide whether it should remain Polish or be ceded to the *Reich*. The next day the British Government was informed that, as no Polish representative had arrived in Berlin in response to Hitler's request, the German Government regarded the terms as rejected. On September 1 the German army began the invasion of Poland. This produced an ultimatum from Great Britain, which Hitler rejected, and on September 3 Great Britain and France declared war upon Germany.

During the struggle that followed Hitler reached heights of unimaginable power, and by the end of the first year of war Germany seemed to have attained a degree of predominance in world affairs which, if it did not justify Gobbels's boast that the Third Reich would last 1000 years, did suggest that it would long outlast the lifetime of its founder and dominate Europe, at any rate, during the post-war period. The downfall of France following upon the swift conquest and new partition of Poland and the overrunning of Denmark, Norway and the Low Countries, appeared to make it certain that before long Great Britain would also be reduced to submission. Even a year later, when Italy had already given clear proof of her inability to carry out the task assigned to her of evicting the British from the Middle East and when Great Britain had survived the worst that Göring's *Luftwaffe* and the German U-Boat campaign could do against her, Hitler could still claim with truth that his plans were going well. All the states of south-east Europe, which had been the object of Schacht's economic solicitude, were now either by force or by fear brought within the *Pax Germanica*, while Turkey, which had received a similar guarantee from Great Britain to that formerly accepted by Poland, shivered outside. An *Afrika Korps* under one of Hitler's best generals had taken charge of the North African campaign and had driven back to Egypt the British army which had so easily conquered Italian Cyrenaica. Soviet Russia, which had learnt that in the case of the *Führer* a change of tone was after all not a change of heart, and that his pledge of friendship was worth no more than any of the rest of his promises, had to watch her armies give up enormous stretches of territory before the German onslaught and millions of her people be left to serve the pitiless purposes of their conqueror. It was indeed a wonderful record of achievement that the Nazi Party was able to present to the German people at the end of the year 1941. Moreover, all these countries that had been brought under the ultimate control of the *Führer* were being organised on new lines, to harmonise with the pattern of European order which Nazi planners were busily shaping in readiness for the coming days of peace. There were 'quisling' sub-dictators and local Gestapo agents in every capital, whose duty it was to see

that all active opposition to the new order was stamped out, and that directions for the transfer of labour to Germany or elsewhere or for the application of industry to the purposes required by the Reich authorities were duly observed. Finance too played its part. Schacht had been removed from office, but steps were taken by Funk, his successor as President of the Reichsbank and Minister of Economics, to secure that the German mark should be the standard by which all European currencies were measured, so that in the coming days of peace the whole vast area which had been laid under tribute by the Nazis, or permeated by their influence, should be brought into economic dependence upon the *Reich*. Lastly, those sections of the subject populations who stubbornly refused to adjust themselves to the new order, particularly in Poland and Soviet territory, or were, like the Jews, offensive to Nazi racial theories, were ruthlessly eliminated on a scale for which there is surely no historic parallel. The full extent of these atrocities was hardly realised even in Germany at the time, and only became known to the world after the war.

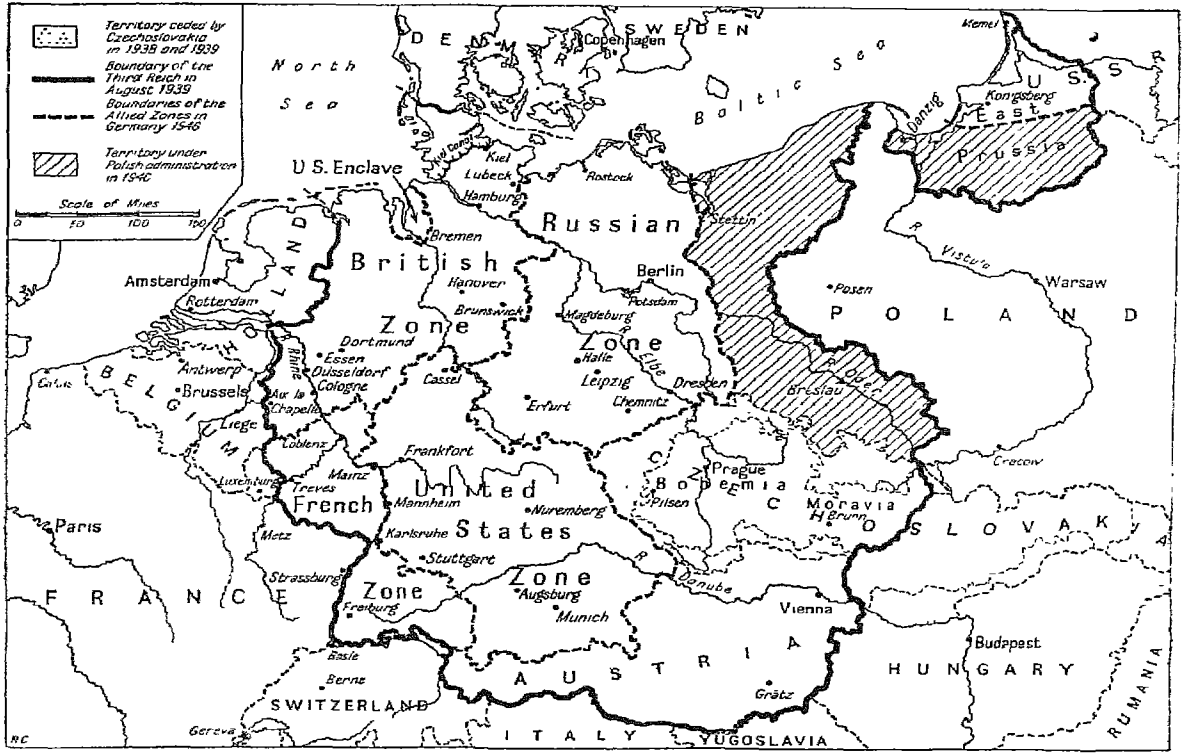
Very different was the picture presented to German eyes a year later. The forces of the U.S.A., almost against their will, had been added to those of the other enemies of the *Reich*, thanks to the action of its Far-Eastern ally and to Hitler's belief that the American system of 'lend-lease' aid to Great Britain and Russia would no longer be available in the same profusion as formerly. The Italians had now been definitely expelled from their African colonies and Rommel's *Afrika Korps* had been virtually destroyed by the British Eighth Army under its new commander, Montgomery; while another powerful force of American and British troops, which had landed in French North Africa, was preparing to close in on the Axis divisions which had been concentrated in Tunisia in the hope of staving off the threatened invasion of the Italian homelands. This hope too was blighted, for by May 9, 1943, 291,000 Axis soldiers, more than half of them Germans, had been compelled to surrender unconditionally to the Allies, who were now in complete control of the whole of North Africa. The invasion of Sicily and Italy quickly followed, and by the end of August, after Mussolini had been hurled from power and

imprisoned, Italy had sued for peace. Nor was this the end of the tale of woe of this period of the war, for at the turn of the year the German Sixth Army, which had been besieging the Volga fortress town of Stalingrad for twenty-three weeks, was itself encircled by a relieving Russian army, and on January 31, 1943, 91,000 Germans, along with their commander and his staff, passed into captivity. Thereafter Hitler's eastern armies were steadily, if at first slowly, pressed back from the limits of their conquests on the Volga and in the Caucasus, where they had intended to secure a firm hold on the oil-fields. To make good the appalling losses of the *Wehrmacht* during these operations on the Eastern Front, which had included two unforeseen winter campaigns, workers from farms and factories, who had hitherto known in their persons only the dangers that came from enemy action in the air, were drafted into the armed forces and their places taken by prisoners of war and civilian 'slave' labour gathered in from occupied countries. German civilians indeed at this time were displaying obvious signs of 'war-weariness'. Thanks to the countries brought under tribute to the *Reich*, there was no shortage of food, as had been the case in the previous war, but in other respects they were made to feel the devastating effects of the policy of their rulers. The increasing severity and frequency of the attacks of the American and British air forces on industrial centres—the one acting by day and the other by night—were hard to bear, and the break-up of family life brought about by mass evacuation from dangerous areas added to the strain. There was, however, no open demonstration of discontent, though people listened with growing scepticism to the promises put out from time to time that new inventions of German scientists would presently overcome these marauders, and 'England would be punished'. The Government, for its part, took precautions; it had not forgotten what happened when things began to go wrong during the Kaiser's war. Göbbels could be trusted to deal faithfully with the propaganda end of the effort to maintain civilian morale, but more than this was necessary. So Himmler, head of the Gestapo and the S.S., was commissioned to organise a large and powerful special S.S. force, adequately armed to meet any emergency, which was distributed

throughout the country and especially in industrial areas and seaports. In this way disorders among 'slave' workers or any serious civilian disturbances could be suppressed at once.

Meanwhile the struggle went on outside the confines of the *Reich*. The 'Fortress of Europe' had not yet been seriously breached. Italy had been punished for her 'treachery' by being turned into a battlefield. Mussolini had been rescued from his mountain prison by Hitler's paratroopers and had been given a kind of 'quisling' status as the head of a new Italian Fascist Republic; while, to support him, German divisions, which could ill be spared from other fronts, were rushed southwards, and the Anglo-Americans, who had expected the whole country to pass quickly under their control, had to fight hard under the most difficult conditions, as they slowly moved northward. Thus the winter and spring of 1944 passed away and the time arrived for the long-prepared assault of the enemy upon the massive defences which the best skill of German engineers had constructed along the coasts of France and the Low Countries. When the blow fell on June 6, it took Hitler and his generals somewhat by surprise, both by its location and by the weight and scale of the attack. But it was a far cry from the beaches of Normandy to the Rhine, and, after the first disappointment at the news that a landing had been made at all, the Nazi propaganda machine assured the people that there might be fighting in France, as there was in Italy, but there would never be fighting on German soil. But the generals knew better; and Rommel, in particular, who had been summoned home before the final *débâcle* in Africa and put in charge of the 'Atlantic Wall', told Hitler plainly, once the invaders had broken out of the bridgehead, that the war was now lost and it was time to make peace for the sake of Germany. But the *Führer* refused, and the hopeless struggle continued. Rommel himself did not live to see the catastrophe that he predicted; he met his death later in the year. Some plotters who had once posed as Hitler's supporters now (July) took the desperate course of trying to kill him, but they failed and paid the penalty of failure with their lives.

By the end of the year Rundstedt's last effort to hold off the enemy in the west from German soil had broken down, and during



GERMANY AT THE FALL OF THE THIRD REICH

the months that followed British, American, and French armies, from north to south, pressed forward, across the Rhine and into the heart of Germany. The Russians too were doing the same thing now from the east. The Germans had abandoned Bulgaria, and Roumania and had withdrawn their garrisons from Greece, but they held on to Hungary and parts of Jugoslavia. Russian armies drove into and through East Prussia, across Poland, and up the Danube valley, capturing Buda-Pesth and Vienna on the way. In northern Italy German resistance had completely given way. Still Hitler refused to make the unconditional surrender which the Allies demanded. On April 24 the Americans and Russians linked up on the Elbe. Germany was thus cut in two, and the plan which Hitler was expected to adopt of retiring to Berchtesgaden and holding on in a 'southern redoubt' among the mountains of Bavaria and the Tyrol became impossible. Berlin itself by this time was under attack on all sides from the Russians, who steadily pressed in towards the centre of the city. Of the Nazi leaders only Hitler and Göbbels remained there. On April 29, in an underground shelter of the Chancellery, Hitler made his will and appointed a successor to himself as *Führer* of the German people. His choice was not Göring or Himmler, who, he said, had betrayed him, or indeed any of the well-known Nazi chiefs, but Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy. A copy of this document was conveyed out of Berlin into the hands of Dönitz, who on May 1 announced in a broadcast to the German nation that Hitler had died "fighting to his last breath against Bolshevism and for Germany", and that he, the Grand Admiral, had been named by Hitler to succeed him as *Führer*. Dönitz then declared that the war would go on against all the enemies of the *Reich* and called on all persons in authority to obey his orders. On May 2 the bodies of Göbbels and his family, dead by poisoning, were found by the Russians in a shelter, but no trace of Hitler's body was ever discovered. That he too died about this time, probably by his own hand, is the verdict of those best qualified to judge, and with him died all hope of maintaining even a shadow of the authority that he once wielded.

For now the Third Reich was visibly in dissolution. No one

outside the limits of the headquarters of Dönitz at Flensburg in Schleswig paid much heed to what the new *Führer* said. Civil and military controls were breaking down; railways and other forms of communication were ceasing to function; and orders were not obeyed because they could not be transmitted. Under these conditions army commanders were exercising their own discretion: some were surrendering, with or without the troops under their command, while others tried to maintain some kind of resistance, because 'honour' required that they should do so, till supreme authority told them to submit. On May 7 Dönitz put an end to this confusion, as far as his writ would run. After attempting to negotiate a partial surrender to the Western Allies but not to the Russians, and being told that unconditional surrender must be made to all at the same time, he gave way and sent Jodl, his Chief of Staff, to General Eisenhower's headquarters at Rheims to make his formal submission. This was ratified two days later at Berlin by German emissaries in the presence of representatives of the High Commands of all the Allies. Meanwhile Von Krosigk, the Foreign Minister in Dönitz's 'Cabinet', broadcasting on the Flensburg radio, told the German people what had been done and why. Next day Dönitz himself went to the microphone and said, "The foundation on which the German Reich was built is a thing of the past. The unity of State and Party no longer exists". For a little while longer, as a measure of convenience, Dönitz was allowed by the Allied Commanders, who were now the real rulers of Germany, to keep a semblance of authority, but on May 23 even this was taken from him. The *Führer* and his Cabinet, together with some hundreds of civil and military officials, were arrested and placed under guard as prisoners of war; and the last flicker of life in the prostrate body of the Third Reich ceased.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EVENTS

A.D.	
800	Christmas Day. Coronation of Charlemagne at Rome as Roman Emperor of the West.
814	Death of Charlemagne.
843	*Treaty of Verdun*. Division of the empire of Charlemagne among his grandsons. First separation of a German kingdom from 'France'.
936	Accession of Otto the Great.
962	*February* 2. Coronation of Otto the Great at Rome. Beginning of the Holy Roman Empire (First Reich).
1039	Accession of Henry III—The Empire at the height of its power.
1077	Henry IV submits to Pope Gregory VII at Canossa. Beginning of the struggle between Empire and Papacy.
1152–1190	Reign of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.
1250–1273	The Great Interregnum.
1273	Election of the first Hapsburg Emperor—Rudolf I.
1356	The Golden Bull of Emperor Charles IV (also King of Bohemia), establishing the Holy Roman Empire on an elective basis.
1415	Emperor Sigismund (King of Bohemia and Hungary) allows his safe-conduct to John Huss to be violated at the *Council of Constance*. 'Hussite' wars follow. Frederick of Hohenzollern becomes Margrave (later Elector) of Brandenburg.
1440	Accession of Emperor Frederick III (of Hapsburg).
1493	Maximilian I, son of the last named Emperor, succeeds his father, having been elected King of the Romans in his father's lifetime.
1517	Luther's condemnation of Indulgences—beginning of the German Reformation.
1519	Accession of Emperor Charles V, grandson of Maximilian I; also King of Spain and ruling prince of the seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands.
1520	Luther burns the Pope's Bull.
1521	Diet of Worms—condemnation of Luther.
1524–5	Peasants' War. Luther disapproves.

A.D.	
1525	Albert of Hohenzollern, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, becomes Duke of Prussia under allegiance to the King of Poland.
1526	Victory of the Turks at the battle of *Mohacs*. Death of King Lewis of Bohemia and Hungary. Succeeded by his brother-in-law, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, who thus becomes first Hapsburg ruler of these lands.
1527	Sack of Rome by army of Emperor Charles V.
1529	Diet of Speyer. Lutherans first known as 'Protestants'. Vienna besieged by the Turks; saved by King of Hungary (Archduke Charles).
1530	Confession of Augsburg.
1545	Beginning of the *Council of Trent*.
1546	Death of Luther. Civil War between Catholics and Protestants begins.
1547	Defeat of the Protestant princes by Emperor Charles.
1552	Capture of *Metz* by the French, in league with the Protestants.
	Emperor Charles defeated by Protestant princes.
	Treaty of Passau.
1555	Peace of Augsburg.
1558	Death of Emperor Charles V; succeeded by his brother, King Ferdinand of Bohemia and Hungary, also 'King of the Romans'; henceforth known as Emperor Ferdinand I.
1563	Council of Trent ends.
1618	*May*. 'Defenestration' of Prague.
1620	Battle of the White Hill; flight of Elector Frederick of the Palatinate from Prague. Bohemia conquered by the Emperor Ferdinand II.
1621	Elector driven from the Palatinate by the Spaniards.
1629	Wallenstein drives Christian IV of Denmark from Germany. Emperor issues Edict of Restitution.
1630	Emperor deprives Wallenstein of his command.
1631	Battle of Breitenfeld—defeat of Catholics under Tilly by King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden.
1632	Wallenstein restored to the command of the Emperor's forces. Battle of Lützen. Defeat of Wallenstein and death of Gustavus Adolphus.
1634	Assassination of Wallenstein.
1635	France joins in the war on the side of the Protestants.
1639	French army occupies Alsace.

A.D.	
1640	Accession of Frederick William, 'the Great Elector' of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia.
1648	*Treaty of Westphalia.* Alsace and a partial Rhine frontier go to France; Sweden gets West Pomerania on the German shores of the Baltic. Brandenburg gains territory on the Baltic and in the Rhineland.
1657	The Great Elector frees the Duchy of Prussia (East Prussia) from Polish suzerainty.
1701	War of Spanish Succession. Elector Frederick I becomes *King* of Prussia.
1704	Battle of Blenheim. French driven from Germany.
1713	*Treaty of Utrecht.* Louis XIV of France fails to extend the Rhine frontier north of Alsace.
1740	Accession of Frederick the Great. Death of Emperor Charles VI. Frederick takes Silesia from Maria Theresa of Austria. War of Austrian Succession begins.
1756–1763	Seven Years War; Frederick keeps Silesia.
1772	*First Partition of Poland.* Frederick gains *West* Prussia and links up East Prussia and Brandenburg.
1786	Death of Frederick the Great.
1789	French Revolution begins. Fall of the Bastille, July 14.
1792	France declares war on Austria and Prussia.
1793	Great Britain joins German states, but fails to save Germany from the French Revolutionists. *Second Partition of Poland.*
1794	French conquest of the 'Left Bank' of the Rhine.
1795	Treaty of Basle. Prussia makes peace. *Third Partition of Poland.*
1797	Treaty of Campo Formio. *General* Bonaparte compels Austria to make peace.
1801	*Treaty of Lunéville.* France gains complete Rhine frontier.
1801–3	*Diet of Ratisbon. First Consul* Bonaparte dictates reorganisation of Germany east of the Rhine: secularisation of ecclesiastical States; 'mediatisation' of small principalities in the interest of the larger—except Austria.
1804	Coronation of Bonaparte as Emperor Napoleon I. Holy Roman Emperor Francis II proclaims himself Francis I, Hereditary Emperor of Austria.
1805	British Prime Minister Pitt forms *Third Coalition* against Napoleon.

A.D.

1805 *December* 2. Battle of Austerlitz. Austria submits to Napoleon.

1806 *July* 12. Napoleon establishes the *Confederation of the Rhine*.
August 6. Abdication of the Emperor Francis II. No successor. *End of the Holy Roman Empire*.
October 14. Battle of Jena. Downfall of Prussia.

1807 *June* 14. Battle of Friedland. Czar submits.
July 7. *Treaty of Tilsit*. Czar withdraws from Germany; River Elbe fixed as Prussia's western frontier.

1808 *October*. Napoleon at *Congress* of German rulers at *Erfurt*.

1809 Austria attempts revolt and is crushed. Metternich takes control of Austrian affairs.

1810 Napoleon marries Marie Louise, daughter of Emperor Francis of Austria.

1806–1812 Prussia reformed by Stein and Scharnhorst.

1812 Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. Prussia begins *War of Liberation*. The British Minister Castlereagh forms the *Fourth Coalition*.

1813 *October* 18. Napoleon defeated at the *Battle of Leipsig* and driven from Germany.

1814 German and Russian Armies in France.
April 11. Abdication of Napoleon.
May 30. 1st Treaty of Paris. Settlement of Germany left to Congress of Vienna.

1814–1815 *Congress of Vienna*. Metternich's plan for a '*Germanic Confederation*' accepted. Opposed by German 'nationalists.

1815 *September*. Russia and the German powers form the Holy Alliance.

1817 *October*. The Wartburg Festival.

1818 Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle. Czar Alexander I won over to Metternich's point of view.

1819 Assassination of Kotzebue, German agent of the Czar. 'Carlsbad Decrees' approved by Diet of the Confederation.

1830–1831 Minor revolutions in German States. Several rulers grant constitutions, despite Metternich's disapproval.

1833 Convention of Münchengrätz and Conference of Vienna. Renewal of policy of suppression of 'liberalism' begun by Carlsbad Decrees.

A.D.

1834 German *Zollverein* founded by Prussia. Austria remains outside.

1835 Death of Emperor Francis I and accession of Ferdinand I.

1837 *Hanover separated from British Crown at accession of* Queen Victoria.

1840 Death of Frederick William III of Prussia and accession of Frederick William IV.

1848 *February*. Revolution in France.

March. Revolutionary outbreaks in Vienna, Berlin and other German cities as well as in Austrian dependencies. Flight of Metternich to England. Prussia obtains a Constitution.

May. 'National Assembly' opens at Frankfort (The Frankfort Parliament). Collapse of 1815 Confederation. New rising in Vienna; flight of Emperor Ferdinand.

June. Prague and Bohemia recovered by Austrian Imperial forces.

November. Vienna captured from the revolutionists. Reaction sets in. Schwarzenberg Chancellor.

December. Abdication of Emperor Ferdinand I; accession of Francis Joseph.

First phase of the Schleswig-Holstein question.

1849 *March*. New Federal Constitution for Germany passed by the Frankfort Parliament, and King Frederick William IV of Prussia elected German Emperor.

Austrians recover Lombardy.

April. King of Prussia refuses the Imperial Crown of Germany.

June. Frankfort Parliament transferred to Stuttgart and then suppressed by Würtemberg Government.

August. Austrians recover Hungary and Venice.

1850 'Humiliation of Olmütz'. Restoration of 1815 Confederation and Austrian predominance in Germany.

1851 Bismarck becomes chief Prussian representative at the restored Diet of the Confederation at Frankfort.

1852 Treaty of London, intended to settle the succession to the Danish Monarchy and the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.

1857 Bismarck becomes Prussian Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

King Frederick William IV has a mental break-down. His brother Prince William becomes Regent.

1859 Death of Metternich.

A.D.

1859 Defeat of Austrians by Napoleon III and loss of most of their Italian dependencies.

1861 Death of Frederick William IV: accession of William I of Prussia.

1862 *Summer.* Bismarck Prussian Ambassador in Paris.
Autumn. Bismarck appointed 'Minister-President' (Prime Minister) of Prussia.

1863 Accession of Christian IX of Denmark (Christian of Glücksburg). Re-opening of Schleswig-Holstein Question.
Insurrection in Russian Poland; Prussia helps in suppression.
Austrian scheme for reform of Confederation defeated by Bismarck.

1864 Danish War. Joint occupation of Schleswig-Holstein by Austria and Prussia.

1865 *August.* Convention of Gastein: division of Schleswig-Holstein.
October. Meeting of Bismarck and Napoleon III at Biarritz.

1866 *April.* Alliance formed between Prussia and Italy.
June 14. Diet votes for 'Federal Execution' against Prussia.
June 15. 'Seven Weeks' War begins.
July 3. Defeat of Austria at Battle of *Sadowa-Königgrätz.*
August 23. Peace of Prague.

1867 Formation of *North German Confederation.*
Establishment of the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary.
Luxemburg Question settled by Treaty of London.
Publication of Karl Marx's '*Das Kapital*'.

1868 Spanish Revolution: expulsion of Queen Isabella.

1870 *July* 12. Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern withdraws his candidature for the Spanish throne.
July 13. 'Ems telegram'.
July 15. France declares war on Prussia.
September 2. Capitulation of Napoleon III and his army at *Sedan.*
September 20. Siege of Paris begins.
October 28. Capitulation of Marshal Bazaine at *Metz.*

1871 *January* 1. South German States included in the *Reich.*
January 18. Proclamation at Versailles of King of Prussia as *German Emperor.*

A.D.	
1871	*January* 28. Surrender of Paris.
	May 10. Treaty of Frankfort.
1872	*February*. Beginning of the *Kulturkampf*.
	September. The First *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*.
1873	The 'May Laws' of the Prussian Legislature for the control of the clergy.
1877	Socialists win twelve seats in elections for the *Reichstag*.
1878	*July*. *Treaty of Berlin*. Bismarck sides with Austria against Russia.
	October. Anti-Socialist Law, passed by *Reichstag*.
1879	Dual Alliance with Austria.
	Germany becomes a Protectionist country.
1882	Triple Alliance formed, to include Italy.
1883	End of *Kulturkampf*. Crown Prince pays a visit to the Pope.
1883–1889	Bismarck's 'Social Insurance' legislation.
1884	Second *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*.
	Beginning of Germany's Colonial Empire.
1887	'Re-insurance' Treaty with Russia—for three years.
1888	*March*. Death of Emperor William I.
	June. Death of Emperor Frederick. Accession of William II.
1890	Bismarck resigns the two offices of Chancellor of the *Reich* and Minister-President of Prussia. Caprivi appointed in his place. Anti-Socialist Law expires and is not renewed.
1893	Franco-Russian Alliance.
1894	Caprivi resigns and is succeeded by Hohenlohe.
1898	Death of Bismarck.
	Germany begins to build a big Navy. First Navy Law.
	Kaiser visits Sultan Abdul Hamid. Anatolian Railway concession secured.
1900	Resignation of Chancellor Hohenlohe. Von Bülow succeeds.
1901	Second German Navy Law.
1904	Anglo-French Entente.
1905	Defeat of Russia by Japan.
	Kaiser visits Sultan of Morocco. First Morocco crisis.
	Schlieffen Plan first proposed.
1906	Algeçiras Conference.
1907	Anglo-Russian Entente.

A.D.

1908 Young Turk Revolution; Austria annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina. Third German Navy Law.

1909 Von Bülow resigns Chancellorship. Von Bethmann-Hollweg succeeds.

1911 Second Morocco crisis.

1912 Fourth German Navy Law.

1912–1913 Balkan Wars; total defeat of Turkey. Aggrandisement of Servia.

1914 *June* 28. Assassination of Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand.

August 1–4. Great War begins. Schlieffen Plan put into effect; Von Moltke's failure in the west.

1915 Russian and British defeats in the east. Poland and Baltic provinces of Russia conquered. Turkey and Bulgaria secured. Servia overrun. Italy 'betrays' her allies.

1916 German second attempt in the west foiled at Verdun. British and French attack held on the Somme.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff put at the head of German armies.

New offensive of Russia against Austria; both countries exhausted.

Roumania joins the Western Allies and is conquered forthwith.

Death of Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria.

1917 *January*. Unrestricted U-boat warfare decreed.

March. Revolution in Russia; Czar abdicates.

April 16 U.S.A. declares war on Germany.

July. *Reichstag* passes 'Peace Resolution'.

July. Resignation of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, succeeded first by Michaelis, then by Hertling.

November. Bolsheviks take control in Russia. Russia goes out of the war.

Failure of attempt to drive Italy out of the war.

1918 *March* 3 *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk*.

March 21 Last German offensive in West begins.

July 18. Allied counter-offensive begins.

September. Chancellor Hertling resigns; succeeded by Prince Max of Baden, on basis of responsibility to *Reichstag*.

September 29 Bulgaria surrenders.

October 1 Ludendorff advises peace negotiations.

October 5. Prince Max asks President Wilson of U.S.A. for terms of peace.

A.D.

1918 *October* 29. Naval Mutiny. Revolution breaks out in German Baltic ports.
October 30 Turkey surrenders.
November 3. Austria accepts armistice terms.
November 5. President Wilson tells Prince Max to apply for terms to Marshal Foch.
November 9. Abdication and flight of Kaiser. Republic proclaimed in Berlin.
November 11. German delegates sign terms of *Armistice*.

1919 *January*. Election of National Assembly.
'Spartacist' (*i.e.* Communist) Rising in Berlin suppressed by *Reichswehr*.
May. Kurt Eisner, Socialist Prime Minister of Bavaria, assassinated by 'nationalists'.
June 28. *Treaty of Versailles* signed by German Delegation.
August. New Republican Constitution adopted by National Assembly at *Weimar*.
Autumn. First Presidential election. Socialist Ebert elected.

1920 *March*. Kapp *Putsch*—suppressed by *Reichswehr*, after a General Strike of Workers called for by Government.
April. Communist Rising in the Ruhr—suppressed by *Reichswehr*.
French occupy Frankfort and Darmstadt as a reprisal.
June. First election for *Reichstag* under new Constitution. Coalition Government lose ground.

1921 *April*. Report of Reparations Commission.
May. German Government refuses, then agrees, after Allied threat to occupy the Ruhr, to pay according to the terms of the Report.
August. Erzberger (head of Delegation which signed the Peace Treaty) assassinated.
November. Mark falls to 1000 to the £.

1922 *April*. Russo-German *Rapallo* Treaty, negotiated by Foreign Minister, Walter Rathenau.
June. Assassination of Rathenau.
September. First Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg.
December. Mark falls to 35,000 to the £.

1923 *January*. French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr begins.
August. Stresemann appointed Chancellor and forms a new Government on basis of a policy of 'fulfilment'. Later

A.D.

1923 gives up Chancellorship and becomes Foreign Minister.
Autumn. Separatist Republic of the Bavarian Palatinate set up with French support.
September. German Government stops 'Passive Resistance' in the Ruhr.
November 8. Hitler's 'Beer-cellar *Putsch*'. Hitler sent to prison.
December. Mark sinks to 50,000 milliards to the £.

1924 *May*. Dawes Plan adopted.
Autumn. Evacuation of the Ruhr.

1925 *February*. Death of President Ebert.
May. Presidential Election: Field-Marshal von Hindenburg elected.
December. Locarno Treaty signed in London.

1926 *September*. Germany admitted to the League of Nations with a seat on the Council.

1927 *January*. Inter-Allied Commission of Control abolished.

1929 *August*. Young Plan adopted.
October. Death of Stresemann.
Panic on New York Stock Exchange and beginning of World Economic Crisis.
Autumn. British Army of Occupation leaves Germany.

1930 *March*. Brüning appointed Chancellor.
June. Last Allied troops leave Germany.
September. General Election: Nazis win 107 seats in *Reichstag*.

1931 *January*. Austrian-German Customs Union Treaty signed.
June. Financial Crisis in Germany. Hoover moratorium.
September. Austria withdraws, under pressure, from the Customs Union.

1932 *April*. Re-election of Hindenburg as President. Hitler a candidate.
May. Brüning dismissed. Papen appointed Chancellor in his place.
July. Papen expels Socialist Government of Prussia.
General Election: Nazis win 230 seats in new *Reichstag*.
September. New *Reichstag* dissolved.
November. General Election; Nazis 199, Communists 100.
December. Papen resigns. Schleicher becomes Chancellor.

1933 *January* 28. Schleicher resigns.
January 30. Hitler appointed Chancellor.
Göring becomes Prussian Minister of the Interior and has

A.D.

1933 control of Prussian police. Göring also Reich Air Minister.
February 25. Reichstag Fire.
March 5. General Election; Hitler gets a slight majority of votes.
March 21. *Reichstag* passes law giving Hitler legislative powers for four years.
July 14. Abolition of all political parties except Nazis.
October. Germany withdraws from Disarmament Conference and League of Nations.
November. General Election: all-Nazi *Reichstag*.

1934 *June* 14. Hitler goes to Venice to see Mussolini.
June 30. Nazi 'purge'—'Night of long knives'.
July 25. Assassination of Dollfuss in Vienna.
August 2. Death of President von Hindenburg.
August 19. Election of Hitler to joint office of *Führer* and Chancellor.

1935 *January* 13. Saar Valley votes for return to Germany.
March 16. Hitler re-establishes conscription in Germany.
April 11–14. Stresa Conference of Britain, France, and Italy.
April 17. League of Nations condemns Germany's violation of Treaty of Versailles.
June 18. Naval Agreement with Great Britain.
November. Germany refuses to apply Sanctions against Italy in the Abyssinian War.

1936 *March* 7. German troops march into the Rhineland. Hitler repudiates the Locarno Treaty.
June 17. Himmler, chief of the S.S., becomes head of the Gestapo.
July 11. Italian-sponsored Agreement between Austria and Germany.
September 9. Formal abolition of Weimar Constitution. Inauguration of 'Four-Year Plan.'
October. Germany recognises King of Italy as Emperor of Abyssinia.
November 12. Hitler abolishes international control of German waterways.
November 25. Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan.

1937 *January* 30. Hitler abolishes international part-control of Reichsbank and German Railways.
September 25–29. Mussolini's visit to Germany. 'Rome-Berlin Axis' formed.

A.D.

1938 *February* 4. Hitler reorganises High Command of the *Wehrmacht*.
February 12. Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg summoned to Berchtesgaden.
March 11. German troops march into Austria.
March 14. Proclamation of the *Anschluss*.
April 10. Plebiscite throughout Germany and Austria. also General Election for *Reichstag* of the 'Greater Reich'.
May 3. Hitler goes to Rome on visit to Mussolini.
September 15. Chamberlain goes to Berchtesgaden.
September 22. Chamberlain goes to Godesberg.
September 29. Chamberlain goes to Munich.
September 30. Munich Agreement signed.

1939 *March* 15. Hitler annexes Czechoslovakia.
March 21. Hitler annexes Memel.
March 31. British guarantee to Poland.
April 28. Hitler denounces Anglo-German Naval Agreement and Non-Aggression Pact with Poland.
August 21. Ribbentrop signs German Non-Aggression Pact with Russia.
September 1. Germans invade Poland.
September 3. British and French Declaration of War against Germany.
September 29. German-Soviet 'Treaty of Friendship'.
September 29. 'Fifth' Partition of Poland.

1940 *April* 9. German Invasion of Denmark and Norway.
May 10. German Invasion of Holland and Belgium.
May 31–June 3. Dunkirk evacuation of British Army.
June 17 France asks for armistice.
August–September. Failure of plan for invasion of Britain.

1941 *Winter and Spring*. Defeat of Italian plans for elimination of British from East Africa and Middle East.
German *Afrika Korps* sent to N. Africa.
April. Greece and Jugoslavia invaded through Bulgaria.
June 22. Hitler attacks Russia.
December 7. Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Germany declares war on U.S.A.

1942 *October* 23–*November* 2. *Afrika Korps* defeated by British 8th Army at El Alamein.
November 8. U.S.A. and British forces land in French North Africa.

1943 *January* 31. German 6th Army surrenders at Stalingrad.
May 9. Surrender of German forces in Tunisia.

A.D.

1943 *July* 25. Fall of Mussolini.
September 3. Italian Armistice signed.

1944 *June* 6. Allied Invasion of France begins.
July 20. Unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life.
August 25. Paris liberated by Americans.
September 3. Antwerp occupied by British.
October 20. Aachen captured by Americans.
October 21. Rommel died.
December, Rundstedt's 'Ardennes offensive' defeated.

1945 *January* 25. Russians cross the Oder.
March 7. First crossing of the Rhine by Americans.
March 15. Siegfried Line smashed.
March 23. British cross the Lower Rhine at Wesel.
April 24. Americans link up with Russians on the Elbe.
April 30. Hitler's death.
May 2. Unconditional surrender of German forces in Italy.
May 2. Grand Admiral Dönitz proclaims himself *Führer*.
May 7. Dönitz makes unconditional surrender at Rheims.
May 23. End of Third Reich.

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