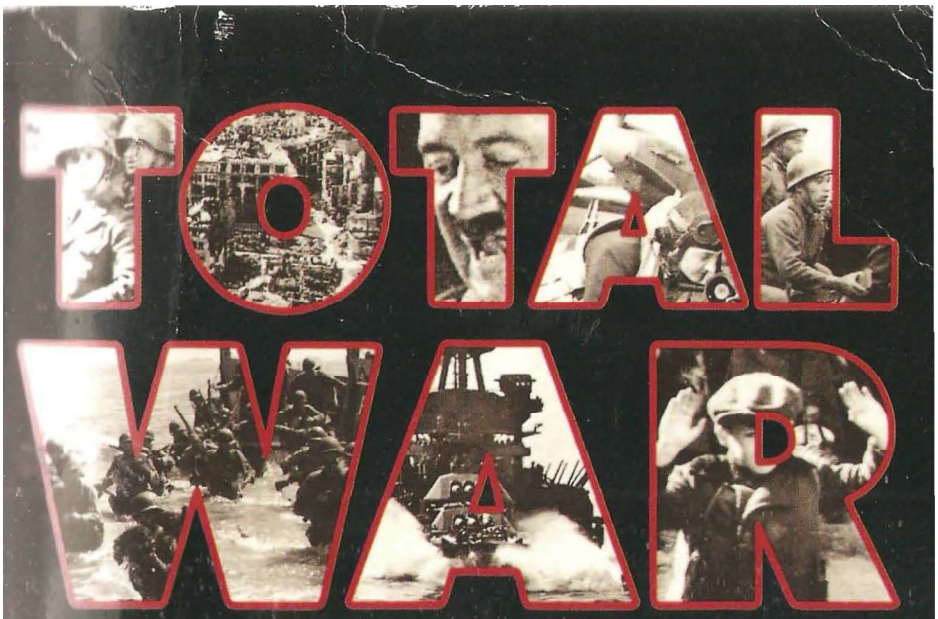

THE CAUSES AND COURSES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

PETER CALVOCORESSI
GUY WINT AND JOHN PRITCHARD

REVISED SECOND EDITION

PENGUIN BOOKS

TOTAL WAR

Peter Calvocoressi was born in 1912 and educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, where he received a First in History. He was called to the Bar in 1935. During the Second World War he worked on Ultra Intelligence at Bletchley Park and later attended the Nuremberg trials. Since then he has mainly divided his time between publishing and international affairs. For eleven years he was a partner in Chatto & Windus and the Hogarth Press and later Chief Executive of Penguin Books. He has been Reader in International Affairs at Sussex University and has served on the Councils of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the International Institute for Strategic Studies and Amnesty International, and on the UN Sub-Committee on Discrimination and Minorities. He has been chairman of the London Library and of the Africa Bureau and is now chairman of Open University Educational Enterprises Ltd.

Guy Wint was born in London in 1910 and educated at Dulwich College, Oriel College, Oxford, and Berlin University. In 1932 he went to China as secretarial assistant of the League of Nations Technical Mission. From China he went to India and spent some years there studying the working of the Indian Constitution. He spent most of the war years in government service in India, Singapore, America and China and in 1947 published *The British in Asia*. He then became a journalist and was for ten years a leader-writer for the *Manchester Guardian*.

Guy Wint died in early 1969.

R. John Pritchard was born and brought up in Southern California in the aftermath of the Second World War. Following graduation from the University of California at Riverside in 1967, he obtained his MA and Ph.D. in International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he studied diplomatic and military history and specialized in the theory and practice of appeasement. Between 1973 and 1987, he compiled an annotated, unabridged edition of *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: The Complete Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East* and a companion five-volume series of Index and Guide. Interest in the law and misconduct of war led him to a close study of other German and Japanese war crimes trials (including the records of more than 300 British trials of 900 suspected Japanese war criminals). John Pritchard has written or contributed to more than thirty-five published books, including *Far Eastern Influences upon British Strategy towards the Great Powers, 1937–1939* (1987), and has taught war studies, contemporary history and modern history in British and American universities. In 1986 he became a founding director and company secretary of a firm that provides intensive courses in reading scientific, technical and business Japanese.

PETER CALVOCORESSI, GUY WINT AND
JOHN PRITCHARD

Total War

The Causes and Courses of the Second World War

Revised second edition

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Foreword to the Second Edition

WHEN this book was being written early in the seventies no governmental archives were generally open to the public. Now many are. This is the first of two important differences between the book's first edition and that which is now presented. The second is the death of Guy Wint – he died in fact before completing his work – and the new partnership of John Pritchard and myself in the preparation of this new edition.

It has frequently been observed that the opening of official archives reveals little or nothing. This sweeping judgement is a useful corrective to the view that history is enshrined, often entombed, in official papers, and it is true enough in so far as it asserts that official disclosure rarely produces revelations of major significance. But such disclosure has two important historical consequences. It exposes a mass of detail, and even if the details are in themselves mostly trivial the accumulation of them is not. In particular, the historian's ability to wallow in these details helps him to enter into the minds of those who guided, or tried to guide, or thought they were guiding, the march of events; to understand – whether sympathetically or not – why they thought as they did and acted as they did, and to readjust the impact upon them of the kaleidoscope of circumstances. Within the ambit of this book the opening of the archives compels and facilitates a reassessment of the politics of appeasement in the 1930s – to which I shall revert.

The second important consequence of the opening of the archives is that it loosens tongues and sharpens pens. It stimulates the memoir industry. This is partly a mere matter of time as men and women who have taken part in memorable events find the leisure in advancing age to recollect and write. But many hesitate to do so and they may be encouraged to put pen to paper, or to face the microphone or the camera, when the past is stirred up by official publications, whether raw materials exposed in public record offices or official histories made out of the storehouses of public papers. There is what may be called the secondary scope of disclosure: the memoirs of the people, mostly in high places, who write of themselves and their immediate experience, and also the testimony of humbler men and women who would normally remain silent but whose stories are elicited, and whose diaries are dug out, by historians anxious

to put the flesh of ordinary humanity on to the skeleton of history. The non-official literature generated by official disclosure is voluminous and varied. Alongside the books by or about leading statesmen and commanders are the equally pertinent down-to-earth accounts garnered by, for example, John Keegan in his *Six Armies in Normandy* or Studs Terkel in his *The Good War*.

In reading this mass of secondary material I have gleaned suggestions and found facts which have caused me to correct or helped me to sharpen a number of episodes in this book and so, I hope, to increase its veracity and readability: for example, on the loss of Crete, the battle of the Mareth, the bombing of Monte Cassino. Other episodes have been rewritten owing to a special circumstance – the revelations about Ultra intelligence – of which I shall have more to say later in this Foreword. But I have not found myself induced to alter the principal judgements about the course of the war which were contained in the original edition.

I revert to the official archives. Their main impact – and here I refer to the British archives – is on the prewar years and appeasement. In short, the perusal of British Cabinet papers leads me to a somewhat more charitable assessment of British policy-makers but not to the belief that they were right to shirk war in 1938.

The charges against the appeasers have fallen into two main categories: that they were benighted by their ideological prejudices and therefore soft on Fascism and Nazism, and secondly that their consequent feebleness (particularly at the time of Munich) did more to endanger than to succour Great Britain, France and Hitler's other European victims. What the official records show is that the British cabinet was genuinely concerned about a factor which has not received its due prominence – the danger to British interests and British obligations from Japan. Neville Chamberlain and his colleagues may have been blinkered rightists but this was not the only or main source of their attempts to appease Mussolini and Hitler or of their shameful (and it remains shameful) betrayal of Czechoslovakia. They had worries in the Far East to which they rightly attached major importance and which to a significant extent tied their hands. Yet this is not to say that they steered a sensible course.

There is a clear distinction to be drawn between trying to detach Mussolini from Hitler (which was not only highly desirable but also well worth the effort in spite of the eventual failure) and trying to stop Hitler's expansion by throwing him chunks of Europe. If, as I still believe, the latter policy was never likely to succeed (read *Mein Kampf* and Hitler's speeches *passim*), the question that arose was how to weigh the loss of Czechoslovakia's armoury, armed forces and morale against the risk that

Japan would, in 1938, use war in Europe as an opportunity to make war against British and French possessions in South East Asia and the Pacific and against the British dominions of Australia and New Zealand. This question is not one that can be answered but it has to be put because the repute of British and French leaders of that time depends on whether they are judged in retrospect to have weighed the imponderables well or badly. Japan did go to war but not in 1938 or 1939 or even 1940 when Great Britain and France became actively engaged in war. Hitler was not deterred from war by appeasement, although his attacks on Czechoslovakia and Poland were postponed until 1939 and his attacks in the west until 1940. I still believe, as will be evident in the body of this book, that a war in 1938 would have been more easily won than the awful and chancy conflict of 1939–45, and that it would have been saner in 1938 to gamble with the Japanese threat than to eliminate Czechoslovakia from the anti-German alliance.

The principal addition to Part I of this book concerns Ultra intelligence – the decipherment, sufficiently promptly for operational use, of German high-grade Enigma ciphers used by the three armed services, the SS and certain other agencies. When I was writing the first edition of this book, which was published in 1972, I knew all about Ultra because I had worked on it at Bletchley Park during the war. The Ultra secret was about to be broken but I did not know that and I was personally bound to keep it. I made some discreet inquiries about the possibility of being released, perhaps partially, from my obligations. I was given to understand that if I broke my promise there was not much that anybody could do without looking silly, but I decided that my proper course was to observe my promise. I suspected that the continuing secrecy had become unnecessary but I could not be sure of it at that date. Later, I became convinced that the secrecy was pointless and after some discussion with persons better placed to know I tried to persuade a British Prime Minister that there was much to be said for allowing it to be known that the British Secret Service, even more renowned for its treasonable inmates than for its achievements, had in fact made an exciting and decisive contribution to winning the war. My efforts were rebuffed shortly before the secret was allowed to poke its nose out of the bag.

Part I of this book was therefore written in the full knowledge of certain things which I might neither mention nor explain. I recall in particular how my friend and editor at Penguin, Dieter Pevsner, upon reading my first version of the Battle of the Atlantic, told me that he thought it was splendid but made no sense. He was of course right since I had left out the determining factor. This was the most blatant case but

there were other passages where the balance of my presentation was distorted by the suppression of the Ultra ingredient. I still, incidentally, do not know whether the Russians read Enigma ciphers. There are many reasons for supposing that they did not. Yet it remains difficult to account for the completeness of their post-Stalingrad tank victories without suspecting some element – Enigma or something else – which has not yet come to light.

In this new edition I have introduced the story of the breaking of the Enigma ciphers and its effect on the war at various times and places. As I was at pains to point out in my book *Top Secret Ultra*, this effect varied greatly: Ultra could be crucial but it never provided complete and prompt coverage of all German military activities. Besides its contribution to the defeat of the U-boats in the Atlantic it was massively useful in North Africa and copious before and after the landings in Normandy in 1944 – I have rewritten, among other things, my account of the battle of the Ardennes. Ultra shed light on such diverse corners of the war as German scientific developments and who was doing or not doing what in Yugoslavia. Most important was its cumulative and (since it came from the Germans themselves) authoritative revelation of the overall size of the German sea, air and ground forces, their capacities, equipment and dispositions, thereby giving the allied side an unprecedented familiarity with the enemy's strengths and limitations. Like so many things about the war this story is not yet fully told. Not all the relevant British documents have been released and some have been destroyed. In the pre-war story of Enigma the Poles hold pride of place for the brilliant intellectual work which enabled them, and them alone, to read Enigma ciphers before the war. Yet it is also becoming clear that a critical element in this success was presented to the Poles by the French and, furthermore, that the French got it before the Nazi seizure of power from a German working in the German cipher office.

John Pritchard's task in Part II has been the more difficult one, for unlike myself he has had to review another man's work. He has done so with a strong admiration for Guy Wint's scholarship, perceptiveness and literary style. He has also two different starting points: first, as a man of a younger generation and, secondly, as an expert primarily in Japanese matters, whereas Wint's erudition was focused on China and India, which he knew and loved well. To my mind all these points – the basic admiration, the difference in age and the diffraction of viewpoint – are manifest advantages. Much of what Guy Wint wrote is unchanged, notably in relation to China, India and Burma. But in other areas John Pritchard's contribution is decisive. Drawing largely on fourteen years' work on the

documents of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial he amplifies and corrects our picture of Japan which, even in those aspects where it remains extremely unattractive, becomes historically intelligible rather than simply demoniacal. Thus he digs deep into the reasons why Japan ran amok in China and exhibited in this century a savagery untypical of Japan in the nineteenth century. He re-examines relevant features of the Japanese constitution, the nature and consequences of the factional fighting between the Japanese army and navy, and the roots of Japanese extremism. While stressing no less than Guy Wint the importance of the Manchurian Incident and the transformation of Manchukuo into an industrial and colonial powerhouse, he portrays this extraordinary achievement in terms of Japanese creativity as well as Japanese power. He brings out the significance for Japan of Russian activities in northern Asia, from the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway a hundred years ago to the murderous Russian comeback in Manchuria in 1945. He dismisses the notion that the British were taken by surprise by the Japanese onslaught on their possessions in 1941: the British fault was not ignorance but the inability to decide what to do about a menace foreseen, alternating between the itch to dispatch the Royal Navy to teach Japan a lesson and playing it cool and hoping for the best. With the war over, the American régime of General MacArthur emerges as not merely dictatorial, which was not in the circumstances surprising, but also as flouting the terms of the Emperor's surrender.

Passing time changes more than the store of knowledge. Attitudes change too. The first readers of this book were prompted, I surmise, mainly by wonder. They wanted to know how and why this terrible war, which they had experienced and survived, had come about; and how it ran its course, with what shifts and turns, what inventions, skills and pieces of luck. This curiosity was allied with the simple convictions of right and wrong which had ruled during the war; wartime loyalties persisted for a time in post-war exhilaration and relief, equally unquestioning, providing their own scale of values. A later generation has other needs. The curiosity is still there, but an audience further removed from the intensities of war is more critical. It takes less for granted and sees no reason not to query particular reputations or general strategies, ours as much as theirs. War leaders, military and civilian, are subjected to the beady eye of posthumous inquest, which is sometimes justified by the resulting verdicts although it may in some cases smell of a distasteful iconoclasm. Strategies which, during the war, were judged purely in terms of their war-winning efficacy are reviewed and censured in moral terms which the warriors

themselves would have dismissed as a luxury rightly banished from the calculation of their wartime exigencies.

War leaders inevitably loom larger than life so long as they are in charge. They become known to, and therefore misunderstood by, thousands of people who have barely heard of them before. This was particularly the case with Churchill and Roosevelt as allied leaders. For the British, Roosevelt was a towering American personality. They were oblivious of the fact that all his life Roosevelt was an object of bitter controversy in his own country. They were oblivious too of the further fact that throughout the period between the wars Anglo-American relations were normally bad. On the American side Churchill was portrayed and accepted with the lineaments of legendary and archetypal heroism, in ignorance of his record as a maverick and inconstant politician whom the electorate would dump as soon as the war was over. Wartime reputations are not made to last. Yet I would argue that these were greater men than their contemporaries and it is a mistake to disinter their evident failings if the object of doing so is to deny them this eminence.

More generally, the conduct of the war has been more critically examined. There was some criticism at the time: for example, British protests against area bombing of civilian targets and criticism in and beyond the United States of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki without at least some warning. The annihilation of these two cities and so many of their inhabitants shocked by its novelty as much as by its enormity but the first revulsion against this supreme act of destruction was confined to the few. The point is that those few have got no fewer with the passing of time, while the equally frightful bombing of Dresden has evoked, on its fortieth anniversary, passionate recrimination. (This is an instance where official disclosure and the ensuing arguments have not only left my initial judgement unchanged but have reinforced it: I find myself more than ever convinced that this operation lacked the rigorous justification which so fearful a slaughter of undefended civilians requires and – the crucial point – did require even in the press of war.)

The probing of the conduct of the war, alongside the desire to retrace its fortunes, demonstrates that the Second World War now commands attention for two distinct reasons: as a self-contained event in time, and as an example of the species war. This expanded focus of the historical viewpoint prompts two reflections. The first concerns morality and legality in war and the second concerns the status of its opposite – peace – in our post-war scale of values.

The fact that the war was fought against evil Nazis or, to be more guarded, that the war fought to curb German power incidentally entailed

the destruction of Nazism – made it for many people a good war. Our side was right. The terrible suffering and devastation had to be. The Middle Ages, trying to justify wars, evolved two sets of tests called *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. The first laid down rules for deciding whether the waging of a particular war was right in the first place. The second set tried to regulate behaviour once war had started. Medieval churchmen and lawyers attached much importance to *jus ad bellum*, which enabled them to distinguish legitimate wars from illicit ones and so to sanctify war on at least some occasions with a clear conscience. To *jus in bello* on the other hand they paid relatively perfunctory attention. That imbalance has been redressed in modern times and nowadays the Hague and Geneva Conventions on permissible and impermissible weaponry and on the treatment of civilians, neutrals, prisoners and others (the descendants of *jus in bello*) are taken no less seriously than restrictions on the right to make war in other international instruments. The conduct of war has become as much a matter of moral concern as its initiation. Hence the concentration in recent years, by a general public as well as lawyers, on the more dubious episodes in the Second World War and what these ready lapses into morally and legally impermissible acts may portend for the future.

Secondly, war itself – as distinct from the ways in which it may be waged – is once more a matter for debate. When the Second World War ended, the prevailing view, which amounted to an unquestioned assumption, was to the effect that nothing like it must be allowed to happen again: peace is paramount. In that spirit the victors took the lead in creating the United Nations (more or less in the image of the League of Nations) and, by Article 2 of the UN Charter, in removing from the state the right to make war except in tightly restricted circumstances. The Japanese went further still and in their post-war constitution explicitly denied the right of the state to belligerency. This novel ban on warfare, in either form, was one of the principal consequences of the Second World War and its horrors. I do not feel confident that this primacy of peace still prevails, least of all among leaders of Superpowers. The antithesis of war and peace is most blatant and compelling in the immediate aftermath of war, but gradually other values reassert themselves and people come to think, as many thought in the 1930s, that there are worse things than war: injustice, for example, or tyranny or systematic and pervasive torture. Just as medieval Christians honestly believed it right to go to war to convert pagans or kill heretics, so today, their modern counterparts have seen virtue in crusading expeditions to impose democracy (the Reagan line) or preserve communist socialism (the Brezhnev doctrine). The trouble with such notions is that they

relegate peace to a subordinate place in our scale of values and, furthermore, that they are all too easily, perhaps inevitably, shaped by national self-interest rather than the disinterested virtues which they proclaim. When peace is no longer paramount, when statesmen cast casuistically about for ways of side-stepping the laws of armed conflict or reinterpreting the Charter, then the bestiality of war is that much easier on the mind and that much nearer in practice. Of such attitudes the course of the Second World War is a standing indictment, never to be forgotten.

PETER CALVOCORESSI
BATH, 1988

The Western Hemisphere

Introduction to the Second Edition

THE years 1870 to 1945 were the period in which Europe feared Germany. Before that it was France, afterwards the Soviet Union. In this perspective the Second World War is the end of an era.

In this period much was lost. The European states system disintegrated. One international economic order foundered and was not replaced by another. Concurrently with these two great dislocations Europe's primacy in the world disappeared. Given the centrality of Germany – geographical and dynamic – much retrospective attention has been focused on German responsibility, even (which is not the same thing) culpability, in this tide of events.

The European states system, which evolved and prevailed over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, gave priority to the state over the system – it was a system in which the whole was subordinate to the parts – but nevertheless it was a political reality recognized and used by statesmen. It rested on the proposition that where there is a plurality of states there is a community of interests; and that these common interests may be served by constant communication and mutual accommodation, even though the ultimate sovereign right to decide and act unilaterally is retained. The working of such a system required two crucial pre-conditions: that the states which mattered should be few but not too few, and that for most of the time most of them should prefer peace to war and find the system useful in keeping the peace. Its principal feature was balance. It had inherent mobility between its parts, and statesmanship was largely defined by the capacity of statesmen to manage the balancing through alliances and reversals of alliances. It was at risk whenever it became rigid through incompetent management or when any principal statesman had no use for it: that is to say, in the first case, when too many of its possible permutations were blocked or, in the second, when a man like Hitler preferred (to adapt Ludwig Dehio's phrase) *Hegemonie* to *Gleichgewicht*, empire to system. It was also at risk when the sovereign states, which were its components, became too numerous and unequal in power and resources, particularly when (as happened after 1919) the Great Powers were reduced in number and new, lesser states proliferated.

After 1870 Bismarck's new Reich was the greatest industrial and military power in Europe. Bismarck preferred *Gleichgewicht* to *Hegemonie* but he fashioned for his successors a Europe which was not only re-shaped by German victories but also systemically constricted by two fateful acts: the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine in 1871 and his treaty with Austria in 1879. The first eliminated from the system any Franco-German permutation and therefore weakened the system itself; the second tied Germany to Austria's ambitions and apprehensions in the Balkans when the last stage in the slow Ottoman retreat from Europe was setting the Habsburg against the Russian monarchy in south east Europe. Bismarck's successors, often more liberal than he but never as powerful or intelligent, failed to extricate themselves from this unnecessary strait-jacket. That is part of Germany's responsibility for the onset of the First World War. There were other parts, by no means all of them German, although two German factors contributed powerfully to the trend to war: the personality and antics of Kaiser William II, not a bad man but an uneducated one; and the post-Bismarckian attempt to challenge British naval power in the world as well as throw German weight about on the continent. These two factors put paid to another of the system's possible permutations: an Anglo-German condominium.

The two World Wars have obscured the extent to which Great Britain and Germany entertained good feelings for one another throughout most of the period from Bismarck to Hitler. Von Tirpitz and Hitler were potent destroyers of these feelings, but before the First World War there were inklings of an Anglo-German joint power structure, while after that war and the abdication of the Kaiser, British statesmen were keen to re-establish relations with Germany and restore it to the comity of European states – as France had been embraced in the Concert of Europe after the abdication of Napoleon. Great Britain even pursued this endeavour for several years after Hitler became Chancellor and then President in a Third German Reich. One of the main paradoxes of the period under discussion is the tenacity of British hostility in wartime to a country with which, for most of the time, Great Britain had no quarrel.

In the First World War Germany defeated Russia and was then defeated by a western alliance; in the second, Germany was defeated on both fronts. Among the consequences of the first war were the disappearance for ever of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires; the revolution in Russia, which removed the Tsarist monarchy and, with the aftermath of foreign invasions and civil war, removed Russia itself from European affairs for a generation; the emergence in eastern (but not western) Europe of a string of new or revived or enlarged states, all of them economic weaklings and

none of them adept performers in a European states system; the reduction therefore of the managers of that system from five or six to two (or three, if Italy be accounted a competent and willing third); and the enfeeblement of Germany, prolonged until the time when it was able by its own exertions to reclaim its place in Europe on its own terms.

The instrument of the curbing of Germany was the treaty of Versailles. In 1919, as during the Second World War, plans for partitioning Germany were abandoned and its French proponents had to be content with a limited occupation of parts of the Rhineland, the emasculation of Germany's armed forces, a swingeing bill of costs and a (broken) promise of an Anglo-American guarantee against renewed German attack. Making the losers pay for a war was nothing new – after the Franco-Prussian war Bismarck imposed heavy payments on France, which paid them more than punctually – but the inclusion in the treaty of the famous 'war guilt' clause in order to justify a big bill rankled unforgettably in Germany; the haggling over the total sum went on for ten years; the American insistence on keeping inter-allied debts, the bulk of them due to the United States, distinct from reparations payments bedevilled post-war international finances, particularly in the case of France, which, owing twice what it was owed, looked to reparations from Germany to enable it to pay its debts to the United States.

The First World War was not only a huge shock. Its cost too was huge. It accelerated, if it did not cause, a breakdown in the international economic order which compounded the breakdown of the European states system. For much of the previous century relations between the (relatively few) sovereign economies were stable. The economic order was dominated by Great Britain, under the signs of free trade and gold. Their balances were measured and settled in gold, and the exchange rates of their currencies were steady. The war greatly devalued all the currencies, even more greatly disrupted the relations between them, exposed Great Britain's inability any longer to combine an international regulatory role with the pursuit of its national economic interests, and provided no alternative leadership since the United States – the world's greatest economic power – abjured any such role. (The United States gave restorative aid to Europe through investment and loans in the 1920s, but the provision of this finance made its withdrawal at the end of the decade all the more painful and disastrous. This withdrawal, beginning in 1928, had mixed causes: the failure to cut back American wartime agricultural production, leading to falling farm prices and rising farmers' indebtedness; enticing opportunities for investment at home instead of in Europe; and maniacal speculation, the stock market crash of 1929 and the consequent rush for liquidity.) So, within

the very short space of a decade, the economic consequences of the war and of the Treaty of Versailles combined to create bewildering economic confusion. The Depression of 1929–31 was followed in 1933 by a world Monetary and Economic Conference whose failure – engineered by the United States – deepened the gloom, accelerated nationalist protectionism and promoted revolution.

Revolution was most feared in France but occurred in fact in Germany. Great Britain's was the first major economy to turn a corner, through a policy of substantial spending on new housing which reanimated the construction industry and associated trades. In France, by contrast, governments nailed their colours to deflation, gold and balanced budgets; lent large sums to banks and other undertakings, and lost it; and cut real wages, forced women out of jobs and so added social unrest and political instability to economic disorder. When Leon Blum's Popular Front government tried to go into reverse, it discovered that it could not do so without a coordinated international strategy which did not exist. Frenchmen talked of 1789 and threw Blum out, but although there were violent disturbances there was (as in 1968) no revolution. In Germany, however, there was. There Heinrich Brüning, hagridden by the inflation of 1922 which was ended by decreeing that 1 million million marks made 1 mark, also clung until too late to deflation in a deflating world. The moribund Nazi Party won votes and total power: twelve seats in the 1928 Reichstag elections became 107 in 1930 and the largest party block in 1932. In the next year Hitler was Chancellor.

Hitler knew what he wanted and had written a book saying what he wanted: *Lebensraum* (living space, for Germans). It could not be got without war. Hitler envisaged war and did not at all disapprove of it. Therefore Hitler's contribution to the Second World War was altogether different from any German contribution to the First. One may plausibly conclude that Germany's responsibility for the first war was greater than others, either much greater or only a little greater; but in relation to the second war Germany's responsibility is close to total. This judgement may be challenged only by disjoining a country from its rulers, by considering a term like 'Germany' to be an abstraction incapable of carrying responsibility. That within Germany many people did not want war is self-evident. But in so far as wars are waged by states, and in so far as the responsibility for a war may be apportioned between states, then German responsibility for the Second World War in Europe is in a class of its own.

The responsibility for starting the war resurrected the old charge of Germany's peculiar war guilt in the twentieth century, but in a much altered context, since it is psychologically difficult to separate Hitler's

responsibility for the war from related atrocious and guilt-laden policies, particularly the killing – with the machinery of the state and for purely racial reasons – of all attainable Jews and gipsies and the design to reduce the numbers of the Slavs by 30 million. (The fact that until about 1941 Hitler still preferred to export Jews rather than kill them is relevant neither to his racialism nor to the criminality of the subsequent genocide.) Hitler's plans for Europe were not original in as much as they were an expanded version of visions of *Mitteleuropa*, which had allured an earlier generation of thrusting financiers and industrialists. If such visions lead to war the man in the street feels only a limited responsibility (at most) for the outcome. In the sixties Fritz Fischer's *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (1961) reopened the case against Germany in 1914–18 with a scrupulous and scholarly investigation of German aims, before and during the war, to seize for Germany dominion in Europe and the world. The debate which ensued became at times heated but remained essentially academic. But a later debate about German guilt in the thirties and forties went wider and deeper because it went beyond the war-making propensities of governments and ruling classes to the racial and criminal accompaniments of Hitler's conquests, which demanded widespread personal involvement in the bestialities perpetrated in death camps and in territories occupied by the German armies in the east. This later debate, although conducted mainly by historians, was not confined to academics and very many Germans felt a shame akin to guilt. The swell of disgust prompted a counter-attack which tried to explain away conduct so unbecoming a civilized people. A conservative school of writers, more nationalist than scholarly in their inspiration, argued that the mass murders of Jews and Slavs were a secondary crime, secondary because they reflected a mode of thinking and acting with which Europe had already been infected and polluted by the enormities of Stalinist communism. Others have fallen back more modestly on the argument that no man is responsible for another's crime, no generation may be saddled with moral guilt except through its own acts or connivance. But the first post-war generation acknowledged, it would seem, some guilt by association and endorsed the view that the new German state, as the successor in title of the Third Reich, was morally right to accept an obligation to Jewry and offer the sort of reparation (money) which alone can be offered after the event: an acknowledgement and a payment which lie somewhere between expiation and *ex gratia* disbursement.

These debates and their outcome are one indication among others that the Germany which emerged from its second defeat was much more radically altered than was Germany after the first war. The two other principal states of western Europe – Great Britain and France – have

changed far less since 1870 than Germany appears to have done: their fundamental political and constitutional assumptions (not to mention their frontiers) have remained the same, their national temper has been, compared with Germany's, subdued, and the trend of their domestic policies has been fairly consistent and equable in a liberal direction. Germany's history in the same years has been episodic. The Second Reich began as a monarchical régime under a Kaiser who was more a military than a civilian figure; its main props, in addition to the army, were a landowning aristocracy (the Junkers of the east) and a new plutocracy (the industrialists and financiers of the west). This was something like the régime envisaged a generation earlier by John C. Calhoun of South Carolina who, before the Civil War, hoped for a partnership between the plantation society of the South and the developing industrial economy of the North, but in a very different constitutional, civilian context. The Second Reich degenerated into a monarcho–military autocracy and then, during the first war, into a military dictatorship which first overrode and then sacrificed the Kaiser. After the war the Weimar Republic, democratic and even socialist in intent, was immediately beset by armed threats from left and right which persisted to 1924 and from which the government was able to save the Republic only with the help of what was left of the army. With the revival of industry in the boom years 1924–9, Weimar governments had either to displease the military and the plutocracy or to lean on them, from which dilemma it had not extricated itself before the advent of the Great Depression and Hitler. Both the military and industry – a nationalist and protectionist combination – welcomed Hitler up to a point, and he in turn was dependent on industry for rearmament and on the army for his aggressive foreign designs. While the Nazis were in many ways repulsive and alarming to these old pillars of the state, there was enough common ground to stifle the Weimar ideals of parliamentary democracy and social responsibility. It took a second war and defeat to bring Germany into line, mentally as well as formally, with the main stream of western political and social attitudes. This alignment of the three main western European states is one of the second war's most significant consequences.

When the second war ended the European states system was left even more jejune than in 1919. In the east the Soviet conquest was a further stage in the division of the continent into east and west, an accentuation of a process already marked by the dissolution in 1919 of its old autocracies (senior members of an overall European system) and by the Treaty of Locarno in 1926 whereby a new order was established for the west from which, on British insistence, the east was excluded. With the Second

World War the Soviet Union erased the three Baltic Republics and took large bites out of Poland and Rumania and a smaller bite out of Slovakia. Otherwise the map looked in the east much the same as before the war, but a map is not the best guide to reality and the states shown on it were states only in name. In the west the map was unaltered: the causes of Hitler's war lay in eastern, not western, Europe. But the states of western Europe, although intact, had lost their confidence in their ability to construct or operate a purely European system; the old European Great Powers were no longer the top powers but were outranked by two Superpowers, and in order to safeguard themselves they prayed the United States, a geographical outsider, to become a political insider. To regulate economic affairs a new international economic order had been devised in 1944 at Bretton Woods but it lasted for less than thirty years and was followed by a fresh bout of economic instability reminiscent of the leaderless inter-war years – widely fluctuating currencies, barely controlled expansion of credit, boom and bust in stock markets, unpayable foreign debts. The new political order, resting on the mutual nuclear deterrence of the Superpower arbiters of the continent, was accepted as a fact of life for about the same span. But the régime in the east, erected by Stalin to protect his western frontiers, was a failure. Subordinate communist parties ruled in the several pre-war states. They were installed by the Soviet armies (except in Yugoslavia, which broke away from the Soviet block almost at once) and were secure so long as Soviet armies might come back in an emergency. This they did in Hungary and Poland in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, but in Poland in 1980 the Soviet government deemed it inexpedient to intervene with force even to prevent the overthrow of the party's rule. In western Europe the alliance with the United States remained almost unchallenged. It was an insurance against Soviet hostility and, even when the Kremlin put on a more benign face with Khruschchev or Gorbachev, fear of Soviet might and distrust of Soviet intentions could not be lightly assuaged. Yet the Nato alliance, initially easy and popular, began to become irksome as commercial rivalries developed between Europeans and Americans; world policies, particularly in the Middle East, diverged; and, perhaps temporarily, Europe's assessment of United States leadership lapsed into amazed contempt and ridicule. The terms upon which a European-American alliance might endure needed to be discussed but could not be discussed so long as political leaders on both sides pretended that what was needed was maintenance and not a new model.

As the war ended all the eventual victors abandoned the idea of partitioning Germany. But Germany was partitioned. Partition was a yearning to

undo Bismarck's work, a feeling that Europe might cope with pre-Bismarckian Prussia but not with Prussia-writ-large, *alias* Germany. Within a few years of the war's end two entirely new states were born: the Federal Republic of Germany and the Democratic Republic of Germany, both of them as new-fangled as the German Reich had been in 1870. But partition did not have its expected effect. The German impact on events did not evaporate. The (western) Federal Republic quickly became, at first in association with the United States but later by its own exertions, a Great Power – only half armed in as much as it might neither make nor possess nuclear weapons, but an economic giant which by the end of the eighties was the second (after Japan) provider of capital for the rest of the world. This resurgence raised once more an old question whether all, or nearly all, Germans ought not naturally to form one state, and what the power of such a state might be. The war had cut Germany in two and recreated the separate republic of Austria. Before the war and until Hitler's *Anschluss* in 1938 the separation of Austria from Germany had been maintained only because a union had been ruled out by the Geneva Protocol of 1922; but because it was maintained it came to seem proper. By analogy the separation of the two post-war German republics may also come to seem immutable. Yet these two states have long insisted that their relations with one another are not as the relations between other sovereign states, and – unlike Austrians who identify themselves as Austrians – citizens of both German republics identify themselves as Germans. A first post-war generation accepted the separation because it was clearly unable to end it without starting a war, but it will be surprising if a succeeding generation does not mate west with east as surely as the Rumanians once mated Moldavia with Wallachia.

But the future contribution of Germany to Europe's affairs does not depend on reunification. The Federal Republic is by itself strong enough to have and exercise choices, which it is beginning cautiously to consider. It is inhibited by fear of the Soviet Union and a commensurate reluctance to annoy the United States, but within the foreseeable future it may choose one or more of a number of political courses and experiment in combining them: reunion with eastern Germany; a condominium with France; substantially improved relations with the Soviet Union. The code-name for this last option is Rapallo – but with the reminder that the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 did little for either party except enable it to thumb its nose at everybody else while they were not looking. There is once again a German power. Germany is not a Superpower or likely to become one, but there is no law in politics which says that only Superpowers count nor is there a law which says that no state may deal with a

Superpower except another Superpower. The main thrust of Superpower détente is not confined to arms deals but leads in the longer run to political debate and manoeuvre, and once the United States has given a lead in intercourse with the Soviet Union, others will not be far behind.

The only European state which won in both the World Wars was Great Britain. Except in the obvious sense – it is more agreeable to win than lose – these victories have been a mixed blessing. They have veiled and accelerated Great Britain's industrial decline, for however one may admire the economic management of the British war efforts, the wars were enormously costly and Great Britain stumbled out of them with only partial confidence and independence. A victor's natural inclination to return to what he sees as attainable normality was demonstrated in 1925 by the return to the gold standard with an overvalued pound sterling which could be maintained only by severe and damaging deflation. By reversing such policies Great Britain staged a comparatively early recovery from the Great Depression but the second war was won only at the cost of selling precious overseas assets and incurring large debts. Post-war recovery was gratifyingly swift but without a sufficiently radical transformation of industry, from those which had made fortunes in the past to the materials and methods of a new industrial revolution. With the revival of the French and west German economies Great Britain seemed once more to be flagging. Renewed international instability and inflation in the seventies propelled it, in the eighties, into a fresh bout of extravagant deflation which throttled economic activity and precipitated bankruptcies and unemployment on an unforeseen and unnecessary scale. In spite of remarkable bonanzas (North Sea oil, the collapse of world prices of raw materials, prolific proceeds of denationalization) Great Britain was forced to the bottom of the table of advanced industrial countries and forfeited unrecoverable opportunities. A half-hearted abandonment of the nostrums of the early eighties stimulated recovery, but this sad performance diminished Great Britain's standing in Europe.

The ambiguity of the British position in Europe was enhanced by a different wartime experience: the special relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt. Before the war relations between the two countries had not been close or cordial, and leaders on either side were wont to be derogatory about the other, in private sometimes very derogatory. But the war wrought a big change, not merely through the imperatives of an Anglo-American alliance and the exhilaration of a shared victory but also through the exceptional personal relations which were initiated by Churchill and welcomed by Roosevelt. With other leaders after the war this relationship became something of a fetish, but a fetish grounded in enough reality – a common experience, a common language, shared traditions –

to give substance to the magic. The relationship, however, was special in a more restricted sense than the British imagined. It made for an ease of communication at all levels which neither British nor Americans attained with others, but it could not create a special identity of interests in political or commercial matters and so far from putting American weight behind British ideas it threatened to pull British politicians into a toadying indulgence of American adventures and misadventures. On the British side the belief in this special relationship strengthened hesitations about joining the European Community (whose value and durability the British grievously underrated in the fifties and sixties) and made Great Britain, when it did join, a partner with a difference, less than fully committed to the Community's larger aims. Great Britain muffed its chances of playing a linking role between Europe and America and lapsed into a petulant limbo between the two. Where once in the community Great Britain's absence had been deplored, its presence became a matter of some indifference, even vexation. Germany's obvious European partner was no longer Great Britain but France.

The European Community was a child of war, an experiment for mustering and re-asserting Europe's diminished status and diminished economic clout in the world. Its success is problematic because it has not solved the question how much unity and central authority are necessary to make a community effective. Too much unity goes against the European grain. The Community was established in the first place by Europeans who observed Europe's economic (and therefore political) decline and wished to reverse it by joining forces and resources. The forces and resources to be joined were economic, and the Community in its first phase was an association of advanced industrial and trading states. But it failed to take a leaf out of the book of the German *Zollverein* and, instead of consolidating before expanding, it did the reverse. It did so moreover for non-economic reasons and was to that extent untrue to its first purpose. The original six members welcomed newcomers for, mainly, political reasons. They believed that membership of the Community would deter anti-democratic antics in countries like Greece and in pursuit of this implausible aim attenuated the Community's economic strength by admitting to it economic weaklings which, at this stage, it had difficulty in supporting. The political aspect of the Community has been sharpened by attempts, only half successful, to achieve common policies in extra-European affairs. What the Community most needs is not policies about other continents but a central bank and a common currency: the mobilization of resources before attempts to exert inchoate power. The untimely distension of the Community, in size and in purpose, has jeopardized it.

To argue that the Community is ill-advised to devote its ingenuities to fabricating common external policies is not to deny that some European states have crucial external interests or that these interests are often the same. This is particularly true of the Middle East, a stamping ground for Europeans for centuries, a vital crossroads and an inescapable source of fuels. When the First World War dissolved the Ottoman empire, its Arab subjects hoped for independence but got British and French rule. This rule was eliminated by the second war which, in this area, complemented the first. The second war also gave, in the most horrible manner, a great boost to modern Zionism, which had been a not very successful Jewish minority movement originally founded to find a way to save the persecuted Jews of Russia and Rumania. The founder of this modern Zionist movement, Theodore Herzl, was an attractive but naïve Austrian Jew (Jewish by race but an atheist) who was so appalled by the pogroms of the 1880s that he devoted his life and wealth to finding somewhere – preferably in the Ottoman empire – for oppressed Jews to live a decent life. He grievously misjudged Ottoman readiness to accommodate – as opposed to listen to – his schemes, and after his death and after the First World War his successors were equally unsuccessful in getting British sympathy or support, in spite of the Balfour Declaration (1917) by which the British had promised to look favourably on the creation of a home for Jews in Palestine. (By home, the British understood a refuge for a limited number of Jews without statehood. The Zionists wanted a state.) The second war's horrors created unprecedented sympathy for Europe's surviving Jews, and by allying their own ruthlessness with this sympathy Zionists won their state, evicting all the British and half the Palestinian Arabs. Subsequently financed by the American state and by American Jewish well-wishers (who, however, did not want to go to Israel except as tourists) the new state defeated all Arab attempts to exterminate or contain it but failed to achieve a *modus vivendi* with the Arab world, with the consequence that the Middle East has been almost perpetually at war since the end of the war in Europe. Forty years on the future of the state of Israel appears a great deal less than certain.

In the years 1870–1945 Germany lost whatever chance it may have had to dominate Europe either imperially, as Hitler wanted, or by manipulating the European states system, as Bismarck envisaged. After two catastrophic wars the western German Republic, the more important relic of the Reich, has come to terms with its western foes but is on an uneasy footing with the Soviet Union, a footing which could get better or worse as the one or the other grows richer or stronger. The eastern German Republic lacks formal relations in the one direction and satisfactory ones

in the other. The prime question in eastern Europe is the degree of independence which its sovereign states may exact from the Soviet Union, which is perplexed about how to change Stalin's failed post-war settlement without reviving Stalin's fears for the Soviet Union's defences. The prime question in western Europe is whether the exceptional resources and skills of its principal national economies may be integrated to create once more a power in Europe commensurate with other world powers.

Europe's position is a double dilemma. Not only is the deployment of its resources impeded by its fragmentation into sovereign authorities – a luxury which it can hardly now afford. In addition it seems trapped in the ambiguities of power. In the first years after the Second World War power was equated with nuclear weapons. The war in Europe was the last widespread pre-nuclear war, but within a few months of its termination the concomitant war in the Pacific and East Asia saw the use of nuclear bombs. Since then wars have been divided into nuclear and non-nuclear, and states have been sharply categorized in the same way. Yet world powers are not the same as nuclear Superpowers, for the World Powers include, confusingly, Japan which has overwhelming economic power without possessing post-modern nuclear armament. Nor are all the increasingly numerous nuclear states the equals in resources of some non-nuclear ones. Western Europe, epitomized in this respect by western Germany, senses a capacity to graduate to the top level economically but feels unsafe without some kind of nuclear protection, which, however, may so mortgage its resources as to cancel its hopes of emulating Japan. After two mutually destructive wars west Germany and its associates may not do as Japan has done, because Europe's Soviet hinterland is a great deal more menacing than anything that Japan yet perceives in China. Europe therefore is constrained in a way in which Japan is not. A hundred years ago conflict between Russia, China and Japan was already a major element in world affairs, but to most Europeans it was peripheral. Now, by contrast, this continuing power dance on the other side of the globe may condition Europe's future as decisively as the material and psychological ravages of Europe's wars or the loss of Europe's worldwide empires.

Europe's response is not as novel as it looks. Proponents of *Mitteleuropa* in Germany in the early decades of this century were moved by, among other things, the fear that Europe in general and Germany in particular were in danger of being squeezed between Russian and American empires. (They were moved too by greed.) They argued that Europe must be united to meet this eventuality. Being German and nationalist and exuberant they equated unification with German domination. Their visions stretched from France on the one side to Turkey on the other, inclusively.

They were opting for a German Power almost coterminous with continental Europe in place of the German World Power with a European base which Bismarck and his intellectual heirs had hoped to build through manufacturing, commerce and (with hesitations) colonies: Germany would become a World Power by incorporating Europe rather than by expanding beyond Europe. This continental vision, never attractive to non-Germans, was extinguished by the defeat of 1918 but was revived with variations a few years later by Hitler and his early coadjutor, ex-Field Marshal Ludendorff. In Hitler's mind German domination of Europe was required in order to provide living space for the German race – non-Germans might be reduced to serfdom or exterminated, not merely subordinated; but the notion of creating a Great Power by territorial and economic unification was close kin to the *Mitteleuropa* of earlier generations and, subject to one very big qualification, is kin too to the expectations of the European Community. The qualification is the substitution of supranational collaboration for German dominion – a qualitative change that makes the European dream at once more palatable and yet more difficult to attain, since there is no precedent for a World Power created neither by conquest nor nationalism.

The authors of the European Community look beyond the world of Superpower bipolarity to the re-emergence of an international system (similar on a broader scale to the extinct European states system), in which 'Europe', alongside the United States and Japan, the USSR and China, will be the principal actors. In such a world, if it comes to pass, the European Power will need to ponder the experience of Italy in the old European Concert, a member whose credentials were not universally accepted.

Patterns of power change, but power itself remains a prime factor in international affairs. Wars accelerate shifts in power, but their impact on the use or abuse of power is problematic. A great war, by inflicting great suffering and great damage, may be expected greatly to affect attitudes to war, but how deeply or lastingly is again problematic. At the end of every great war people say that such a thing must never happen again, but they say so with more longing than conviction. How, if at all, has the Second World War been different?

It was extraordinarily callous and savage. Half a century afterwards people still shudder at the recollection of the horrors, while those too young to recollect wonder at the atrocities perpetrated and the degree to which they were tolerated: at the deliberate mass bombing of civilians by all sides, the taking and shooting of innocent hostages in droves, the holocaust of the Jews in Europe, the sadistic treatment of prisoners of war

at Japanese hands. New weapons, however horrible, are at least a tribute to man's inventiveness; the accompanying inhumanity and acceptance are unrelievedly evil unless they spark a more potent and more effective opposition to the waging of yet more wars in which such things may happen again.

The sources of war include appetites and attitudes. The appetites are easy to identify: greed, envy and the like deadly sins. Of the attitudes which have encouraged the recourse to war and have sanctified its ruthless conduct, two stand out, the one ancient and the other comparatively new. The one is resignation – the feeling that wars are inevitable and that the exhortations of pacifists, the protests of moralists and the arguments of those who point out the futility of war are a waste of breath. The other is the uncomfortable fact that war became at one time popular. Nationalism, nourished by propaganda (much of it false but some of it valid), fashioned a mass approval of war, even a demand for war, which not only propelled governments into war but enabled them, once in, to conduct it with a violence which knew few bounds. It quelled the basic belief that war, although perhaps inevitable, was at bottom a curse. The wars of the mid twentieth century, which coalesced into the Second World War, have posed the question whether this trend has been reversed. Is there a limit to the tolerance of cruelty or does the limit limitlessly recede?

A stouter opposition to war requires the reinvigoration of old ideas about the place of war in human society and the limits which should be imposed on it, together with the application of these ideas to what is new in the war-making of the twentieth century. For centuries war has been widely regarded as an inevitable, even a necessary, evil. Those who glorify it, and those who condemn and hope to eliminate it altogether, are on the fringes. Centrally, the crux has been how to rationalize the conflict between, on the one hand, accepting war as a fact of life and, on the other, condemning it as immoral multiple homicide. The idea of war as a necessary evil has emerged from this dilemma and has dominated all thinking (in Europe) about war since early Christian times. It is what most people felt about war against Hitler. Beginning with St Augustine, Christian and other moralists have tried to resolve the irreconcilable by arguing that war, like the use of other forms of violence, may be justified. By dividing wars into the permissible and the impermissible, they sought to control recourse to war and conduct in war, even though by proscribing some wars they automatically legitimized others. They foreswore the pacifists' simple proposition that all wars are wrong, because this proposition exposed Christianity to the danger of annihilation through a refusal to defend itself or to support the newly Christianized state (the Roman

Empire) whose arms were to be the salvation of Christianity against heathen barbarians. It was better to regulate the evil, since in the rejection of war lay a greater evil.

The regulation began as moral justification but developed by legal definition. The ancestry of the Charter of the United Nations includes lawyers and political thinkers who have devised schemes and mechanisms for keeping the peace, as well as preceptors such as St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas who laid the basis for the conditional legitimization of war. Whether by divine command or by human contrivance, wars are to be limited, since war cannot be safely eliminated: wars of a kind have a proper place in the world, and the main question is what kind. In every age, including the nuclear age, the problem is to prescribe within the circumstances of that age when a war may justly be started and within what limits it may be waged – and to influence opinion accordingly.

The rules and their interpretation have inevitably varied, but three conditions governing the initiation of war have provided the perennial groundwork. First, a war may be begun only by a sovereign. This category included the Pope and kings and was gradually refined to mean nobody else. In modern times it has meant a duly constituted sovereign state. In very modern times attempts have been made, not so far successfully, to confer legitimacy on wars waged by bodies fighting against states but not themselves invested with the trappings of a state (guerrilla groups, liberation movements within colonial empires, embryonic states – the PLO, the ANC). These attempts seek to widen the laws of war into laws of armed conflict; they face opposition from states, which have arrogated to themselves the sole right to wage war.

The second condition for the initiation of a Just War is that it be righteous. Roman legists regarded a war as justified if the aggressor were bent on recovering stolen territory or property, but Christians had a different point of view. They regarded a Just War as essentially punitive. What made it just was not the aggressor's grievance but the victim's transgression. Therefore a Just War might be undertaken by any sovereign, regardless of his own interest in the matter. If President Nyerere had said that he was attacking Idi Amin's Uganda because its government was evil, he would have been within the Just War tradition, but he preferred to rely (precariously) on the terms of the UN Charter. The right or duty of punitive intervention has fallen into disfavour, partly because the governments of states have successfully contrived to make the state a law unto itself and partly because the claim to be waging war for a righteous cause can so easily be made in bad faith. Thus Hitler could pose as a champion of justice in his aggression against Czechoslovakia, and

Brezhnev and Reagan have come close to doing in their attacks on – again – Czechoslovakia and Nicaragua. So malleable a provision is a reed half broken from the start. Thirdly and finally, a Just War must be pure in the sense that it must not be undertaken by the aggressor for gain or other selfish purpose. This too is a provision more easily judged by God than man.

The rules concerning the initiation of war were radically altered at the end of the Second World War when the signatories of the UN Charter abandoned their sovereign right to make war on other members of the United Nations except in self-defence. Subsequent history suggests that this bold innovation was, to say the least, ahead of its time – as are many bold innovations.

The proponents of Just War sought to regulate behaviour in war as well as the resort to war. The commonest prescriptions of this second aspect of the doctrine were: that fighting must be suspended on special days; that certain classes of person must not be killed or harmed, notably women and children, ambassadors, clergy, sometimes peasants; that new weapons must be eschewed; that warlike acts must be proportionate to the offence which justified the making of war in the first place. The first of these requirements has lost its force long since, although there were attempts as recently as the First World War to suspend killings at Christmas. The second was evaded at an early stage by the counter-argument that it was up to the protected species to keep out of the way of the fighting. The third is a compound of the conservatism of the fighting classes who damned or derided the weapons to which they were not accustomed and, on the other hand, the fear and distress caused by every inventor of crueller and more lethal weapons. Nuclear weapons have given it new force. Most flagrantly breached in the wars of the twentieth century is the requirement of proportionality: that means should bear some acceptable relation to ends. The scale and indiscriminate nature of death and destruction by modern weapons are the most shocking parts of modern war, and both anti-war and anti-nuclear movements have rested much of their case on the impossibility of keeping warfare within just bounds. The logic of the argument is that a Just War is no longer possible if nuclear weapons or other weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction are likely to be used. It unites moral, legal and intellectual traditions with the emotional sentiments evoked by the experience of modern war.

A pessimistic reading of history suggests that mankind has an almost infinite capacity to tolerate horror, particularly in the context of war which suspends prevailing precepts and standards of behaviour. It is therefore rash to suppose that the record of our own times marks the limit of

their toleration. There have been dozens of wars since the end of the Second World War and some of them have been at least as frightful and shameful as any which went before. The rules devised to govern the resort to war and the conduct of war have been ignored by governments and individuals with almost complete impunity and with sparse popular outcry. This passivity, or auto-gullibility, has been facilitated by the galloping industrialization of war, which has enabled the instruments of death to function more and more remotely – remote not merely from people hundreds and thousands of miles away from scenes of horror, but also out of sight of the warrior himself up in the dark in his bomber or behind his long-ranging naval gun, endowed by the latest technology with the gift of divorcing the fascination of his doings from their consequences. For a century or so, technology has veiled the facts of war.

Yet here we touch upon one of three developments which point in a more optimistic direction. They are: the new visibility of war through television; the impact of nuclear weaponry; and satellite photographic intelligence. These developments have occurred preponderantly since the Second World War but they have their origins in it.

The reporting of war on television is one of those innovations which may revolt the mind or habituate it. In the case of Vietnam it so sickened the audience that the directors had to cancel the unfinished performance. That the war was brought to an end by the U S administration's interpretation of television's effect on American opinion and attitudes is hardly to be gainsaid, however considerable the weight of other matters. This television exposure coincided with a particular turn in the techniques of war. The high-level bomber had been superseded by the low-level helicopter gunship, so that what the cameras showed was not material destruction far away but lifesize figures fleeing helplessly and dying in torment. That, at last, was more than human nature could stomach. Thousands of people knew during the Second World War that Jews were being rounded up, deported and presumably killed, but comparatively few saw these things being done. There is no dodging the evidence of one's own eyes.

Images, it has to be admitted, fade. The holocaust has turned inevitably from a proceeding into a fact of history, and attempts to keep it a present reality cannot in the nature of things succeed; it must lose much of its potency. The same will be true of the atrocities in Vietnam, even as it has been true – to cite a single remoter example – of the once famous genocidal slaughter of Armenians by Turks in 1895 and 1915. What endures is not the event itself but the knowledge that the event took place; and knowledge is a far weaker force than the senses. If wars are to become fewer and behaviour in war less atrocious there will have to be other aids to better

conduct. There are two, the one ambivalent but the other more positively hopeful, the one much conversed but the other less frequently remarked. Both impinge upon the incidence of war by affecting, not so much sentiment, as calculation.

The Second World War ended with the dropping of two nuclear bombs on two Japanese cities. These bombs appalled people, even though other bombing operations killed as many people in the space of not much more time. But they were more than just the latest invention in the history of war, for they destroyed the traditional basis for calculating the chances of war. Contrary to popular belief, wars do not happen by mistake; they are initiated by calculation (including miscalculation), and the calculations are made by more or less rational persons reckoning the chances of winning and profiting from war. Hitler, in company with the great majority of warmongers before him, started wars when and where he calculated he would win them. The opposition to him in his own military circles in the thirties derived from the calculation of certain officers that the wars which the Führer planned would lead not to victory but defeat: they too calculated, but otherwise. With the invention and manufacture of nuclear weapons, all these calculations become obsolete and nonsensical if, as was generally supposed, a nuclear war must be suicidal or at least unacceptably costly. So any war likely to involve the use of nuclear weapons must not be started. This axiom has regulated the course of the Cold War (i.e. non-war) between the Superpowers, although its application to wars between the increasing number of other states with nuclear weapons has remained uncertain. Nuclear weapons, in other words, have been treated as unilaterally useless. They can bring death but not victory or gain. Their function, to invert Gibbon, is ostentation, not use – and they have in consequence been accumulated at enormous cost as deterrents in superabundant armouries which would be equally deterrent with a fraction of their contents. In the Superpower conflict these weapons have been a powerful force for peace because of their promise of mutual deterrence. They are what early Christians would have liked the wrath of God and the promise of damnation to provide: a guarantee of peace, albeit in the limited context of nuclear war only. It is an open question whether they will continue to impose this constraint or, with familiarity, will lose their hold over the calculations of impatient or irascible statesmen.

The same caveat applies to the impact of nuclear weapons on the imagination. The special influence of nuclear weapons has been a combination of restraints on both calculation and sentiment, but there was a short space of time when only the latter operated. So long as the United States alone possessed nuclear bombs, their use was inhibited not by the calcula-

tions but by awe. American presidents, including Truman who in 1950 authorized the making of the 'Super' or hydrogen bomb, have refused to use nuclear weapons when arguments for doing so were no less seductive than in August 1945 and when neither the USSR nor any other state had retaliatory power. This refusal was not solely due to doubts about whether the use of the bomb might be disadvantageous in a military sense. There was also the sense that to use it would be wrong and the sense too that public opinion would not countenance the incineration of several thousand Russians or Chinese or Koreans in one flash. Since 1945 some 100,000 nuclear warheads have been made and none has been used. Old morality and new public opinion have had a share in this outcome. Those with the power to make nuclear war have apparently recoiled from doing so because of its inhuman consequences as well as its military unprofitability – a powerful combination.

Yet not enough for comfort. Nevertheless, modern technology has produced another peace-keeper, less spectacular and less scaring, but perhaps more effective. In the pre-nuclear age, adversaries accumulated and refined their armouries and kept them secret. They aimed to excel and also to surprise, so that in a crisis they might win. But since nuclear weapons have, for the possessors of these weapons, put deterrence above winning, it has become expedient to let the enemy know how strong you are. (It is also much more difficult to prevent him finding out.) There is little point in assembling an overwhelming deterrent force if the enemy cannot assess it, since the greater his awareness of it the more will he be deterred. Photographic intelligence in the Second World War was incomparably better than in the first, but the deployment of photographic satellites has been an even more striking technological advance and has simultaneously transformed intelligence from the competitive business of keeping and stealing secrets into the spreading of knowledge to mutual benefit. To that extent adversaries are becoming influenced more by what they know than by what, perhaps incorrectly, they fear. Technology, which has done far more for war than for peace, has at last put a substantial weight into the other scale.

Part I

THE SOURCES OF WAR IN EUROPE

CHAPTER 1
The Background

HITLER

THERE are two extreme views about the European origins of the Second World War. One is that it was all Hitler's fault. The other is that it was a war in which Hitler, along with a lot of other people, and for much the same reasons, got involved. Both views stand condemned by their very simplicity. This book supports neither but it has to start somewhere, and it starts with Hitler and the Nazis.

To begin with Hitler is not to endorse the view that the war was Hitler's war. No great upheaval can plausibly be ascribed to a single individual, however extraordinary. The war that occurred in 1739 is called after a certain Captain Jenkins and his ear, but it was not much of a war and Captain Jenkins may, if a little spuriously, have it. But the conflict of 1939–45 was a World War and not one man's war. It embraced a number of originally distinct wars which merged. Some of these were, in a formal sense, started by Hitler, but the causes of this six-year compendium of fighting in Europe have to be examined in terms of much more than Hitler, or the Nazis, or Germany, or even of Europe. A World War has necessarily complex origins.

But it does not follow that Hitler was a man or a politician like any other. He was not. On the contrary, he was decidedly outside the normal run of men and of statesmen, and the things that made him different contributed to war. He saw human affairs as a conflict; he portrayed this conflict as a moral one in which he had a role which justified every means; yet morally speaking he was, by any ordinary standards, himself a criminal who used murder openly and massively. Such beliefs and such behaviour cannot fail, if allied with power, to promote war.

Hitler, however, was not the demiurge. He could not create or even destroy in a vacuum, and there were, without him, the makings of war in the world and the makings of the sort of wars which were begun like a spreading fire in the years 1939–41.

To see how Hitler and the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933 it is necessary to understand not only Hitler and the Nazis but also Germany in 1933, and in order to understand the Germany of that time it

is necessary to ask questions about the Europe of which Germany had been geographically and culturally a part centuries before Hitler was heard of.

Adolf Hitler was born in April 1889. In January 1933, at the age of forty-three, he became Chancellor of the German Reich. Six years later Germany invaded Poland and so began Europe's part of the Second World War. These are three facts among countless others which belong to the history of the sources in the Second World War. They are cardinal facts. Without them things would have been very different. But by themselves they explain nothing. The war was not the work of one man or one nation but a phenomenon which punctuated the course of Europe's history and the whole world's.

Adolf Hitler's father Alois was the illegitimate son of Maria Schicklgruber. Alois took the name of Hiedler or Hitler after Maria's husband, who may have fathered him before the marriage. Alois was a reasonably well-off minor official, inclined to be self-indulgent and quick-tempered, something of a womanizer. He died in 1903 at the age of sixty-six after having married three times. His third wife bore him six children, of whom only Adolf and a sister Paula survived beyond childhood. Adolf did poorly at school and was difficult at home. From elementary school he went to a *Realschule* and not to a *Gymnasium* which was the goal of the cleverer children or of those with the more ambitious parents. He left school at sixteen and stayed at home, spending his time drawing and making plans for buildings. He dreamed of being asked to design a new municipal theatre for the city of Linz. When he was eighteen he went to Vienna with a competence which was supplemented shortly afterwards when his mother died and he got a small pension. He also sponged on a penurious aunt. He wanted to go to the Academy of Fine Arts but failed the examination. He lived at first quite well but as his money gave out he became not only idle but increasingly lonely, shabby and bitter. He earned a little money by copying pictures; a friend hawked them for him; he was a pavement artist without a pavement. He became a middle-class misfit in a lower-class environment. He was humiliated by this decline and also shocked by what he saw. Years later in *Mein Kampf* he referred to the 'economic misery' of the companions he had at this time and to the 'crudeness of their habits and morals and the low level of their cultural development'. He also noted the fear which grips a social group when it sees itself falling down the social scale and becoming classed with the lowest workers. He looked around for someone to blame.

Vienna, in its last years as an imperial city, a polyglot centre dominated by Germans who were nevertheless fearful of losing their dominant posi-

tion, was overcrowded and short of housing. The poor and destitute congregated in homes and rest-rooms. Hitler was among them. Here he picked up the common grouse that things would be much better if only Jews and foreigners – especially Czechs – were not allowed to get all the jobs. When things were specially bad this grumbling turned to hatred. Some Austrian politicians played on it and Hitler may have learned in Vienna how potent a weapon racial prejudice can be, for the forerunners of the Austrian Nazis were already at work scaring German Gentiles with the prospect of a flood of undesirable aliens who would overwhelm them economically and besmirch the purity of their race. Statistics were invoked to increase repugnance and envy. Between the middle of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of the First World War the Jewish population of the city rose from 2 per cent to nearly 9 per cent, and in Hitler's time Jews gained more than a quarter of all the places in secondary schools and university. Financial or sexual scandals were exaggerated or invented. Hitler himself swallowed the story that the city's prostitutes were run by a Jewish ring, when it is very unlikely that they were run by a ring at all. Hitler's description of Jewry in *Mein Kampf* as the 'bacillus which destroys humankind', a pestilence like the Black Death, was probably formulated during his years in Vienna, and he specifically wrote of Vienna as the 'ancient nursery of German culture' battened on by 'promiscuous swarms of foreigners'.

In 1913 Hitler left Vienna, probably in order to evade military service. He went to Munich but was traced by the Austrian authorities and summoned back to Austria, where, however, he was pronounced unfit to serve. He returned to Munich. His circumstances were still wretched and he lived the life of an urban beachcomber until war broke out and he joined a Bavarian regiment. The army and the war provided him with activity and a social framework; he became a corporal and won the Iron Cross Second Class and – a rarity for an NCO – First Class. He was in hospital after a gas attack when the Germans collapsed on the western front in 1918. He never served on the eastern front.

After the war Hitler returned once more to Munich. Bavaria had ceased to be a kingdom within the German empire and had become a province within a German republic. This change increased rather than diminished the Bavarians' dislike for Prussia and for centralized government. Moreover, after a brief communist phase, initiated and extinguished by violence, authority in Munich passed to right-wing groups which were at odds with the more left-wing government in Berlin. They were also at odds with one another. There were monarchists who wanted to restore the independent Bavaria which had existed before Bismarck's time; separatists with vaguer

but similar aspirations; protagonists of a south German union between Catholic Bavaria and Catholic Austria. Hitler, while sharing the general antipathy to the central government in Berlin, wanted neither the restoration of the Bavarian royal house nor union with the Austria which he despised. He was employed in the Press and News Section of the army headquarters in Munich, was appointed a *Bildungsoffizier* (a cultural instructor or ideological education officer) and was detailed to investigate, among other things, a new political party called the German Workers' Party – DAP. He joined the party, became its star platform performer, provided it with a programme and gave it a new name – the National Socialist German Workers' Party, NSDAP. His military superiors were not only happy to see a member of their staff, still not demobilized, engaging openly in politics in this way; later they also put up some money to enable the party to buy a newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Hitler was put on his political feet by the army and when he left the army in April 1920 he was the leader of a party which was similar to a number of other parties except that it had a startling future before it. Post-war Munich saw many parties spring up, wilt and die. They appealed to those who were afraid of Bolshevism, afflicted by defeat in war or crippled by inflation, and they offered an escape into a nationalism which dilated on the glories of the German past and the wickedness of other nations with the implication that the glories could be revived and the wicked put down. Their programmes combined this nationalism with a sort of socialism in so far as they offered the little man protection against the communist commissar on the one hand and the capitalist banker on the other.

Munich provided Hitler with a second political novitiate. Vienna had taught him to hate Jews and had given him glimpses of how to play on popular prejudices and fears. Munich added hatred of Bolshevism, further training in the uses of propaganda, the conviction that the base of political power was mass support, and the further conviction that the way to win this support was not by reasoning but by stirring up emotions. He picked up the idea that Jews and Bolsheviks were equally loathsome and so could be treated as essentially the same thing. His experiences showed him that an audience is better captured by a 'systematically one-sided approach' than by a balanced evaluation of a problem which allows the audience to wonder whether the speaker is himself really convinced of the truth of what he is preaching. This second novitiate closed with a bang and a valuable lesson. In 1923 Hitler staged a putsch. He did so in alliance with General Erich Ludendorff, one of the military heroes of the war, who suffered abnormally from the stings of defeat because his own loss of nerve in 1918 had contributed to it. The putsch was a farcical failure, but

the association with Ludendorff gave Hitler the attention of the whole nation. At his trial he announced that he was a man 'born to be a dictator'. He was sentenced to prison for two years, served nine months, did some thinking and wrote *Mein Kampf*. The lesson he learned was that he should try to gain control of the state by constitutional means and not by frontal assault and never against the army.

Mein Kampf, a mixture of autobiography and political manifesto, was an immensely successful book which sold so well that Hitler eventually made a fortune out of it. It is a long book in bad German. Its author remained largely unknown until 1930 and was not taken seriously by many of those who did hear of him. This was a pity because for all its hyperbole *Mein Kampf* proclaimed much of what Hitler wanted to do and how. As a politician Hitler was an unnatural mixture of the normal and the eccentric. After the 1923 putsch he superficially adopted the normal forms of party organization, speech-making and publicity, but he also adapted them up to and beyond the point of distortion. His conformity, so far as it went, reflected his caution and shrewdness, but it was far from being a complete index to his character for his grip on his party was autocratic and intolerant, his speech-making took place in a setting of ostentatiously armed henchmen, party meetings became hierophantic rallies quite unlike the meetings of normal political parties, he was uncommonly uninhibited by scruple and an unrestrained liar (who may have believed what he said while he was saying it but who also believed that lying paid), and he was prepared to use violence whenever and however it served his purpose. In the organization of his party he insisted from the first on his personal ascendancy and refused to allow even his principal colleagues to have views of their own; in his speech-making he was conspicuously violent in what he said and how he said it; and in his propaganda, his mass meetings and the dress and deportment of his followers he deliberately gave his party the appearance, as he himself said, of 'a political fighting force and not a debating society'. If on the one hand he was using the accepted implements of politics, he was also transforming them.

Hitler did not have the mind of a statesman but rather an impresario and improviser. Where a Bismarck imposed himself on events, Hitler imposed himself on people by the fervour of his personality. He was a leader of men first and a framer of policies only a poor second. He was not an original thinker or theorizer but he was adept at picking up ideas which suited him and at taking the opportunities given him by others; he knew how to wait for his chances and how to seize them, and he was guided by certain basic preconceptions. He had a view of history. He was a Manichee, a man who sees the world and its history in terms of black

and white, good and evil, god and devil. He saw two powers face to face in 'a world of everlasting conflict where the one creature feeds on the other and the death of the weaker implies the life of the stronger'. For such people the problem is to identify the good and the evil. Hitler saw no difficulty here. He defined the party of the good as the Aryans – a 'race' or biological group which was superior and so had to be tended, preserved and improved by political leaders acting like farm bailiffs.

This definition of good and evil in terms of race stemmed from certain European philosophers and historians who had, during the nineteenth century, evolved the view that races and nations could be graded on a scale of merit and that those lower down the scale would for ever remain below their betters higher up. This way of thinking was fortified by Darwin's contributions to biological science which, taken up by social scientists, were thought to show that social groups, like natural species, evolved to higher stages by a process of conflict involving – and justifying – the extinction of some groups and the survival and expansion of others. Thus backwardness, an inferior culture, was seen as a natural phenomenon rather than as a social challenge, as something to be observed rather than something to be changed. Hitler imbibed these ideas. Conflict, he said, was 'the father of all things'. The German people had to be embattled and purified, preserved from the taint of mixed blood which had caused the downfall of the ancient civilizations; it had also to be trained in devoted obedience to its Leader, to whom had been vouchsafed a vision and a mission to save the world. But to save the world from what?

The party of evil was even more easily identifiable than the party of the good. It consisted of the Jews who, ever since the time of Moses, had been labouring with diabolical ingenuity to destroy nothing less than the human race itself. Hitler's anti-semitism was a genuine and potent hatred. It was sharpened by his ability to equate Jewry with communism. For him Lenin was the latest reincarnation of Moses, Bolshevism the latest device of Jewish malevolence and 'the most radical form of the genocide [plotted] by the Jews'. Through Marx and Lenin and Bolshevism the Jews were repeating what they had done through St Paul and Christianity: European civilization was to be destroyed by the one as Rome had been destroyed by the other. At one time or another Hitler conflated all his adversaries, all those who stood for values which he despised, with the loathed Jews, so that Jewry became a sort of cultural generic term embracing – because it had inseminated and poisoned – not only communism but also social democracy, liberalism, the intellectuals, aristocrats, international finance and Christianity. Either these would be extirpated or they would extirpate humanity. A Jewish triumph would be the 'funeral wreath of the human

race' and would leave the planet diving through space 'once again without any human life on its surface'. It was as simple and as terrible as that. The simple view, when wrong, can be the worst because it removes doubt and justifies every means. Hitler did not recoil from slaughter; it was so obviously necessary that it probably never occurred to him to consider whether it was agreeable or disagreeable. Genocide was not a moral issue but the practical application of physical means to social ends. He did not enjoy indiscriminate killing in the way that many simpler Nazis did, although he savoured personal revenge (he revelled over the films of the hangings of the conspirators of July 1944). He enjoyed secondhand descriptions of living and dying in concentration camps but was a strong anti-vivisectionist and could not stomach a demonstration of slaughter when he saw one with his own eyes.

Between the Germans or Aryans on the one hand and the Jews on the other were peoples who were neither. These peoples, of whom the Slavs were the most prominent example, did not have to be exterminated. Their function was to serve the party of the good. Their chief characteristics were their inferiority and their number. These were related terms since it is the destiny of an élite to rule over inferior hordes and use them, as for example the British did in India (Hitler admired the British empire for reasons which would have horrified the Indian Civil Service).

Nazi contempt for the Slavs merged with a far more ancient German-Slav hostility. The conflict between Germans and Slavs is a thousand years old. After the period of the great barbarian invasions and migrations in Europe the Frankish King Charles created in an era of dawning stability an empire in western Europe to match the eastern empire of Byzantium. This empire reached tentatively to the Carpathians and extinguished the alien Avar power in central Europe, but it failed to embrace the rising Slavic state of Moravia; nor did it weld the western Franks of France, still less those in Spain, to its Germanic core. This empire was shortlived. What survived was the idea of a western empire blessed by the papacy – and so essentially Italian as well as German – and distinct from Byzantium. It was revived by Charlemagne's successors in the tenth century, the Saxon emperors. By this time the place of the Avars in central Europe had been taken by the no less alien Magyars or Hungarians, whom the Saxons checked but did not exterminate. The emperors also made war on the Slavs in what is now northern Germany and on the Poles – the first Germano-Polish conflict. They made no attempt to bring the western Franks back into the empire but were even more strongly pulled towards Italy and the papacy than Charlemagne had been. This 'renovation' of the empire was clearly to include Italy but exclude the lands west of the

Rhine and Rhône. About the Slavs, however, there were doubts. Otto III (A.D. 983–1002) conceived a great western Christian empire in which other princes besides himself would have wide autonomous authority as kings. Such an empire could include non-Germans, and the Polish, Czech and Hungarian princes welcomed it and joined it. But Otto died young. His conception of the empire died with him. His successors reverted to fighting the Slavs, and the Slavs, missing an opportunity to create a countervailing empire of their own, quarrelled among themselves: the Czechs remaining in the empire, which the Poles renounced. A pattern evolved which endured, with variations, for centuries and produced in more modern times a strong German power flanked to the east by separate and weaker Polish, Czech and Hungarian ones.

By the twentieth century the opportunities created by this pattern of power were combined with racial theories and economic appetites. In the eyes of German nationalists the Slavs were biologically inferior peoples destined to become a caste of slaves; they also occupied valuable space which was needed by the Germans who, by virtue of their superiority, had every right to take it. The notion of *Lebensraum*, the idea that Germany was too small for the German race, was not invented by Hitler. It was current during the First World War and was one of the pseudo-intellectual props of the policy of *Mitteleuropa*, which aimed to establish a continental empire fit for Germans (and stretching in some versions from France into Asia Minor). Hitler appears to have been genuinely convinced of the need for *Lebensraum*, which, with his racial fantasies, constituted the basis of his foreign political attitudes. In *Mein Kampf* he wrote that National Socialism 'must attempt to remove the disproportion between our population and our living space – the latter regarded both as a source of food and as the basis of political power – between our historic past and the hopelessness of our present impotence'.

Hitler belonged to 'the race of men who dream concretely – a very dangerous breed' (the words come from Ernst Jünger's parable *The Marble Cliffs*). Taken by itself his idea that one being waxes as another declines is neither original nor startling. Goethe wrote:

> *Du musst steigen oder sinken,*
> *Du musst herrschen und gewinnen*
> *Oder dienen und verlieren,*
> *Amboss oder Hammer sein.*
>
> (Man must rise or fall, He must win and rule
> Or lose and serve, Be the anvil or the hammer.)

But there is a world of difference, in practice and in intent, between the figurative speech of a poet and the concrete programme of a practical politician with a literal mind and power at his command. Hitler's concrete dream envisaged a German nucleus of some hundred million people, flanked by subordinate federations colonized by other Germans. He did not think that this re-ordering of Europe could be effected without war, nor did he think that war was at all agreeable. He said that the next war would be extremely horrible and enormously destructive, but like so many of his contemporaries he believed it would be short. He also believed that too much peace was bad for a people and he took pleasure in the thought that a greater and more beautiful Germany would rise from the devastation, inhabited by survivors welded into a nation by their experiences and guided by a messianic leadership which would last a thousand years: Hitler was a chiliast as well as a Manichee. Some people have been tempted to judge that Hitler did not mean what he said when he indulged in language of this kind, that he got carried away; but it is equally possible to believe that he never spoke truer to his own nature than at these moments. Although cautious, he was not moderate.

Hitler's principal instrument was the Nazi Party, which, exploiting the circumstances of his day and age, he used to win power over the German people and the German state. Through the party he practised the violence, verbal and physical, whose effectiveness became increasingly contrasted with the ineffectiveness of his opponents and of the constitution. The Nazi Party was like the feudal system. In it a man was obligated to an immediate chief and also to the supreme Führer. There were Führers at every level but the supreme Führer was linked with all members of the movement by direct personal allegiance as well as through the hierarchy. The supreme Führer, besides being the apex of a pyramid, was also a unique being, infallible, prophetic, the incarnation of the general (Aryan) will: 'The will of the Führer is law.' His authority was not only absolute but he himself was irreplaceable: he could have no true successor. Successors of a sort – caliphs to Hitler's Mahomet – could be nominated, but this concession to human mortality did not detract from the urgency of fulfilling the Nazi mission in Hitler's own lifetime and while he was still in the prime of life.

This concept of the Führer was reflected in Hitler's relations both with his principal henchmen and with the generality of his followers. After the capture of power in 1933 the machinery of party and the machinery of state coexisted in a kind of semi-merger. The Weimar constitution was never abrogated – it was simply ignored – and the machinery of state was left largely intact, but power passed to numerous party agencies which

were given overlapping functions with the result that many decisions could be made only by the Führer; the bureaucracy, reduced to a state of confusion and inefficiency, was eliminated as a barrier between Führer and *Volk*, ruler and ruled. Hitler's principal lieutenants were not men of conspicuous ability and they never constituted a team. Perhaps only Goebbels was more than ordinarily talented and even Goebbels was more marked by the extremity of his devotion to Hitler than by outstanding intellect. There was little trust or friendship in the party's higher reaches and not much cooperation. The Nazi leaders feared and intrigued against each other and, at the end, against Hitler too. Hitler seems to have been neither surprised nor dismayed by this lack of solidarity, so long as it did not affect relations with himself. A suspicious man, he expected others to be suspicious too, and he built their mutual mistrust and malice into his system of government. As a result the principal organs of the party and, after 1933, of the state, were run by feudatories, and government at the top proceeded by a series of clashes. The heads of the government did not govern by talking and working together, and the supreme chief – whether as party Führer or Reich Chancellor – was a dictator conducting a wilfully discordant band which he was not particularly anxious to orchestrate. What mattered to Hitler was the obedience of his lieutenants to himself. They did not have to agree among themselves. The party was held together by the Leader's personal magnetism and not by fellowship or community of ideas. The *Führerprinzip* was hostile to ideas, since an ideologist might find himself in a conflict between his doctrine and his Führer. Alfred Rosenberg, the party's chief racial theorist, never became a figure of the first rank and was increasingly ignored by Hitler, and the Strasser brothers, leaders of the more radical groups of the Nazi Party in northern Germany, were pressed out of the party when the Führer came to have no use for their quasi-socialist ideas.

With his remoter followers the Führer's relations were special in two ways. Without the Führer the followers were nothing, so that the Nazi Party dissolved in 1945 not merely because the Nazi Reich had been defeated but because the Nazi Führer was dead; and secondly, there was an intimacy between Führer and rank and file, a mutual dependence, which gave the movement a democratic force based, not on majorities or voting (a degrading exercise), but on the identification of the leader with the led, expressed by the former's unquestioned authority. The function of the party organization was to 'communicate a definite idea . . . to ensure its conversion from theory to reality' and to do these things with as little intervening 'machinery' as possible. This relationship between party leader and party members was repeated at second remove and transmitted

from the movement to the even wider circle of the German people as a whole. While membership of the party was limited and pride (and profit) in membership preserved undiluted, the outer circle of sympathizers was progressively enlarged to create a wider mass movement which, like the party members but less intensively, was attached to Hitler personally and which, because of this emotional attachment, had a stake in his success. Hitler realized the importance of getting the masses to feel but not to think. The Führer divulged his inmost thoughts in a narrow circle whence they percolated to the Nazi élite, thence again into the party in general, beyond the party to the people and beyond the people to the outside world. At each stage they lost something in the telling and so became assimilable by people who would otherwise have rejected them as mad and bad. In such a system the élite and the leader himself could afford to propagate preposterous ideas and even to do so cynically, because the party followers and the people as a whole were blinded by their devotion and their distance from the centre. Hermann Rauschning, with whom Hitler had long and intimate talks until their breach in 1934, relates that Hitler once told him that he was well aware that there was no such thing as race, but that he needed it for his political and salvationist purposes. A saviour of the human race may well permit himself a touch of cynicism. Nor is it incompatible with fanaticism.

The Nazi party served two main purposes. Through its ideology it united the people with their leader and through its techniques it perfected the elimination of opposition. It was not a party in the ordinary sense of the word since it could never be satisfied with partial allegiance or partial dominance. It presented a comprehensive, total way of life, explaining everything, past and future, and regulating everything, public and private. Hitler did not achieve this purpose by catechizing or by arguing. He neither instructed his audiences nor explained things to them. He presented views which, half inarticulately, they were already disposed to welcome, and one reason for his success was his ability to appeal to a variety of different types of people – the disgruntled generation of the First World War, the middle classes downgraded by inflation, the deprived classes which had never played a part in German politics before, youth, the nationalism of the old order and the nationalism of the masses. But although he appealed to these classes, he did not appeal to them as classes. At a meeting addressed by Hitler the message went from Hitler to each listener separately. The audience was a crowd of distinct depersonalized objects. In the aggregate they formed not classes but a mass, 'uniform [as he said once at a marchpast] not only in ideas, but even the facial expression is almost the same . . . a hundred thousand men become

a single type'. Each man and woman, whether marching past the Führer or standing in a packed crowd to listen to him, had his eyes and soul focused onto a man who had placed himself in a unique position in German political life: sufficiently remote from the normal political structure which was crumbling (Hitler never got himself elected to the Reichstag and so never operated as a party political leader in that restricted field) and at the same time intensely close to the magnetized individual who wanted a Leader rather than a choice between leaders.

Hitler used fear and persuasion to an unsurpassed degree. Physical terror was one of his principal political weapons. To quote *The Marble Cliffs* again: 'A cloud of fear preceded the Chief Ranger like the mountain mist that presages the storm. Fear enveloped him, and I am convinced that therein far more than in his own person lay his power.' The Nazis thought nothing of assaulting their opponents, torturing them and murdering them – frequently with fanatical brutality. Sadistic thugs were given a licence instead of being shut up, and this licence was accorded to them by Hitler not out of indifference to the finer standards of behaviour but with the positive intention of assuring his hold over Germany in this way. Overt opposition died and even individual thinking was stifled. The dominance of the party was rendered as nearly total as it could humanly be by fear. Education, controlled after 1933 by the certifiable Dr Rust, became a means for destroying the individual's capacity to form opinions and indoctrinating the young with Nazi versions of history and ethics (and even with German, as opposed to inferior, mathematics) through rewritten textbooks and politically reliable teachers. Teachers who did not toe the line were reported by the Hitler Youth, which came virtually to control the schools. Boys and girls spent their leisure hours in uniformed youth associations where the process was continued. Books, plays, the press and broadcasting were brought under Nazi control and censorship. Justice became a farce. It was, said Hitler, 'a means of ruling'. The courts were used to complete the suppression of the individual; the legal profession was regimented, the Führer had the power to quash proceedings, his deputy the power to increase inadequate sentences in cases involving offences against the Führer, the state or the party; illegality was legalized by the invention of the principle of 'hidden right'; an advocate who got his client acquitted would see him being bundled into a police van as he left the court. The whole of life was subordinated to the Nazi purpose with the concentration camps, or the mere knowledge of their existence, in reserve to quell those who felt like protesting openly or, given the perfection of delation within the family, even in private.

This colossal subversion of civilized values was acquiesced in by the

German people and to some extent by Europe too. Only the war put an end to it. What permitted this acquiescence?

Hitler joined an ancient practice with a modern force – ritual with the mass meeting, mumbo-jumbo focused on the microphone. In great squares and open spaces, which he converted into cathedrals of Nazism, he filled ordinary Germans with a sense of destiny, giving them a wonderful vision of unreality as an escape from the chanciness of life and also laying bare to them, with telling candour, how much he had already achieved by violence and how much more he was going to achieve the same way. His performances were brilliantly staged but they would have remained historically inconsequential if they had not fitted the time and place of their presentation.

GERMANY

Germany had been something of an anomaly in Europe for more than a century before Hitler came to power. The Germans did not form a compact group in Europe like the French or the English, nor did they create a nation state; and they failed to find adequate outlets beyond Europe for their power, talents and ambitions. For both these reasons they were the more disposed towards expansion and conquest in Europe.

Modern Europe is a patchwork of conscious nationalisms expressed or seeking expression in statehood. Some of these have been recognizable entities for centuries but the bursting time of European nationalism came with the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. At this period the dynast, an individual with hereditary right and a personal demesne (his kingdom), came to seem old fashioned. Two changes, the one domestic and the other international, were involved: a shift of political power within the state and a redefinition of the boundaries of the state. The first of these favoured 'the people' at the expense of the dynast; the second was based on the idea of 'the nation', as opposed to history or geography or power, as the criterion for deciding where one state stopped and the next one should begin. The new ideas were most effective in western Europe, where the making of Italy was their outstanding advertisement; they were least effective in eastern Europe, where polyglot autocracies continued until well into the twentieth century. In the centre of Europe Germany looked as though it had developed into a nation state but the appearance was deceptive.

German nationalism was promoted by reaction against French cultural and military hegemony. It asserted that Germans had a separate identity

and the right to mind their own affairs instead of being part of Napoleon's empire and of a French-dominated cosmopolitan culture. It aimed not only to liberate Germans but also to unite them and so helped to produce a powerful and efficient state out of an agglomeration of feeble ones. But if German nationalism looked at this stage very much like other European nationalisms, it diverged as the Germans both began to think of themselves as not only distinct but superior and at the same time failed to achieve a nation state to focus and absorb their national energies.

German writers and thinkers made much of the nation state and provided the most famous of the state's champions in the nineteenth century: the Reich created in 1870 was designed by Bismarck and regarded by almost everybody as the German nation's state. But Bismarck's Germany was incomplete. It was a federation of German-speaking states dominated by Prussia and excluding not only Austria, which was only partly German, but also numerous Germans scattered about eastern Europe; the Germans were too dispersed and too intermingled with other peoples to constitute a nation state. Bismarck's Germany was not a national gathering together, like Cavour's Italy. It was an extension of Prussian power, achieved by defeating Austria and France, and a consolidation of class power, achieved by blanketing German liberalism and passing enough social legislation to take the wind out of the German socialists' sails. It was therefore incomplete not only in the sense that many Germans were left outside it but also because whole classes of Germans within the state were excluded from effective political activity and remained subordinated to the socially superior ruling classes: it was a nation state neither in its geographical extent nor in its social cohesion. It was unstable and tense both within and at its borders. Unlike Italy, it was not even a geographical expression. If anything, it was a linguistic aspiration seeking political form and traversed by social rifts. Since it was also the most central of European states and became the most powerful, its malaise dominated European affairs for a century.

German nationalism foiled of what was, in nineteenth-century terms, its natural outcome turned to racialism. Germanism materialized as *Reich* and *Volk*, a pair of politically disruptive and often mystical concepts. A *Reich* is a claim to dominion; a *Volk* is a people linked not by habitat but by race. *Reich* and *Volk* combined imply racial dominion. (When, later, the Nazis chanted: *Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer*, they were acclaiming the political activation of this dual concept.) At the same time the desire to establish a separate identity for Germans was replaced by the idea that Germans were not only distinct but superior. The line between pride and arrogance is a thin one and the assertion of an independent personality

passes very easily into a claim to superiority. The Germans were neither alone nor unusual in thinking themselves better than other people, but from early in the nineteenth century Germans began to make extraordinary claims for Germanism as the embodiment of superior virtues deposited by God in people who spoke the German language. Racialists see history as a conflict between races – an alternative to Karl Marx's explanation of history as a conflict between classes – and racialists conscious of their own superiority see a world in which they are bound to do battle with other races and win. Nineteenth-century German racialist ideology postulated an Aryan race of purer, ideal human beings, the founders and custodians of all human culture. History and science were invoked to prove these unhistorical and unscientific postulates, and ancient racial gods were resuscitated to give spiritual support to this denial of the essential equality of man which had been preached for centuries in the tradition of Stoics and Christians. The pseudo-science of phrenology, which enjoyed a curious vogue in an age avid for anything which might be called scientific, measured the differences between Aryan and other skulls and when these outward signs of distinction proved disappointingly trivial, racialists fell back on inner measurements of souls which, though they were more difficult to demonstrate, were also more difficult to deny. Darwin's theories were also used. The world of men (*The Origin of Species* dealt with plants and animals) was divided into the fit and the unfit, and the survival of the fittest was taken to justify and even require the extermination of the unfit. Conflict, in any case inevitable, was the means for the improvement of the race and therefore also noble. There was no such thing as a right to live – let alone a right to liberty or the pursuit of happiness. Human rights were replaced by strife as the path of progress.

German racialism, having evolved from German nationalism, took a further step and became imperialist. Where a race and a state do not coincide the racialist may achieve his aims either by the migration of outlying members of the race into the fatherland or by the extension of the rule of the race to all parts of the world inhabited by the race or needed by it. German minorities in foreign countries were, by definition, superior people living under the rule of their inferiors. Either they must be repatriated or German rule must be extended to cover these areas. The second solution was the more appealing. Hence the notion of a Greater Germany, a German Reich extending to areas well beyond any normally accepted confines of Germany but where Germany ought to rule because some members of the German *Volk* lived there. Towards the end of the nineteenth century various Pan-German groups emerged, both in Vienna with its windows on the east and in Berlin with its consciousness of

superabundant power, to advocate what was in effect a German empire in Europe. They were not inspired solely by ideology. Unlike the other great powers of Europe Germany had found no worlds to conquer outside Europe. While the western European nations conquered overseas and the Russians conquered in Asia, the Germans – partly because they were too late – conquered nowhere. Bismarck was indifferent to colonies and Germany's interest in Africa at the end of the nineteenth century was half-hearted as well as belated. So Germany's field of conquest became eastern or middle (*Mittel*) Europe. Bismarck himself preferred that Germany should live in a state of equilibrium with the Russian and Habsburg empires to the east of it, but the German-ness of the Habsburg empire was a standing invitation to call Germans to go east, to regard the Slavs as their Red Indians or 'fuzzy-wuzzies', to embark on one of the great movements of European expansion and colonization – only this time within Europe itself and at the expense of peoples whose systems were neither so alien nor so technically backward as the Asian and African societies which other Europeans subjugated. Like all imperialists the Germans easily convinced themselves that they were benefiting inferior peoples by interfering with them – until eventually the Nazis dispensed with the idea of benefiting anybody but themselves.

These racial and imperial strands in the modern German experience were picked up by the Nazis. Nazism was a product of elements in German history and elements in European history. Its peculiarly evil character was a consequence of amalgamating the worst in German public life with the worst in European public life. It was the German version of European Fascism, combining special German features with the general characteristics of the wider, European genus to which it belonged. Its outstanding special features were the demand for *Lebensraum*, which was a euphemism for imperial conquest, and its anti-semitism. Its special victims therefore were the Jews and the Slavs. These two elements were not unconnected, for the Pan-Germans of the late nineteenth century who pointed Germany towards an imperial destiny not in the sense of Bismarck's compact central European Reich but as a vast overlordship over Slav peoples and lands beyond the strictly German horizon, were also markedly anti-semitic.

During most of the nineteenth century Germans, with some reservations in regard to Austrian Germans, were not pre-eminently anti-semitic. Nor is anti-semitism a necessary ingredient of Fascism, although it has been a common one; the Italian fascists, for example, were comparatively free of anti-semitism until they imported it by a process of reverse Lend-Lease from Germany in the closing phase of the *fascismo*. German anti-semitism seems to have been mainly an indigenous growth coinciding

with the growth of German political consciousness. Pan-German anti-semitism was an expression of resentment against people who insisted on being different and who refused to be assimilated to Gentile society and full participation in the German dream. (Hitler's original contribution to anti-semitism was to abandon this demand that Jews become Germans, to insist on the contrary that they could never be Germans and to emphasize the unbridgeable gap by marking each Jew with the star of David.) Although many Jews – not least in Germany in the 1920s – were assimilated into Gentile society when they themselves wished to take this course and when the surrounding circumstances favoured it, they remained liable to be singled out and attacked whenever the Gentile society had a grievance to be vented somewhere. In the latter part of the nineteenth century they were used by conservatives to pin unpopular ideas on: liberal ideas feared by the privileged classes were characterized as Jewish in order to make these classes revile the Jews. This use of racial prejudice for political purposes was begun by Bismarck and adopted and magnified by Alexander III in Russia, where anti-semitism has continued to be exploited in this way ever since. The appearance of the Jews is often markedly recognizable (though it has been embarrassingly discovered that a number of Jews have blue eyes and fair hair). They have a religion and a language which they share with nobody else. In Europe they have performed a function as useful as it is often unpopular – that of the capitalist who provides money for other people's enterprises or follies – but in the nineteenth century they preserved more of their unpopularity than their usefulness as Europe's growing Gentile bourgeoisie began to supplant them as the providers of money. The state found them less useful as it turned to financing its needs more by taxation and less by loans. Moreover, the Jews lacked two characteristics which seemed natural to everybody else: the Jew had no state and, in the state in which he lived, counted as a Jew rather than as a member of an economic or social class. In a society of classes and in a polity of nation states he was a misfit; the fact of his belonging to something which was neither state nor class fostered suspiciousness of exclusive racial loyalties and the myth of machinations behind the scenes; and his exclusion from the class structure helped his defamers to represent him as an enemy of all social structures. In the heyday of his usefulness the Jew had often been close to power and when his usefulness declined his power was thought to have become covert rather than diminished.

Racism endangered the Jews because they were the pre-eminent example of a self-chosen race. Any other self-chosen race was bound to clash with them and hate them. The Germans did so more than most and ascribed to them all the vices which were the counterparts of Aryan

virtues. The German master race arraigned the Jews and the Nazi party became the principal instrument for destroying them. Again, Hitler did not invent anti-semitism; he gave it a special twist and he provided the tools and the opportunities for satisfying it. And the Nazi state did not protect these people within its borders because in the Nazi scheme of things the state was not an instrument for preserving public order or securing the rights of men but an instrument for furthering the destiny of the German *Volk*. The S A sang:

> *Erst müssen Juden bluten,*
> *Erst dann sind wir befreit.*
> (First must Jewish blood be shed,
> Only then will we be free.)

EUROPE

The ending of the old European order, by the dissolution of its economic and social foundations and consequently of its political structures, was effected by a variety of forces which together can be called democratic. Their general direction was to extend, in the name of freedom, equality and fraternity, the narrow bases of élitist societies and exclusive policies. The history of this movement, which is the stuff of the modern world, cannot be resumed here even in the briefest compass, but it is relevant to point out that it has been both divided and opposed. The division created eventually the two broad and increasingly discordant streams called liberal democracy and totalitarian democracy (that is to say, communism) – both rooted in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment but diverging over two fundamental issues, the former regarding politics as a part of human activity where the latter regards politics as comprehending the totality of human activity, the former giving a higher value than the latter to individual choice and wellbeing in the inevitable conflict between the individual and the group. The opposition to democracy has been authoritarian, the rejection of the democratic principle of extension and the reassertion of the right of special men or special groups of men to lay down the law. Where democracy diffuses power, authoritarianism concentrates it once more.

This authoritarian opposition too has been divided. It has conservative and radical branches. The conservatives have tried to arrest democratic change, or to minimize and delay it; they have been ambivalent about democracy, usually accepting for pragmatic reasons a measure of what in principle they dislike. The radical authoritarians on the other hand have

been frankly anti-democratic and have set out to destroy democracy and revert to a political and social order dominated by a special caste or individual, although not necessarily by the same castes or individuals who were invested with power under the *anciens régimes*. Fascism is the outcome of this active and radical, as opposed to the passive and conservative, opposition to democracy. Mussolini defined Fascism as opposition to the principles of 1789, by which he meant opposition to what others have called the Rights of Man. It was also opposed to the Enlightenment, to reason. It preferred violence: fascists have been bent on destroying an existing democratic order and on doing so by deed and not by argument.

The politics of Europe in the last 200 years have revolved round the ideas summed up in the phrase 'the French Revolution', and the political terms in common use – such as right and left, progressive and reactionary – relate to attitudes towards those ideas. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 sharpened the conflict typified by 1789 and, with conservatives often passive or confused about their role, there developed in the twentieth century a triangle of forces and eventually war between the temporarily reunited streams of liberal and totalitarian democracy and their fascist foes who captured the power of the state in various parts of Europe where weak government by conservatives or democrats helped them to do so.

Modern Europe has had to digest industrial, demographic and technical revolutions and at the same time a questioning of accepted values which has amounted to a social and cultural mutation. These changes have been very unsettling. The fundamental change has been the growth of populations and the growth of towns, so that at one and the same time there were quite quickly many more people, many of them living in a completely new way. The change in the demographic and geographical patterns produced social changes. Old ties were loosened and aristocratic and paternalist structures, based mainly on land and caste, were eroded by the motor forces of the Enlightenment (emancipation from dogma and despot) and of the Revolution (power to the people). The new urban classes began to exert pressure and command sympathy. What they wanted was vague – less misery and poverty, more fairness, more self-respect – but it implied upheaval. The traditional givers of laws and *mores* (churches, kings and nobles), and the laws and *mores* themselves, lost authority under rational scrutiny and popular suspicion. It was not immediately clear what the new values were nor where they were to come from. New élites, professing a democratic instead of an aristocratic faith, emerged to take or share the power which was slipping from the exclusive grasp of the old régime and which, owing to technical revolutions in communications and manufacturing, was rapidly becoming much greater

than ever before. For the most part power was shared, whether in concert or in a parliamentary system of alternating bouts between nostalgic conservatives and moderate progressives. The result was an orderly but slow development, too slow for those who maintained that no really radical social changes had yet occurred, too decided for the radical forces of the Right which were opposed, not so much to change, but to democracy. There was therefore an ever present possibility of a reversal of alliances in which the conservative opponents of change and the fascist opponents of democracy would join forces against the Left despite the fact that the one group was essentially passive and the other essentially revolutionary. The outstanding example of such a combination was the government in which the aristocratic Papen served as Vice-Chancellor under the fascist Hitler as Chancellor. As early as 1850 Palmerston, in the Don Pacifico debate in the House of Commons, recognized two varieties of radicalism, the reactionary as well as the Jacobin, but it was not until a century later that the fascist combination of reaction with violence was widely recognized as a potent and pernicious threat to European societies.

The fascist leader, like the democrat, had his ideological roots in the eighteenth century, but whereas the democrat put his faith in reason and debate the fascist believed in the power and virtue of the will. Traditionally the high road to right action has been knowledge discovered by reason; the function of reason was to uncover the knowable which, when revealed, was common property. Reason and knowledge assumed therefore universal values. The will, however, was personal. Whereas the individual impelled by reason was moving towards agreement with other individuals, the individual impelled by will was at least as likely to be moving towards a clash with other individuals. The will was subjective rather than communal, aggressive rather than irenic. The will was seen as a creative force in its own right operating in a world in which the objective reality sought by the reasonable man of the Enlightenment was an illusion. There were no external criteria of rightness, only inner promptings. Therefore the strong-willed had right on his side, and the stronger his will the more right he was. What was real was the product of each individual's inner self, and this product was *ipso facto* valid as well as real, so that the individual was entitled and indeed under some compulsion to make his will prevail. His destiny was that of a sovereign creator in a world of his own which impinged upon the personal worlds of other sovereign creators; it was not his lot, nor was it within a man's capability, to discover a single world in which all would participate, because such a world did not exist to be discovered. The world was not a semi-known and orderly system but an unknowable and anarchic non-system.

The consequences of this view were conflict and uncertainty. Both cried

out for leadership. What sort of leadership? With knowledge and reason at a discount the emotions were promoted to a dominant role and the intensity of a man's feelings were rated above the soundness of his judgement: there was a deeper, inward truth in the soul by comparison with which the reason was superficial, and the leader was to be distinguished by the qualities of this ill-defined, unlocated, non-rational, even irrational soul. He was above all a doer, an activist, and whatever he wanted to do was right, including crushing weaker beings. He was unpredictable but he was to be trusted and followed none the less, since his unpredictability was only in the eye of the beholder; so long as his acts and commands issued from the dictates of his will they were not to be questioned – and it was as impossible to prove, as it was imprudent to suppose, that they issued from anywhere else. The Italian fascists summed up the position in the slogan: *Credere! Ubbedire! Combattere!* (Believe! Obey! Fight!). The fascist leader was also a saviour and redeemer, more of a superman than a man, half-way between god and man, what the ancients called a hero. By dubbing him Duce and Führer – leader in Italian and German – the fascists usurped a term to which they had no exclusive right, for Churchill and de Gaulle were leaders too. What distinguishes the fascist chief is not leadership, but the role of hero. The hero disdains reason (Homer's heroes never engage in rational debate) and prevails by the weight of authority and by killing. His criteria are quantitative – the bigger the better, whether the subject matter is the length of a speech, the volume of sound at a concert or the number of deaths in a slaughter.

His antithesis is the representative leader who derives his authority from parliaments and elections and depends on a choate body of opinion as opposed to the inchoate mass following on which fascist power is based. In countries like France and Great Britain which have had strong rationalist or parliamentary traditions fascist leaders, although they existed, made little headway. These countries did not go fascist. But their right-wing leaders felt drawn to foreign fascists and praised Mussolini and Hitler and later Franco, who were regarded by conservatives as ready helps against the extreme Left and as performing the salutary task of getting their countries out of messes into which they had fallen. Afraid of rather than familiar with Marxism, they misinterpreted Fascism. Fascist movements and fascist leaders were in truth revolutionary and dynamic, but because they had also certain characteristics which were conventionally dubbed right-wing, they were frequently mistaken for a rather uncouth kind of conservative. The characteristic British and French leaders of this period were capable rather than intelligent, well educated only in terms of an educational system designed to produce mere custodians,

suspicious of and so ill equipped to understand new ideas and forces. They could see that communism aimed to subvert the existing order of which they were themselves a part – the communists themselves said so – but they failed to draw the same conclusion about the no less revolutionary fascists, whom they persisted in regarding as respectable. In some degree they were bemused by their own standards and their own democratic precepts. They could not believe that people who said such crazy things as the Nazis meant what they said; the British in particular took little account of theories which they considered to have little bearing on practical politics; they felt that a movement which attracted millions of votes could not be as bad as surface appearances sometimes suggested: thus were they able to turn a deaf ear to the very explicit statements of aims by Nazi and other fascist leaders. (In 1933 Hitler said publicly that the democracies had fortunately not understood what Nazism was about, for otherwise they could have stopped it.) In political circles Neville Chamberlain was a representative figure, hoping that Hitler and the bulk of his party were more sensible than the rowdies of the SA, hoping that they would be tamed by office and responsibility, regarding the Nazis as just another party in the twenties and then from 1930 as a necessary one for the working of government, gradually losing heart and at the end doing his best to avoid war in an impossible situation which had been created partly by his own incomprehension. Outside political circles many leaders, including in particular Roman Catholic hierarchs from the Pope downwards, were over-indulgent – to say the least – to Fascism and to atheistic Nazism because they hated communism more. The propertied classes, underrating the threat of Fascism because they compared it with communism, not expecting to be killed by fascists or even to have to surrender too much of their power and property, had no strong objection to helping fascists with their money. The march of the fascists on Rome in 1922 was a harmless parade compared with the Bolshevik Revolution of five years earlier and life in Mussolini's Italy was disagreeable only for socialists and liberals. Mussolini was appointed Prime Minister by the King in due constitutional form, as Hitler was appointed Chancellor by Hindenburg, and people who read of these appointments in newspapers without seeing for themselves what was going on in streets and prisons were confirmed in their prejudgements that these strange new groups were not revolutionaries in the accepted guillotine sense but champions of order and stability. If King Victor Emanuel of Italy and President von Hindenburg of Germany chose to act thus, what right had any foreigner to object or interfere? It was odd but not outrageous, and if socialists and Jews were having a rough time, they were probably getting no more, or not much more, than they de-

served. The ruling classes of western Europe consisted on the whole of cultivated and humane men, but they were men who had also acquired a certain stolidity in the face of misfortune – their own or other people's – which could amount to callousness. They were used to ruling not only their own countries but large empires as well, populated by strange peoples to whom they owed justice and sound administration but over whom it was undesirable for practical reasons to sentimentalize. They were acquainted with 'inferior' races as well as 'inferior' classes, so that the social structure and the imperial experience of Europe combined to establish an order of values and a pragmatic indifference to inequalities which could sometimes be reconciled with ideals of justice and decency only by not inquiring too closely into what was going on. In sum the fascist attitude to socialists and Jews was not utterly different from the imperialist attitude to Blacks. The difference was one of degree, and differences of degree can be minimized or dismissed more easily than most. Hitler, in this respect as in many others, was the supremely disgusting example of something which was not so alien to the European mentality: the tendency to put different kinds of people into different sealed categories and then treat them differently. What his contemporaries, other than his victims, refused to see in time was that the degree of difference in the treatment was so extreme that it amounted to a difference in kind and went in any case far beyond the bounds of what Europe had learnt to call civilized.

CHAPTER 2

From Versailles to the Soldiers' Oath: 1919–34

THE First World War did not destroy German power. As in France after 1870 and Germany once more after 1945 recovery was swift. It was, however, punctuated by economic distress at the beginning and the end of the twenties which had profound political consequences, shaped by Germany's refusal to accept the verdict of 1918 and by resentment against the terms of the peace treaty. Nor did the war destroy much of Germany's pre-war social structure. The departure of the Hohenzollerns and other monarchs gave an appearance of political and social change which masked the fact that the rest of the ruling establishment remained in being and in power. Above all the army remained, until 1934, the arbiter of German politics.

Germany's military traditions were a legacy of its Prussian origins. The Prussian army made Prussia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and transmitted its traditions to the German Reich in the nineteenth. These traditions included the social exclusiveness of its officers as an aristocratic caste, the military virtues of rectitude and obedience, and a somewhat vague and unspecified position as the guardians of the state's wellbeing as well as its frontiers. The creation of the Reich in the nineteenth century reaffirmed the prestige of the army from the struggle against Napoleon I to the defeat of Napoleon III. The German officer was trained in the exercise of individual judgement on the grounds, elaborated by Clausewitz and other theorists, that the practice of war throws up a great variety of situations which cannot be foreseen and can best be handled by the officer who has learned to take decisions for himself. In addition the German officer had a wider education than his British or French counterpart in the sense that he was expected to concern himself with matters beyond the strictly professional. Yet, because freedom of speculation was not similarly encouraged, his actions in the wider political field were rigidly conditioned, politics were included in his province, but his political equipment was narrow. The German army was therefore significantly different from the British and French armies. The British army, from its beginnings in the time of Cromwell and his rule through Major-Generals, was more suspect as a threat to the civil power than respected as the guardian of the nation (a role reserved for the navy, which

had the special advantage of all navies that it guarded the nation from outside without being able to interfere in the streets or take part in politics as easily as armies can). The British army had come to accept its place as subordinate and obedient to the civil government and was therefore denied some of the sources of esteem and self-esteem enjoyed by the German army. In France too the army was regarded since the Revolution as an instrument of civil government and not as properly a power in its own right. There was also a further difference between Great Britain and France on the one hand and Germany on the other. In all these countries the nineteenth century saw the *haute bourgeoisie* trying to get a share in political power. In Great Britain and France it did so by adopting liberal values but in Germany it opted instead for partnership with Bismarck and became a contented adjunct of a conservative oligarchy. The German *bourgeoisie*, having entered upon the political scene later than its French and British counterparts and – more important – at a stage in the evolution of Germany when military power was still actively forming the state, left power to the traditional classes and did not mediate between them and the deprived proletariat. Thus in Germany the power of the military aristocracy in affairs of state was not curbed by civilian, liberal, middle-class opinion. In Bismarck's time it was curbed by Bismarck himself, who opposed and even snubbed the army when he felt so inclined, but he did so not because he incarnated the civil power but because he was Bismarck. After his retirement the army, confronting a series of weak Chancellors, achieved a pre-eminence which culminated in the First World War when Generals von Hindenburg and Ludendorff established a military régime which not only dictated to and dismissed civilian Ministers but also invaded the prerogatives of the Kaiser. In 1918 the Kaiser went too, and the army, contemplating even weaker governments than those of the last thirty years, claimed an autonomy which was not successfully challenged by the civil power until Hitler became Chancellor. Its first post-war chief, Hans von Seeckt, a general endowed with exceptional political acumen, devoted himself to preserving what was left of the German army and its traditions and to rebuilding it. He regarded the Weimar republic as something to be survived and he was prepared to wait and survive it.

The Weimar constitution provided a framework in which Germany might evolve from an oligarchical authoritarianism to a popular democracy, but the evolution was slow to start and then struck by adversity which it was too frail to survive. The middle classes, after being blanketed by the exigencies of war, were torpedoed by the post-war inflation. During the lifetime of the Weimar republic only the Roman Catholic Centre Party maintained its strength (at about 15 per cent of votes cast). Other

centre groups declined steadily until they almost vanished. Further to the Left the Social Democrats, who remained to defend the republic with the Centre Party, also lost ground, unused to the political game from which they had been excluded too long, obsessed by the communist threat on their left, and puzzled by the adaptation of Marxism to a vigorous industrial society which falsified some of its premises and drew part of its sting. They ruled Prussia, but whereas Prussia had been the decisive element in Bismarck's and William II's Reich, in Weimar Germany it was only the most important administrative unit.

Weimar Germany enjoyed a number of years of economic prosperity and a remarkable cultural outburst, but politically it remained a promise unfulfilled. It looked as though it might become a parliamentary democracy but it did not look as though it had. After the election of Field Marshal von Beneckendorf und Hindenburg (who had retired from active service in 1911) to succeed Ebert as Chancellor in 1925 it looked more like the pre-war monarchy than anything else and so long as he lived Hindenburg, himself an avowed monarchist, seemed more likely to play General Monk than General Washington. Thus Weimar Germany, besides being smaller and weaker than the old Reich, was uncertain and disunited. At first it was also turbulent. Free Corps, formed out of the disbanded army originally to guard Germany's eastern frontiers, became autonomous units owing shadowy allegiance to senior army officers but acknowledging none to the state. They assumed roving commissions to put down left-wing activities (1919 saw a rash of communist risings in large cities) and where they thought fit they organized murders. They were a throw-back to the medieval Free Knights, freebooters tricked out in romantic trappings. In 1920 the Kapp putsch in Berlin, a right-wing and pro-monarchist attempt by one of these Free Corps to overthrow the government with the open support of a part of the army, demonstrated – the more so because it was a ludicrous failure – the weakness of government and the instability of society. Kapp and his associates failed to take over the government but the government, by failing to punish them or to disband the Free Corps, showed that it was not master in its own house. A similar coup in Munich succeeded and all but withdrew southern Germany from Berlin's authority. There was a continuing struggle for power in Germany in a vacuum in which groups operating outside the law took things into their own hands by virtue only of the fact that they had arms. The atmosphere of violence was aggravated by the murder, by the Free Corps, of the moderate political leaders Matthias Erzberger and Walther Rathenau and also by the fascist march on Rome in 1922 and the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. But the years 1924–9 (from the Dawes settlement

to the Great Depression) were much less turbulent: under Stresemann's guidance Germany sought to satisfy its grievances by discussion and by entering into the comity of Europe: it joined the League of Nations in 1926 and saw the withdrawal of the victors' Military Control Commission in 1927; American loans and efficient administration combined to stabilize the currency, modernize communications, re-equip industry and reduce unemployment to (in 1928) 650,000. The army remained in the background. The more extreme parties made less noise. Germany began to look and to behave like the bourgeois politicians who were in charge of its affairs. By the end of this period it had the best roads, the fastest railways and the most modern merchant fleet in Europe. Real wages were back to what they had been before the war; industrial production was more than 20 per cent higher. But the republic was perpetually threatened by a possible alliance between the nationalist ruling classes and the nationalist masses and its governments were inevitably constricted by the aftermath of defeat.

The peace treaty had taken from Germany all its colonies, one eighth of its European territory and one tenth of its European population, and most of its iron and steel and shipping; it had placed the Rhineland and the Saar temporarily under foreign control, eliminated the German navy and air force and reduced the German army to a force of 100,000 men who were required to serve for at least twelve years in order to prevent the creation of reserves; it had extracted from Germany a written admission of war guilt and imposed an obligation to pay extensive but as yet unlimited reparations. These terms were harsh. This, however, was to be expected. They came also to be considered unjust, not only by Germans, on the pleas that the war guilt clause was a vindictive oversimplification of the causes of the war; that the reparations were excessive, that the plebiscitary principle was applied only to Germany's disadvantage and was excluded where it might have worked the other way, and that Germany had surrendered on the terms of Wilson's Fourteen Points which the peace treaty had then contravened. This last plea does not stand up to examination since no such bargain was struck, but the belief was independent of the facts – like the belief, fostered by the ruling classes, that Germany had not been defeated in the field at all but had been forced to surrender by the collapse of civilian morale.

There was nothing unusual about charging the cost of a war to the losers. Most of the war damage had been done to and not by the victors and they felt entitled to get back what they could in order to repair the damage done to their lands and buildings, their disabled soldiers and their widows and children. The obvious way to do this was to present a bill and demand payment in cash; a more sophisticated method, devised by British

and French officials and welcomed by the Germans, whereby the damage in north-eastern France would have to be repaired by German labour using German materials, was blocked by French building interests. What was unusual about the bill presented to Germany after the First World War was the refusal of the victors to say how much would satisfy them. For twelve years the Germans did not know how much they might have to pay. In 1921 the Allied Reparations Commission produced the figure of 132 milliard gold marks (£6,850 million) but this amount might be increased later if the Commission decided that Germany could pay more. J. M. Keynes, whose own assessment of Germany's capacity to pay was £2,000 million, stigmatized this arrangement as morally detestable, politically foolish and economically nonsensical. Keynes also argued that all inter-allied war debts should be cancelled, since otherwise they would only be repudiated, in which prophecy only Finland proved him wrong.

This interim reparations settlement was almost immediately destroyed by the collapse of the mark which fell during 1922–3 from a par value of 4.20 to the dollar to 4,200 billion to the dollar. Germany could neither pay nor borrow. It defaulted at the end of 1922, whereupon France and Belgium exercised in January 1923 their right to reoccupy the Ruhr. Great Britain disapprovingly kept apart. A new mark, the Rentenmark, was called into existence by Hjalmar Schacht, President of the *Reichsbank*, to replace the old mark which had become a valueless string of noughts, and in 1924 a fresh attempt was made to quantify reparations. Under the Dawes Plan Germany undertook to resume payments at the rate of 1 billion new marks a year (about £50 million) rising to 2.5 billion in 1928–9. These sums were charged on the product of customs, railways and industry and were to be paid by the *Reichsbank* to Germany's creditors, who provided half the directors of the *Reichsbank* and also exercised control over the German railways. The money for the first payments was lent to Germany by the principal foreign national banks. There was still no limit fixed to Germany's total indebtedness, but Germany's more pressing worries were relieved by its creditors' willingness to lend and go on lending. In the next six years, 1924–30, they lent over 30 billion marks, enough not only to meet the Dawes outgoings but also to replace the capital destroyed by the great inflation of 1922–3, finance post-war reconstruction, pay annual deficits on foreign trade and create a gold reserve. These were good years for Germany. Then in 1929 the Young Plan reduced the Dawes payments, fixed a limit for German reparations, provided Germany with yet another loan of $300 million, removed foreign controls over the *Reichsbank* and the railways, and secured the evacuation of the Rhineland in 1930 instead of partly in 1930 and partly in 1935.

But the Young Plan still kept Germany under a heavy economic sentence. Reparations were to continue for fifty-nine years and, as *The Times* noted, Hitler was able to appeal to millions of Germans who could 'know nothing of the war but that the bill for it will outlast their lifetime'. Moreover the Young Plan, unlike the Dawes Plan, did not turn out to be a fresh start. The depression, which had started in the United States in 1928–9, was already spreading to Europe. Factories were closing, unemployment was growing and American loans were ceasing. Among the casualties was the Weimar republic and among those who gained was Hitler.

During the twenties Germany was put back on its feet by foreign governments, especially the United States, but the mere fact that Germany was once more an active competitor in the world economy revived international strains which had accompanied Germany's first advance to economic power at the end of the nineteenth century. The technically advanced countries were producing more than they themselves and the rest of the world could buy. The obvious remedy for this state of affairs – produce less – was not available since the industrial and technical revolutions which had increased the productivity of the strongest economies had also increased their need for capital accumulation and hence their appetite for higher profits and bigger markets. By the end of the twenties overproduction was creating unemployment, while in various parts of the world surplus stocks were lying unmoved and unconsumed. Germany, with its post-war neuroses and without colonial markets, was particularly vulnerable in this competition for the best slices of the international cake and its business community was looking for a government which would give priority to the requirements of its section of the nation and would secure by any means the revision of a post-war settlement which had cut down Germany's place in the world. Germany was thus predisposed to become increasingly authoritarian and revisionist.

The depression of the late twenties was virtually worldwide. It put twenty to thirty million people out of work, halved the volume of international trade, impoverished national banks and exchequers as well as families, baffled political leaders and helped men like Hitler to take power. It was dramatized, near its beginning, by the sensational collapse of the New York stock exchange in the last hour of business on 23 October 1929. On that day nearly 20 million shares were sold at lower and lower prices and by the end of that month investors were poorer by some $40 billion.

In the United States the late twenties was one of those periods of immense material optimism in which people stop thinking about limits. In a booming economy men of property believed, or acted as if they believed,

that an era of richness for all had arrived and that stock prices would continue indefinitely their great leaps forward. As profits and savings satisfied and exceeded the demand for consumer goods and luxuries, they were used to create yet more monetary wealth and were re-consigned to the stock market, where they pushed stock prices up further still. Those who paused to think assumed that higher prices were being matched and justified by higher productivity. In fact, however, the great American boom had shown signs of slackening several months before the stock market's crash in October. Industrial production had taken a downward turn. This had happened before, temporarily, but in 1929 the setback was not followed by a quick recovery; it was not a pause but an about turn.

The effects of the collapse were felt over a vast area because the United States had failed to adjust to the post-war situation in the world at large. During the twenties countries all over the world were importing American goods and borrowing American money. The borrowing had two principal reasons. The first was the high tariffs which the United States maintained and which prevented its customers from selling in the United States enough goods to balance their purchases; they were forced to balance their trade either by payments in gold or by continuous American loans. The second reason was a consequence of the First World War, which created vast intergovernmental debts, partly contracted by the victors in the course of fighting the war and paying for it and partly in the form of reparations. The bulk of the inter-allied debts was owed to the United States, Great Britain and France (although France was only a net creditor if Russian debts were taken at their face value) and the bulk of the reparations payments was owed by Germany to its near neighbours. The debtors borrowed from the United States in order to discharge their obligations. After 1929, however, American loans were no longer forthcoming and at the same time the United States raised its tariffs still further, notably by the inopportune Smoot-Hawley Act of 1930. Since American lending had been financing post-war reconstruction and development in Europe as well as debt settlements and international trade, the turning off of the American tap – first because private investors preferred to play the rising markets in the United States and then because of the collapse of those markets – throttled Europe's economies.

The economic interdependence of different parts of the world was largely a consequence of the industrial and technical revolutions which had begun and flourished in western Europe and northern America. These revolutions created both a demand for primary products in places where they did not exist and speedy means of getting them there. Western Europe, with its higher standards of living and advanced skills, consumed

the food and the minerals which other continents produced for its kitchens and factories. But this pattern contained the seeds of its own transformation since international trade enriched the poorer countries as well as the richer and helped the poorer to improve their own standards of living and so eat more of the food they could grow. The First World War also affected the pattern. By concentrating man's needs on munitions it boosted the demand for minerals and their price, and by disrupting communications it boosted food production for local consumption and, likewise, the farmer's profits. In the United States and other prosperous societies agriculture expanded owing to the fear that the war would prevent food from distant countries from reaching its destination. When therefore the war ended, more food was being produced than could be disposed of. Prices began to fall and continued to do so throughout the twenties with only a brief pause in 1925–8. Instead of reducing production, governments, in particular the government of the United States, subsidized the farmer's prices and so encouraged him to keep under cultivation the land which he had worked so successfully under different circumstances. Moreover, since the wartime expansion of American agriculture had been financed by credit, the farmer in the post-war world was not merely an over-producer but an indebted over-producer. From 1929 the system took perforce the violent way to solution by numerous bankruptcies.

The end of the war also brought a drop in the prices of primary products other than food. Initially this change benefited the manufacturing countries at the expense of the producers, but it soon damaged the industrial societies too by contracting their markets; the suppliers of raw materials were also the purchasers of manufactured goods, and when they no longer got good prices for their raw materials they ceased to be able to buy manufactured goods. Less was bought and sold throughout the world. There was less wealth.

By the end of the twenties there were therefore three interlocking problems: agricultural overproduction; the shrinkage of international trade, which was leading nations to protect themselves by tariffs and other barriers; and reparations and inter-allied debts which, like the reconstruction of Germany and deficits on trade between the United States and Europe, were being financed by copious but not inexhaustible American loans. At the end of the twenties the politicians who were grappling with these economic problems became overwhelmed by them.

In Europe the acute phase of the crisis began in Austria in the spring of 1931. Austria, from having been the centre of a great empire, had become a small new state athwart the division between modern industrial western Europe and the relatively backward agricultural hinterlands of south-

eastern Europe. It was prohibited by the treaty of St Germain – Austria's counterpart of Versailles – from uniting with Germany and this prohibition had been reinforced by the Geneva Protocol of 1922 when economic aid had been provided for Austria in return for renewed assurances that it would not unite with Germany. Equally Austria was prevented from combining with its other neighbours in a Danubian or central European federation, because these neighbours were determined to have nothing to do with anything which looked like a revival of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Austrian independence was a shibboleth of France as the foremost champion of the post-war settlement, of Czechoslovakia as the most vigorous of the new progeny of the settlement, and of Rumania and Yugoslavia as its beneficiaries, but independence in this case did not mean the defence of Austrian independence against an aggressor but insistence on Austrian independence against, if necessary, the interests of the Austrians themselves. Since Austria was poor as well as small, those who insisted on its independence had to pay to keep it solvent or see it become a dependency of some other power.

Austria's future became an active topic of discussion and negotiation in 1930. Germany was afraid that Austria was looking to Italy for its salvation and regarded an Austro-German union as the only natural solution. Many Austrians would have preferred a wider solution in order not to become a mere province in a new German empire, but this way seemed to be blocked. France and Great Britain were at cross purposes. France was determined to prevent an Austro-German union but Great Britain was less alarmed by this prospect and wanted to patch up Franco-German differences rather than give France unequivocal support. Great Britain preferred the role of mediator to that of ally. In March 1931 Germany and Austria announced that they had agreed to form a customs union. France in particular regarded this projected union as a political scheme rather than an economic expedient. It was referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague, which eventually declared it contrary to the Geneva Protocol but not contrary to the treaty of St Germain (in both cases by eight votes to seven). The plan was abandoned.

Meanwhile economic forces were gaining control. In May the principal Austrian bank, the *Credit-Anstalt für Handel und Gewerbe*, closed its doors. It was unable to meet its short term obligations because of the decline of Austrian industry and trade which had impoverished Austrian concerns to which the bank had lent its money. Its difficulties were accentuated when France blocked continued Austrian borrowing in the French money market. Although German banks and the Bank of England lent to the *Credit-Anstalt*, they were unable to save it and succeeded only

in weakening themselves. Before the end of the month the German banks were in similar troubles from their own clients. By June the *Reichsbank* had lost over a billion marks and in July one of the leading German banks, the *Darmstadter Nazional*, also closed its doors. American banks which had lent to German banks began to feel alarmed. The Bank of England too was in trouble and borrowed from the Bank of France – France was financially the strongest country in Europe. British industrial and commercial activities were in decline. Unemployment was growing, and in June it became known that under existing arrangements the British government could meet only half of the calls on it for unemployment relief. The Labour government decided that it must balance its budget as a precondition to getting loans from American finance houses, even if part of the cost had to be paid by the unemployed. A special cabinet committee recommended cuts in public expenditure amounting to £78.5 million. The full cabinet decided that cuts of £56 million would do but it then disagreed over one item, a proposal to reduce by one tenth the dole payable to the unemployed. At Invergordon there was a mutiny when it was discovered that cuts in the pay of the lower ranks in the Royal Navy were to exceed the 10 per cent deduction required of all employees of the Crown. The government broke up and the country went off the gold standard.

Some temporary relief, psychological rather than economic, was provided by President Hoover's offer to suspend for one year the payment of debts due to the United States if other inter-governmental debts were likewise suspended. Hoover's offer anticipated an inevitable German default and shortly afterwards Germany declared that it would not resume payments after the end of the Hoover year. The Young Plan was scrapped and a conference at Lausanne in 1932 sanctioned, in camouflaged language, the abandonment of reparations. Another conference at Stresa later in the year tried to find a solution to the economic ailments of Austria and south-eastern Europe but, failing, left the area open to Germany.

The great crash and the great depression shattered more than material things. They destroyed morale. They injected a great amount of fear into ordinary people (including the ordinary people who sat in cabinets) and so turned them to an intent concern for their own affairs, present and future. The sense of community narrowed. Nation protected itself against nation, class turned against class. The millions of victims of the mysterious workings of economics looked for somewhere to lay the blame for their sufferings, and for somebody to lead them out of the mess. And nowhere were the confusion and disruption worse than in Germany, which had

relied most completely on foreign loans. There too factories began to close, unemployment grew by leaps and bounds, and the cost of unemployment relief exceeded the capacity of the treasury to pay it. The resulting problem sundered the democratic parties. The Left wanted higher taxes, the Right higher unemployment contributions and lower relief; the Left, in other words, wanted the economy as a whole to subsidize the unemployment fund, while the Right wanted the fund to balance itself at whatever level was dictated by circumstances. Although both sides were prepared to temper their claims, neither would go far enough to meet the other. For two years Heinrich Brüning, who had been appointed Chancellor in March 1930, tussled with diminishing success with these economic and political storms.

Brüning was an intelligent man in his mid-forties, socially of the middle class, politically of the centre-Right, well intentioned and determined to save the republic. It was his fate to preside over the collapse of German credit and German democracy. By 1929 the steady economic expansion of 1925–8 had come to a halt and in the three ensuing years – 1930–32, the worst of the crisis – the national income was almost halved and one in three of the working population was put out of work. The Austrian crisis having triggered off a German crisis and foreigners (to whom half of all German credits were owed) having hurried to demand repayment of their short-term loans, the credit system collapsed. At the same time the problem of how to relieve the unemployed created dissensions among the centre parties of the Reichstag. Brüning, whose instinctive loyalties went not so much to democratic institutions as to the person of the chief of state, once his regimental commander, failed to hold the coalition together, a failure for which the Social Democrats share the blame. His policies were wrong enough to aggravate political dissension among the moderates and then belatedly right enough to give his ultimate successors, the Nazis, a good start. His methods – government by decree in the last resort – accustomed Germany to procedures which the Nazis turned into common form, and so accustomed foreigners to seeing Germany governed that way.

He took office with the determination not to inflate. The post-war inflation was remembered with such horror that any degree of inflation was very difficult to contemplate. A moderate or controlled inflation was not part of the German experience; inflation meant run-away inflation, a situation in which the value of a house falls to that of a box of matches between breakfast and lunch. Any inflation was a national phobia. So Brüning took the traditional, but beyond certain limits socially intolerable, course of deflation. His immediate problem was the flight of capital from Germany. Having decided against devaluation he resorted to import licens-

ing and exchange controls (both of which were later developed by the Nazis) and to deflation, but deflation failed to boost German exports partly because the government deflated too little and partly because Germany's customers had devalued their currencies. The balance of payments grew worse and the reserves went on falling. At home the attempt to balance the budget by cutting social benefits and increasing taxes widened the rift between Right and Left. Brüning's 1930 budget had to be enacted by decree. The Social Democrats moved in the Reichstag to annul the decrees. The President dissolved the Reichstag. No parliamentary majority could be found. If Brüning hoped to gain control of the Reichstag by new elections he was disappointed, for at the elections of September 1930 the Nazis increased their seats from twelve to 107 and the communists from fifty-four to seventy-seven. The anti-parliamentary extremes were carried by the votes of the unemployed to a dominant position in the parliament and even with Social Democrat cooperation Brüning was now dependent on the President and his power to legislate by decree. By the beginning of 1931 unemployment was approaching the 5 million mark (it continued to rise until the latter part of 1932), production had declined by nearly half of what it had been in 1928, and parliament and the constitution were unworkable. Brüning's policy had failed and the failure, a product of the unenlightened economics of the time in government in Washington, Berlin and other political capitals, visited on the German populace economic hardships unparalleled in peacetime in an advanced industrial country. It also alienated an influential segment of the business class which had previously supported Brüning's Centre Party and so, indirectly, the Weimar republic. The economic crisis laid bare weaknesses in the German banking system which the government could not go on ignoring, but Brüning's attempts to correct these weaknesses – by the introduction of state supervision and inspection of banking practices – caused bankers and their associates in industry and commerce to look round for other parties to patronize. The developed world's economic ignorance and incompetence played a large part in making Germany choose Hitler.

Deflation was abandoned in 1932. It had done no good except to prove the need for something different. A new expansionist policy, based on expenditure on public works, was adopted. It was to be greatly expanded by the Nazis and to reduce unemployment – even before the impact of rearmament – from a peak of over 6 million to 2.6 million at the end of 1934. The Nazis, unafraid of state interference with private enterprise and unhampered by the trade unions, which they overpowered, pursued a policy of inflation controlled by tax increases and by wage, price and dividend restrictions. By 1937 Germany was short of labour. But a few

years earlier inflation had seemed impossible. Because there had been so much of it in the early twenties, there was too little of it in the early thirties and too late. Deflation reduced Germany to something approaching despair and chaos at a time when powerful forces – the Nazis and the communists – could see that despair and chaos were what they needed.

The Nazi Party had made little impression during the years of prosperity (1924–9). It won only twelve seats in the Reichstag in 1928, but between 1929 and 1933 it grew into a mass party of the discontented. The Nazis attacked in the name of socialism the parties and policies which could produce nothing better than unemployment; they accused the entire political establishment of callousness and unimaginativeness. At the same time and in the name of nationalism they denounced the treaty of Versailles as an affront to Germany and a prime source of its economic ills. In the Reichstag elections of September 1930 they jumped from the category of a splinter party on the lunatic fringe into that of a political force which could be left out of no calculation. Six and a half million Germans voted Nazi and made the party the second biggest in the Reichstag. Newspapers abroad dug into their records to tell their readers something about its Austrian leader, Adolf Hitler, who now became world famous. Less than two years later this popular vote was more than doubled to give the Nazis 230 seats and make it the biggest in the Reichstag. But they never polled half the electorate in a free election. Even after Hitler won the chancellorship the Nazi vote in the election of March 1933 was only 43.9 per cent. But by then figures no longer meant much.

The rapid rise in Hitler's popular support created a problem for the other nationalist and right-wing parties. Either Hitler would come to power in alliance with them or he would be swept into power by the masses, with or without violence. Hitler could see this too and in the declining years of the Weimar republic he played politics in the knowledge that the German Right was in a dilemma. The Right had this much in common with the Nazis, that both were anti-republican. The Right believed, or hoped, that Hitler's wilder strains were the sort of political moonshine which can be ignored by sensible men and which is forgotten by even the worst demagogue when he gets office; Hindenburg among others seemed more put off by Corporal Hitler's social inferiority than by his manic utterances. The Nationalist Party, led by the rich industrialist and newspaper owner Alfred Hugenburg, was the first to make an alliance with the Nazis. Others waited, but when Hitler stood against Hindenburg for the presidency in 1932, the Right voted for Hitler. There were four candidates for the presidency, none of them democrats. Only Hindenburg

was strong enough to beat Hitler. So the Field Marshal, receiving substantial support from an unaccustomed quarter, was re-elected, after a second poll, by the votes of the Left – to which he was now useless from senility as well as conviction.

After his re-election Hindenburg discarded Brüning and replaced him with Franz von Papen, the nominee of the anti-parliamentary forces of the Right – the army, the big landowners and big business. Papen was a member of the lesser nobility who was sufficiently insensitive to political reality to imagine that he could outwit Hitler and run a right-wing government without him. Papen fell between two stools. First he destroyed what slight chance of a centre coalition still existed when, in violation of the constitution, he dismissed the Social Democrat government of Prussia and subordinated it to the central government of the Reich. Then he changed his mind about the Nazis and offered Hitler the Vice-Chancellorship. But he was too late. His offer was not good enough for Hitler, who had meanwhile, in the elections of July 1932, become the leader of the biggest parliamentary party. Hitler asked for the Chancellorship. He was refused. Hindenburg declared that he would not give the Nazis full powers because 'they intended to use these powers to further their own ends'. Hitler was both checked and humiliated. Optimists grasped at any sign that somehow somebody was going to prevent Hitler from triumphing. But there was also a growing feeling that the Nazis would and should come to power. The more they spread chaos the more they gave the impression that they alone could allay it. Street violence was an everyday occurrence: public political murders, put at forty-two in 1929 and fifty in 1930, had quadrupled in the first half of 1931 and were still increasing. Terror and brutality, by communists as well as Nazis, sickened public opinion and alarmed the army, which shrank from the prospect of having to fight Nazis and communists at once. Hitler deliberately raised the stakes by sending a telegram of sympathy and support to some Nazis who had broken into the house of a young communist called Hans Potempa and kicked him to death before his mother's eyes. At the same time the Nazis were saying – and demonstrating – that they alone had the energy and the willpower to restore order. The public became inured to the idea that the price of order was a Nazi government.

On the parliamentary front Nazis, communists and socialists combined to defeat Papen in the Reichstag in September and in the ensuing elections in November the Nazi tide receded slightly. But Papen still commanded no majority in the Reichstag and, having failed to contain the Nazis or come to terms with them, he was no longer any use. He had been made Chancellor because the army wanted him and the President commanded

him, and his failure forced the army to take the Chancellorship itself in the person of General Kurt von Schleicher. Papen had been a nominee of the army, Schleicher was its embodiment: seconds were out. Schleicher had been in favour of bringing Hitler into the government until he discovered that Hindenburg would not have Hitler. He still thought it necessary to bring Nazis into the cabinet and he proceeded to offer the Vice-Chancellorship to Gregor Strasser, the leader of the northern and more radical section of the party and the representative of what was left of socialism in National Socialism (a by-product of attempts in the twenties to woo the working classes and lesser *bourgeoisie*). Strasser was willing but stipulated that Hitler must first bless the union, which Hitler refused to do. It is difficult to understand how either Schleicher or Strasser ever imagined that he would, and Strasser merely destroyed himself by letting Schleicher use him in this way. Schleicher, who was a political neophyte, next tried an approach to the democratic Left, whereupon the financial and industrial establishment put pressure on Hindenburg to recall Papen and install a Papen–Hitler coalition. The army too failed to stand solid for its own Chancellor. Some officers, led by General von Blomberg, went over to the Nazis. Hitler now had enough backing from the conservatives, the moneyed interests and the army to make his own terms. This was the end of Schleicher, whose short period in office marked the end of the German army's exercise of political power. Out of deference to Hindenburg, who thus performed a last service by easing Hitler into power, Schleicher quietly relinquished his post. On 30 January 1933 Hitler was appointed Chancellor by Hindenburg with Papen as his Vice-Chancellor.

Hitler became Chancellor constitutionally. To say that he became Chancellor legally would be to ignore the activities of his party, which, in the preceding years, had committed countless acts of criminal violence, including murder; but technically Hitler (like Mussolini) did not seize office, it was conferred upon him. There is a difference between seizing office and assuming power. Hitler assumed power between 1929 and 1933 by violent means but he forbore to lay hands on the institutions of the state which he proposed to manipulate. Ever since his abortive putsch in 1923 Hitler had been sagacious enough to sense and insist upon the advantages of observing prescribed constitutional processes. He was a better respecter of pieces of paper than pieces of humanity, because he realized the strength of formalities and the bemusing effect of a show of continuity. He had made no secret of his intentions. In 1931, for example, he had told a German editor, a political opponent, that although he intended to come to power by winning seats in the Reichstag, after he had done so the

Reichstag might as well close its doors and be turned into a museum; and after his appointment as Chancellor it took him only a matter of months to master the whole apparatus of power and propaganda in Germany. The steps which he took were characteristic: legislation and murder.

Between 9 and 10 p.m. on 27 February 1933 the Reichstag was burnt to the ground. Hitler at once blamed the communists. He probably really thought they had done it. Others equally promptly assumed that the Nazis had burnt it with the intention of incriminating the communists and liquidating their party, and at the end of the war General Halder said that Goering had boasted in 1942 that the fire was his doing. The question remains obscure and there is much to be said for the view that the Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe did, as he himself claimed, conceive the conflagration and effect it on his own as a one-man protest. It is evident that the three Bulgarian communists tried with van der Lubbe (who was executed) had nothing to do with the deed. They were even acquitted. Whatever the truth the Nazis seized their opportunity with alacrity – proof either of their efficiency or their complicity. Arrests were made within a matter of hours, communist newspapers were suppressed, and an emergency decree was issued the next day overriding basic civil rights such as freedom of expression and assembly, permitting arbitrary searches and seizure of property, empowering the central government to assume the functions of local authorities and imposing severe penalties. This decree was never repealed. In March Hitler supplemented it by an Enabling Act which in effect converted him into a one-man legislature. This act, which required a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag, was passed only because the Centre Party (at the bidding of the Vatican) voted for it. A few Social Democrat voices were raised, for the last time, in courageous but futile protest. With the powers thus conferred upon him Hitler decreed all parties except his own out of existence, subordinated the federal states to the central government, and won 92 per cent of the vote in elections which he staged in November 1933. He abolished free trade unions, intimidated the churches and virtually annexed the judiciary and the educational system, thus moulding a new society in which only Nazi ideas, ethical, social and political, might be expressed and protected.

Hitler also struck down a part of his own movement, the armed SA or *Sturmabteilungen*, led by Ernst Röhm, an even earlier member of the Nazi Party than Hitler himself and one of the few men with whom he used the intimate second person singular *du*. The SA had had a job to do on the streets in the days before the Nazis came to power. They provided the rough and tough arguments for supporting the Nazis or keeping out of

their way. But Hitler had had trouble with them from the start. They regarded themselves as an independent force like the Free Corps from which many of them were initially drawn and they wished to be as autonomous *vis-à-vis* the party as the German army traditionally was *vis-à-vis* the state. Hitler had been obliged in 1930 to eliminate their leader Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, an ex-Free Corps man, because he proved too independent and opposed Hitler's policy of achieving power by constitutional means. He also had to suppress an open revolt by the Berlin SA in the same year and had further trouble in the next year. Moreover the SA were growing fast. At the beginning of 1931 they were 100,000 strong, the same size as the army; at the end of that year they were 300,000 strong. By the middle of 1934, their ranks swollen particularly by unemployment and by the march-fever which swept through Germany in these troubled years, they had reached a strength of 4.5 million and were scaring the army as well as Nazi Party chiefs. The SA was the most prominent of various Nazi organizations which duplicated the organizations of the state (like a shadow cabinet duplicates a cabinet) but which had become irrelevant or embarrassing once their party had become the state. Röhm saw the SA as replacing the regular army. Politically naïve and temperamentally unbalanced, he overplayed his hand fantastically. He thoroughly alarmed the officer caste by letting it be known that in his view the armed services should be reduced to being training organizations for the SA, and he failed to see that Hitler needed the army. His ambitions contributed to the alliance which both Hitler and the army desired and provided it with a sacrificial victim. The army began at this period to dismiss its Jewish officers to please Hitler and early in 1934 Hitler forced Röhm to agree, formally and in writing, to moderate his ambitions. But rumours of an SA putsch persisted and in June Blomberg, now Minister for Defence, warned Hitler that the army would turn him out, get Hindenburg to declare martial law, hand over the government to the military and probably restore the Hohenzollerns if the SA were allowed to usurp the functions of the army; if the SA were suppressed, the army would see that Hitler got the Presidency. Hitler thereupon organized a massacre. On 30 June Röhm and about fifty other SA leaders were murdered. The opportunity was taken to murder a great many other people too; they included Schleicher and also Gregor Strasser, although there are doubts whether Hitler wanted the latter's death. But the principal beneficiaries of the destruction of the SA were not the army but Heinrich Himmler and his SS or *Schutzstaffeln*, which flourished on the ashes of the SA and became the rival military force which the army had sought to destroy with the SA.

A month later Hindenburg died. The office of President was merged with that of Chancellor. More important, the death of Hindenburg provided Hitler with the opportunity to annex the officer corps to his revolution. With some exceptions the officer corps disliked the Nazis but it shared some of Hitler's aims and was confident that its power was greater than his. From Hitler's point of view the army differed in two ways from every other institution in the state: it was too powerful to be destroyed and he needed it. Although within Germany it might challenge the power of the Nazis, externally it was essential to Hitler's purposes, especially for the conquest of *Lebensraum*. Therefore it had to be strengthened and at the same time rendered domestically harmless. On the day after Hindenburg's death every member of the armed services swore a new oath of obedience to Adolf Hitler in person as 'the Führer of the German Reich and people and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces'. This oath was devised by General Walther von Reichenau, one of a group of officers who were at this time keenly pro-Nazi. It gave Hitler a moral authority over the officer corps which endured almost undented until the end of his life. The army, which had virtually ordered the elimination of the SA, had placed itself under the Führer's personal orders by the oath, the mystic force which bound the army together and determined its relation to the state. By this oath the army equated the guardianship of the German state with obedience to the command of Hitler, who was henceforward not only Führer but also President and Supreme War Lord.

CHAPTER 3
The Futile Opposition: 1934–8

IN external affairs Hitler's first aim was to restore German power. He intended to recover for Germany the lands and the peoples lost in Europe after the First World War and to re-establish the armed services which had been destroyed or crippled by the peace settlement. These aims were not novel but they were accompanied by another which, though likewise not novel, was rationalized by Hitler in a new way. Hitler intended that Germany should expand into non-German lands and his reason was his conviction that a people must either wax or die. He did not believe that a people could remain static and survive. So safeguarding the German people meant increasing their number (a biological rather than a military necessity) and securing somewhere for them to live. In *Mein Kampf* he had written, with a mixture of conviction and guff, of securing

> ... the existence and increase of our race and nation, the sustenance of its children and the purity of its blood, the freedom and independence of the fatherland, and the nation's ability to fulfil the mission appointed to it by the creator of the universe.

The British, so far as they paid any attention to this sort of thing, thought it might be met by offering Hitler colonies, a partial acceptance of the German demand to revise Versailles and a sop to assuage or eliminate his more dangerous aims in Europe; they dangled colonial carrots before Hitler up to the last months of peace. But Hitler was not to be put off in Europe by presents in Africa. He intended to colonize in Europe, not Africa. He made this clear both privately and publicly. A few days after becoming Chancellor he told his service chiefs that the restoration of German power entailed the creation of a unified German nation by converting or breaking all opposing forces and by mastering youth, the struggle against Versailles, the colonization of parts of Europe in order to gain living space, and the reinforcement of the armed services. Publicly he was no less explicit. 'The foreign policy of a nation (*völkisch*) state,' he wrote in *Mein Kampf*, 'must assure the existence on this planet of a race encompassed by the state; it must do this by creating a healthy, life-giving and natural balance between the present and future numbers of the *Volk* on the one hand and, on the other, the quantity and quality of its territory.'

In his next paragraph Hitler made it clear that the prime aim of this foreign policy was to make the *Volk* self-sufficient in food within the boundaries of its state and by extending those boundaries if necessary. This passage comes near the beginning of a chapter entitled Eastern Policy. It left therefore no doubt where Hitler coveted land. It was included in the abbreviated English translation of *Mein Kampf* which was published in 1933 – and reissued in 1935 in a cheap, paperback edition which sold nearly 50,000 copies in three years.

In 1933 he did not know how or when he was going to achieve these aims. In this sense he had no plans, but he had aims and the achievement of his aims for the German people included from the outset measures which other peoples would never willingly accept. He himself was aware of this. He did not expect to win *Lebensraum* – that is to say, other people's territories – without war.

Among the European powers Hitler distinguished between France and the USSR on the one hand and Great Britain and Italy on the other. France he regarded as an irreconcilable foe, the USSR as an inevitable one. Thus the two chief traditional opponents of the extension of German power were opponents still (although the Franco-Russian treaty of 1935 did not create so menacing a combination as the old Dual Alliance). Hitler's attitudes to these two powers were, however, very different. The irreconcilability of Germany and France came from the French side. In his view it was the French who were perpetuating the Franco-German feud; they were unbiddable, nothing could abate their animosity. At the same time Hitler despised them, so that although French hostility was a fact it was not a very serious one. French power was enough to give Hitler pause but not to thwart him – as he showed when he remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936 against the advice of his generals.

Hitler's feelings about the USSR included hatred as well as contempt. Although he despised Russians as Slavs and sub-men and lacked that respect for their tenacity which was felt by many Germans who, unlike himself, had fought on the eastern front in the First World War, the overmastering sentiment in his references to the USSR was a passionate loathing for their communism, which was for him one of the principal contemporary expressions of the age-long Jewish conspiracy against the human race. Ultimately too it was the USSR which Germany would have to fight for *Lebensraum*.

Italy and Great Britain came into a different category. They were potential allies or at least non-objectors. To begin with Hitler thought of Italy as no more than a medium power which could prove useful by engaging and distracting France and Great Britain in the Mediterranean,

but the course of international politics in the mid-thirties threw Mussolini into Hitler's arms. The two dictators, though personally loyal to one another, never established a close and confidential alliance between their countries like the wartime Anglo-American alliance. Still less did they coordinate their war efforts, but the Rome-Berlin axis justified Hitler in his judgement that Italy could be brought to serve his purposes by helping to demoralize France with multiple preoccupations in the central and western Mediterranean and to convince British governments that they could not face war with Germany unless Italy were first neutralized.

Hitler's feelings about Great Britain were complex and in the end wrong. The British were Aryan and they were successful imperialists. He could respect them. Hitler must have been aware of the view current in Germany that the challenge to Great Britain in 1914 by the invasion of Belgium had been a mistake, although by the end of 1939 – after war had begun – he said that the violation of Belgian (and Dutch) neutrality was a matter of no importance. *Mein Kampf* assumed no conflict with Great Britain and a decade after he wrote his book Hitler was still pursuing the same policy of appeasement when he sent Ribbentrop to be his Ambassador in London. The Nazis avoided the Kaiser's challenge to British sea power and Hitler never had any intention of rebuilding the German High Seas Fleet. But Hitler's admiration for the British was for what they had done in the past and he thought that they had had their day. He despised Neville Chamberlain when he met him although he admired Lloyd George. The question was whether Great Britain would stand in his way. On the whole he thought not. There was, he believed, a difference between Great Britain and France: whereas France wanted to prevent Germany from becoming powerful at all, Great Britain was only concerned to prevent Germany from becoming the sort of world power which would threaten British world power. But Hitler did not want to threaten this British position. He envisaged two world powers, the one based on dominion in Europe and the other based on dominion of the seas, and he hoped that if he made this plain Great Britain would not object to German hegemony in Europe. Subsequent events seemed to show that Hitler was wrong about Great Britain and failed to gauge its inevitable and implacable opposition to his plans. But his error was pardonable. His view of Anglo-German relations was not confined to Germans. When Halifax was about to visit Hitler in 1937 Sir Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador in Berlin, urged the Foreign Secretary to 'look facts in the face' and remember that 'the main point is that we are an *island* people and Germans a continental one. On that basis we can be friends and both go along the road of destiny without

a clash of vital interests.' Further, as late as 1940, when France fell, some British political leaders gave thought and utterance to coming to terms with Hitler and letting him be. They did not prevail but their hesitations show that Hitler's error about Great Britain was only a marginal one, albeit one of those marginal errors which turn out to be fatal.

Hitler's problem in foreign affairs was to nullify international opposition to his international aims, until he was strong enough to dictate abroad as well as at home. He had to ensure that Germany's strength grew faster than fear of Germany, for if the fear grew faster then the forces which had opposed and beaten the Kaiser's Reich might together destroy the new Reich. Fortunately for Hitler this possibility was largely theoretical, for the victors of 1918 were no longer united. After that war two of them, France and the United States, had put forward entirely different solutions to the German problem and in the upshot neither scheme survived in working order. The twenties therefore had seen the elaboration of substitutes, so that when Hitler came to power the principal formalized constraints upon his freedom of action beyond his borders were, in the west, the Locarno treaties of 1925 and, in the east, a patchwork of alliances designed by France – systems which were scrappily deputizing for the treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations.

After victory Clemenceau's solution to the problem of what to do about a powerful Germany was to put such constraints upon it as to make it harmless for as long as possible. President Wilson's solution was to devise a system which would nullify the excesses of every state. Clemenceau was seeking a specific solution to a specific problem, Wilson a general solution to a universal ill. Clemenceau was by nature a pessimist, Wilson an optimist. Clemenceau was a Frenchman first and a European afterwards, Wilson was not a European at all.

The best that France could hope for at the Peace Conference was to dismember Germany (French policy since Richelieu), extend France and get Great Britain and the United States to promise to go to war as soon as Germany attacked France again. This programme failed completely. Great Britain and the United States offered to guarantee France's territory as part of a bargain which included, in the American case, the acceptance of the Covenant of the League and, in the British case, the formalization of the American guarantee. When the US Senate refused to endorse the Covenant, the American guarantee to France lapsed and with it the British. Nor was France allowed to annex German territory west of the Rhine. It had to be content with the demilitarization of these Rhineland areas together with their occupation by the allies until (in different zones)

1925, 1930 and 1935 and with the possibility of acquiring the small Saar territory, economically rather than strategically valuable, by plebiscite. Germany was also to be and to remain substantially disarmed, and was, as we have already seen, subjected until shortly before Hitler's accession to paying reparations designed to keeping its economy trained upon the discharge of debt instead of the creation of military might.

The collapse of the American and British guarantees was not France's only diplomatic setback. In the east Russia itself had collapsed. To most Europeans the new USSR did not look like a useful (or respectable) ally at any time between 1917 and 1941. This was to be an immensely valuable aid to the revival of Germany as a major power. France tried to replace its eastern ally by new ones – by Poland, which was re-created in 1918 and with which France made a treaty in 1921, and by making friends with Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania, the so-called Little Entente, all of them beneficiaries of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire and so, like France, supporters of the Versailles settlement. The weaknesses of France's eastern policies became clear in the thirties. Poland was no substitute for Russia as an ally against Germany except in the limited sense that it lay at Germany's back door. Poland did not feel committed to an anti-German policy as a first priority but developed a policy of keeping its balance between Germany and the USSR. Its population was only three-quarters Polish and it was on bad terms with its neighbours. It had barely re-emerged as a state when it was launched by Pilsudski on an ambitious attempt to recreate the ancient empire of Poles, Lithuanians, White Russians and Ukrainians. It had invaded the USSR in 1920 and, as a result of securing its old 1792 borders, contained within its frontiers six million Ukrainians and White Russians; it had seized Vilna from Lithuania in 1920 and it coveted Teschen, which had been awarded to Czechoslovakia in the same year at a moment when its invasion of the USSR was going badly; it enjoyed special rights in Danzig, the port of the Vistula but demographically a German city with which it was linked by a corridor cut through Germany; and it gained much – Germans thought too much – of Upper Silesia in 1921 after a dubiously interpreted plebiscite. It was a Slav state at odds with other Slav states, a revived state with more than a touch of the intransigence which goes with the proud reconquest of independence, a new republic which (like Greece at that date) cherished tempting recollections of an ancient empire. Revived in November 1918, at war six months later, it narrowly escaped destruction in 1920 when Lenin was talking of sweeping over it into Germany. It was saved largely because its instability exacerbated European fears of spread-

ing Bolshevism, so that France sent General Weygand to Warsaw to give expert advice on how to stop the Russian counter-attack.

Of the members of the Little Entente Czechoslovakia was the most favoured, partly because its western half lay in the technically more advanced half of Europe and partly because it inherited from Habsburg times an efficient civil service and a high level of education. It was also fortunate in its founders, T. G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš. But these advantages and its outstanding liberal record obscured weaknesses, for Czechoslovakia was even more a medley of races than its name implied and was also the principal meeting place in Europe of the thrusting industrialism of the west and the more placid conservatism of the agricultural east. In Yugoslavia racial and religious antagonisms made this new state even less homogeneous than Czechoslovakia, while Rumania had received the uncomfortable war prize of a large Hungarian population. And throughout eastern Europe there were significant German minorities.

Furthermore, Great Britain was never happy with the new eastern Europe reorganized on Wilsonian principles. These new states were children of the United States and soon orphaned. They were also allied with France but the alliances were brittle so long as they were disliked by France's greater ally, Great Britain. They were an ingredient in a French policy which was not France's only policy. This policy was to build up a pro-French and anti-German system in the east, while retaining the power to attack Germany directly in the west. The alternative was alliance with Great Britain. This was an alternative and not a complementary policy because Great Britain did not want France to attack Germany and did not want to be entangled in eastern Europe. After the abortive occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 France never did attack Germany, even when Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936. The price of British support was, first, the surrender of the policy of a direct French threat to Germany and, later, the abandonment of France's eastern system: the first was formalized at Locarno in 1925, the latter consummated at Munich in 1938.

Neither the instability of post-imperial eastern Europe nor France's failure to get territorial safeguards or political guarantees against Germany would have mattered much if the system of collective security embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations had been made to work. Before 1914 statesmen had tried by various means – diplomacy, conferences, the balance of power, arbitration – to prevent wars within the framework set by a multiplicity of nation states. The First World War not only signalized the failure of these techniques but was regarded as a


EUROPE IN 1914
NORWAY
Christiania
SWEDEN
Stockholm
St Petersburg
UNITED KINGDOM
North Sea
DENMARK
Copenhagen
Baltic Sea
RUSSIA
HOLLAND
London
Berlin
Warsaw
GERMANY
POLAND
BELGIUM
Brussels
Paris
LUXEMBURG
Prague
Vienna
Bay of Biscay
FRANCE
Bern
Budapest
SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA - HUNGARY
RUMANIA
Belgrade
Bucharest
Adriatic Sea
Black Sea
Constantinople
SERBIA
BULGARIA
Lisbon
Madrid
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
Rome
MONTENEGRO
ALBANIA
Sofia
ITALY
GREECE
Aegean Sea
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Athens
0
250
Miles
Mediterranean Sea
~ARTHUR BANKS~


EUROPE IN 1923
NORWAY
Oslo
FINLAND
Helsinki
Leningrad
SWEDEN
Stockholm
ESTONIA
North Sea
Copenhagen
Baltic Sea
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
IRISH FREE STATE
GT BRITAIN
DENMARK
U S S R
HOLLAND
EAST PRUSSIA
London
Berlin
Warsaw
GERMANY
POLAND
BELGIUM
Brussels
Prague
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Paris
LUXEMBURG
Bay of Biscay
Vienna
Budapest
FRANCE
Bern
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
RUMANIA
SWITZERLAND
Bucharest
Belgrade
Black Sea
Constantinople
YUGOSLAVIA
Adriatic Sea
BULGARIA
Lisbon
Madrid
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
CORSICA
Rome
Sofia
ITALY
ALBANIA
TURKEY
SARDINIA
GREECE
Aegean Sea
IRAQ
SYRIA
Athens
SICILY
CYPRUS
CRETE
0
250
Miles
Mediterranean Sea
~ARTHUR BANKS~

condemnation of the multi-national system itself. A new comprehensive international system was required. President Wilson, who was among politicians the principal champion of this radical thinking, regarded a collective security system as an alternative to what had gone before, not as a supplement: the old system was bad in itself. He shared the belief that wars were caused by alliances, by armaments and by arms races; he saw the First World War as a logical consequence of the formation of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente and Anglo-German naval competition, and he wanted to create an international system which would make such things unnecessary and proscribe them. But the new system embodied in the League of Nations did not work in the Wilsonian way because too many important states remained outside it, because it was too new to be trusted, and ultimately because some of its more important members did not want it to work.

Between the French and American approaches to peace in Europe there emerged a distinctive British attitude which sought security by reconciling Germany with its former enemies and with the terms of the peace settlement, if necessary by modifying the latter. Champions of reconciliation argued that it was a surer safeguard of the peace than anti-German alliances, that the Germans were not after all the horde of savages portrayed by wartime propaganda but a Christian nation which had produced Goethe and Beethoven, that there was in Germany much to admire from standards of public behaviour and public administration to open-air weekends of an unimpeachably healthy nature, that the reparations demanded by the peace treaty were unfairly discriminatory. This was a laudable attempt to bury hatchets, all the more laudable since the British public continued to harbour powerful anti-German emotions. It was also firmly grounded in political calculation. The alternative to reconciliation with Germany was the prospect of a second European war against Germany and the maintenance in peacetime of a military establishment which, however natural to a Frenchman, was anathema to the British: the Dominions too disliked a view of things in which the British empire was a reserve force to be used to redeem the imbalance of power in Europe. Both as an island and as an empire Great Britain was congenitally wedded to a view of the German question which was different from the French view. The principal achievement of the British view was the Locarno treaties of 1925, a local and limited settlement which, however, bypassed the Wilsonian general approach to security and also contradicted the essential bases of French policy.

The Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 had been a failure and the tough school in Paris was eclipsed when Raymond Poincaré was

succeeded by Édouard Herriot and France accepted the Dawes plan in 1924. A first attempt to reassure France focused on strengthening the League's machinery of collective security. The Covenant provided that a state must not carry a dispute to the point of war without first trying to settle it in one of a number of specified ways and accepting a cooling-off period of three months. If a signatory of the Covenant broke this rule, it was branded as an aggressor and other members would together apply sanctions against it. But the rule was a limited one. It did not apply if the Council of the League was not unanimous about the rights and wrongs of the dispute; it did not apply if the dispute was found to lie within the domestic jurisdiction of the state concerned; and it did not apply if that state observed the cooling-off rule and the dispute was still unresolved at the end of it. These exceptions were called the gaps in the Covenant and in 1924 the so-called Geneva Protocol sought to plug the gaps by providing for the compulsory arbitration of all disputes and the application of sanctions to every resort to war. The protocol was accepted by the British Labour government but the Conservatives, returning to power in 1924, refused to ratify it because Great Britain, strongly reinforced by the independent British Dominions, thought that the scope of the Covenant was already wide enough and ought not to be enlarged in such a way as to cumber members of the League with further commitments. The new British government then proposed something else – a system for keeping the peace in western Europe, based on the acceptance of Germany as a state like any other. This was the genesis of Locarno.

What France feared was a fresh German attack one day across the Rhine and through the Rhineland. Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary in Stanley Baldwin's new government, proposed that Great Britain and Italy should guarantee the Franco-German and Belgo-German frontiers without discrimination as to an aggressor; that is to say, Germany was guaranteed as much as France and Belgium. For Great Britain this reciprocity was more than a diplomatic nicety, since it ruled out a second Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, but for France reciprocity meant the end of a special advantage and a fundamental review of French strategy. It was no longer possible to hope that another war would begin beyond France's frontiers instead of with an invasion across them. The best thing now was to take steps to keep the Germans out. A few years later the Maginot Line was begun, a line of fortifications which proved useless when the Germans invaded in 1940 but which meanwhile corroded the French spirit since the obvious thing to do with a fortified line is to sit tight behind it. (The Maginot Line has been chiefly derided for its psychological effects on French military thinking and general

French morale. Tactically it was defective even on the premises of those who believed in it, since it did not cover the whole of France's eastern front – Pétain having pronounced the Ardennes to be impassable. Even had it been completed it was still an anachronism, a defensive line performing essentially the same function as a trench but ineffective in a war of movement in which no line could stop all the enemy's armour or even most of it.)

The Locarno system was also defective from the French point of view because Great Britain refused to extend it to eastern Europe. Germany did not accept its eastern frontiers. It was in fact Stresemann's intention to alter these frontiers, as well as other features of the Versailles treaty which were obnoxious to Germany, and his acceptance of a firm settlement in the west, including the demilitarization of the Rhineland, which was freely reaffirmed at Locarno, was part of the price he was willing to pay in order to separate western from eastern problems and gain a greater freedom of manoeuvre in the east. With Poland and Czechoslovakia he agreed to conclude arbitration treaties but no more. France extended guarantees to these two countries but the British refusal to do so was more significant. In the west Locarno confirmed Versailles, in the east it questioned Versailles and it did so because Great Britain, anxious to conciliate Germany, and Germany, anxious to keep a free hand in the east, prevailed over France, which would have preferred to strengthen the anti-German forces in that area. Locarno was also a principal source of the mistaken notion that Italy was a Great Power.

The Locarno settlement provided the formal basis for western European security for eleven years (1925–36). In 1926 Germany joined the League of Nations. It also took part in the Disarmament Conference which assembled at Geneva in February 1932 in a belated attempt to fix and reduce arms levels as the Covenant of the League had envisaged more than a decade earlier. But to Hitler treaties and conferences represented limitations upon his freedom of action, preventing Germany from getting strong in military muscle and breathing space. As he himself later said he had to extricate Germany from the toils of the League and the Disarmament Conference. He left both in October 1933 and in the next year he concluded a nonaggression pact with Poland, a first stab at the French system in eastern Europe. For some years Hitler managed to persuade foreigners that the sum total of his ambitions was the rectification of legitimate German grievances by negotiation. There was some nervousness about his methods but a strong tendency to credit him with the same aims as Stresemann and Brüning. Hitler achieved this chiefly by alleging it to people who wished to believe it and were in the habit of treating statements

as true until they were proved to be untrue: westerners were particularly influenced by his renunciation of claims to Alsace and Lorraine (which he incorporated into Greater Germany in 1940).

Within six months of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor the four principal European Powers concluded a pact among themselves. This Four Power Pact was more important for its signatories than for what it contained, which was vague and platitudinous. It was promoted by Mussolini, who wanted to assert Italy's right to a place above the salt, welcomed by Great Britain because it accorded with the British policy of general reconciliation, accepted by Hitler because it gave him time and recognition, and signed by France because not to sign was to court isolation. It implied that the treaty of Versailles was no longer the basic factor in European affairs and that these would be regulated in future by a concert of the more powerful states, opponents of Versailles as well as its champions. The countries chiefly threatened by this prospect were the medium states of central and eastern Europe which owed their existence to Versailles and were allies of France. One of them, Poland, took the startling step of making a pact with Hitler.

But the lines were not yet drawn. An Anglo-French-Italian front against Germany seemed possible, until it was extinguished by the Ethiopian crisis, which put Italy firmly on Hitler's side. Before that Germany and Italy were at arm's length because of Austria. Austria had a Nazi Party of its own, which was subordinate to the German party. It had also a militaristic right-wing organization, the *Heimwehr* (supported by Italian funds), and a reactionary clerical government under a Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss, who had become Chancellor in 1932 and was secretly in league with Mussolini to crush the socialist opposition without having to ally himself either with the *Heimwehr* or, still less, the Austrian Nazis. Soon after Hitler became Chancellor in Germany Dollfuss banned the Austrian Nazi Party. Hitler had been encouraging the Austrian Nazis to make a bid for power, but he realized that he would do himself more harm than good if, with Germany still less than semi-armed and more than semi-isolated, he were to stir up so much trouble in Austria that other states would unite against him. Mussolini was at least as anxious as France to keep Austria from being annexed by Germany and he entered into agreements with Austria and Hungary, whose leaders he received in Rome in March 1934. Hitler decided therefore to hold his hand for the time being, but the Austrian Nazis were less responsive to restraint than to encouragement and in July – with the connivance of some German Nazis but perhaps not Hitler himself – they attempted a coup and assassinated Dollfuss. Mussolini staged an armed display on his frontier with Austria. Hitler did

nothing and the coup was a failure. This string of incidents is revealing. Hitler did not lack political courage but he combined courage with caution. He was inclined to attend upon circumstances with the result that the timing of his principal operations was often dictated by circumstance. The later history of Austria confirms the point. At the end of 1937 Hitler was still waiting with a wary eye on France, and although he actually went into Austria in March 1938 the timing was, as we shall see, still not of his own choosing. This readiness of Hitler to bide his time can produce the misleading conclusion that Hitler's aims were never formulated so precisely in his mind as events made them appear; but it was only his timetable and not his programme which was vague. He was like those persons who love to make lists of things to do but without any clear idea when they will get them done. This does not mean that he did not intend to do them.

Austria was one of the two keys to Italian policy. The second was the Balkans. Italy looked nervously at its frontier with Austria on the Brenner and also at Albania where the eastern shore of the Adriatic comes closest to Italy. In the twenties Mussolini's policy was comparatively pacific – to secure Italian interests by treaties of mutual friendship. He wanted a government in Vienna which was neither too left-wing to make and keep bargains with fascist Italy nor too powerful to need to bother about them. In 1925 he was unenthusiastic about the Locarno plan because it created two categories of frontiers, the guaranteed and the unguaranteed, the Brenner frontier being one of the latter, and in 1934 he was alarmed by the prospect of a strong German government in Vienna in place of a more tractable Austrian one. In Albania he had rejected the policy of direct intervention advocated by nationalists like Luigi Federzoni in favour of reducing Albania to puppet status by economic domination and by marrying an Italian princess to King Zog (in the event she married another Balkan monarch, King Boris of Bulgaria, instead). Here Italy's dominant concern was not Germany but France. Albania apart, the eastern shore of the Adriatic belonged to Yugoslavia which was an ally of France and suspected Italy of coveting the Dalmatian coast. Mussolini pursued an irregular policy; Italy was not strong enough to enable him to be anything but opportunistic, especially when his European concerns became linked with ambitions in Africa. He tried to secure his two soft spots in Europe by agreement with France in Laval's time but his attempt to include in the bargain the conquest of Ethiopia caused the collapse of the Franco-Italian rapprochement and propelled him into alliance with Hitler. Then, largely at Ciano's prompting, he reverted to the policy of direct

intervention in Albania which he proceeded to conquer in April 1939.

Had Mussolini's ambitions been limited to Europe, a Franco-Italian alliance might have come into being, but Mussolini wanted to cut a dash in the world, especially in the Mediterranean which he regarded as an Italian lake and in Africa where, to his chagrin, France and Great Britain had acquired more prestigious empires than Italy. With a sort of Disraelian rapture Mussolini decided to conquer Ethiopia and nominate the King of Italy as emperor. He anticipated no real objections from Paris or London, which, as he correctly judged, were not really interested in Ethiopia. He had had his first encounter with Hitler in June 1934 just before the coup in Austria, but in January 1935 Pierre Laval visited Rome in an attempt to divert Mussolini to a pro-French attitude.

Laval became Foreign Minister in October 1934 in succession to Louis Barthou, who was murdered by a Croat in Marseilles along with King Alexander of Yugoslavia in what was probably an Italo-Hungarian plot to disrupt the Franco-Yugoslav alliance. Laval signed the pact with the USSR which had been negotiated by his predecessor but he did so only because this pact was in any case stillborn. France had a conservative government and the USSR a communist one. Ideological differences were not by themselves a bar to an alliance with a country which Richelieu had allied with Turks against Christians at the noontide of the Ottoman advance into Europe. But Richelieu had never feared what the Turks might do to France, whereas the politicians of the Third Republic feared very much what the USSR might do to France by means of the French Communist Party. Unlike the Sultan, Stalin had a political party inside France which was directed by the Communist International inside the USSR. Although Stalin had abandoned Trotsky's policy of permanent revolution, he had not gainsaid it and as a result an alliance between the USSR and the French Third Republic was all but impossible. For Laval the pact with the USSR which he inherited was distasteful but it was also a possible means to a different end: a rapprochement with Germany.

Laval, like a number of his contemporaries and like even more Frenchmen after the Second World War (including de Gaulle), sincerely desired to put an end to Franco-German hostility. He worked towards a rapprochement by using a Franco-Russian pact as a reserve threat and also by seeking an understanding with Italy which would still further isolate Germany. His Italian policy was dangerous because it disturbed the countries of the Little Entente. These wanted France to make an alliance with the USSR, but they distrusted Italy which was allied with Hungary-an anti-Versailles state which had lost territory to all three members of the Little Entente. So Laval risked losing his Little Entente allies unless he

could reconcile them, especially Yugoslavia, with Italy. Moreover Mussolini had his price. It was a free hand for Italy in Africa. During his visit to Rome Laval at least implied that France would pay this price, although it is still open to doubt whether he was signalling to Mussolini that Italy might go ahead and attack Ethiopia or whether he meant no more than to concede to Italy an exclusive economic field in that country. The vagueness was not unintentional. Mussolini interpreted it in the most favourable light to his own ambitions and, at Stresa in April of the next year, he joined France and Great Britain in condemning breaches of the treaty of Versailles and subscribed a series of agreements whose general message was that these three powers were constituting an anti-German front. Again part of the bargain, in Mussolini's mind, was a free hand for Italy in Africa but again the understanding was so tacit that Ethiopia was not even mentioned. The Stresa front was a flimsy affair. In any case the front quickly obeyed its own nature and fell apart. In June the British government, still rather more intent on making friends with Germany than building an opposition to it, made a naval agreement with Germany in contravention not only of the treaty of Versailles but also of the declarations of the Stresa conference. France and Italy were not consulted, although France was informed at a late stage in the negotiations; its protests were ignored. This episode emphasized Great Britain's abandonment of the full letter of Versailles, but by conniving at a breach of Versailles Great Britain undermined its ability to protest against breaches of Locarno, which was its substitute for Versailles and was soon to be equally flouted by Hitler.

Although an Italian conquest of Ethiopia might endanger no vital French or British national interest, it could only be undertaken in breach of the Covenant of the League of Nations. It was therefore bound to weaken international stability by infringing the general principle of *pacta sunt servanda* as well as the precise terms of the Covenant, and a substantial body of opinion in France, Great Britain and elsewhere was not prepared to connive at Italian aggression for fear of encouraging aggression generally and weakening institutions which might be used to stop Hitler. Besides which the butchering of innocent Ethiopians to make a Roman empire was offensive on elementary human grounds. Consequently when war broke out in October, six months after the Stresa meeting, Mussolini discovered that his campaign was running up against more than a scandalized outcry. Laval discovered that his pro-Italian policy would not work so easily and he was forced to take a lead, jointly with Great Britain, in invoking sanctions against Italy.

But Great Britain and France did not persist. Torn between a policy of

upholding the Covenant and the rule of law and, on the other hand, securing Italian friendship at the cost of letting Ethiopia down, they found that their zeal for sanctions stopped short of those measures which could have effectively checked Mussolini. Such measures, they feared, would force Mussolini to go to war with them. They were probably right, for Mussolini was too far committed in Africa and too vulnerable at home to refuse the challenge and survive. But by the same tokens he would not only have resorted to war; he would most probably have lost it. London and Paris were, however, not minded to bring the issue to the testing point. The British government was acutely conscious of the risks entailed, not directly from a clash with Italy but at second remove from Japan, which might turn an Anglo-Italian war into an occasion for attacking the British empire in Asia: the British cabinet was repeatedly warned by the Admiralty that the Royal Navy no longer had the capacity to wage war simultaneously in European and Pacific waters. So Great Britain and France both preferred to bluff (a threat of British naval action which had no effect on the Italian government but persuaded the Italian people that Great Britain was an enemy) and they also entered into separate manoeuvres behind the scenes to give Mussolini satisfaction in Africa. In London the Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, resurrected a proposal for partitioning Ethiopia which had been put to Mussolini before the fighting began and took it to Paris where Laval improved on it – from the Italian point of view. The two governments were at this point closer in their foreign policies than at most times between the wars. But this Hoare-Laval plan was then leaked to the press before it was presented to Mussolini. There was a public outcry and the plan (and Hoare) had to be dropped. But Mussolini got what he wanted anyway with the result that France and Great Britain got the worst of both worlds. The failure of sanctions discredited the League and the mechanisms of collective security and created a mood of pessimism. The Stresa front dissolved and the Rome-Berlin Axis was created – although the phrase itself, invented by Mussolini, did not appear until shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish civil war. Mussolini used force with impunity. Hitler converted a potential enemy into an ally and had a free demonstration of how boldness pays. France, estranged from Great Britain by the collapse of the Hoare-Laval plan which confirmed all the worst French suspicions about the British, was left with no entente with Italy, only an empty pact with the USSR, no rapprochement with Germany, and damaged relations with Poland and the Little Entente. The attempt to bring law and order into the international system was manifestly crippled as the League's principal members discovered that their obligations under the Covenant were

incompatible with their national interests – particularly in the case of Great Britain which lacked the power to uphold both the Covenant in Europe and British imperial interests and obligations in the East.

In March 1935, just before the Stresa conference, Hitler had introduced compulsory military service in breach of the treaty of Versailles (his first breach of the treaty) and acknowledged the existence of the German air forces. In the same year he recovered the Saar by plebiscite, with nine tenths of the voters choosing reunion with Germany; concluded the Anglo-German naval treaty; promulgated the viciously anti-semitic Nuremberg decrees; recorded a 99 per cent victory in a referendum; and prepared Berlin for the oldest surviving festival of peace, the Olympic Games. In March 1936, he ordered his army to march into the Rhineland which was demilitarized not only by Versailles but also by Locarno which he had reaffirmed twelve months previously. He was copying Mussolini but was still not sure whether he could repeat in Europe the success Mussolini had had in Africa. The French government of the day was a pre-election caretaker team, divided within itself, estranged from Great Britain by the collapse of the Laval-Hoare plan, filled with fear by the gloomy and timorous advice of its own generals, and deceived by a German cover plan which induced it to believe that Hitler was using 265,000 men instead of only a few battalions backed by four divisions. Hitler assured his own generals, who feared war and defeat, that no French soldier would stir and halfway through the operation he refused a request from Blomberg for a partial withdrawal. He had the satisfaction of seeing his generals much more nervous than he was, and the success of the coup redoubled his ascendancy over them, his own self-assurance and his belief in the use of force. This was not Hitler's first challenge to the western powers – his withdrawal from the League and from the Disarmament Conference in October 1933 may be said to be the first and his acknowledgement of German rearmament the second – but it was the first in which he used his army. Yet the risks which he ran were not as great as they seemed, for three months earlier his Ambassador in Paris had passed on to him a strong hint from Laval that the French army would be used only to defend French soil and would not cross France's frontiers. Although the French Foreign Minister, Étienne Flandin, argued that a mere show of force would send the Germans scuttling back, only a minority of his cabinet supported him and it is unlikely that after the first few hours a show of force would have been enough.

By the remilitarization of the Rhineland Hitler challenged with impunity the two strongest powers in Europe, who had been also the principal champions of Versailles and were, since Locarno, Germany's allies in a

comprehensive scheme for keeping the peace in western Europe. He broke France's system of alliances in the east no less than the settlement in the west by exposing the feebleness of France's will, and he implicitly asserted that Germany was a greater power in eastern Europe than either France or the USSR; thereafter nobody was prepared to put the assertion to the test. Against these gains there was only one feeble warning signal. The USSR had joined the League of Nations in 1934 and concluded a treaty of mutual assistance with France in May 1935. A similar treaty was made with Czechoslovakia and a British Minister, Anthony Eden, visited Moscow the same year. But the effectiveness of the USSR as an ally was discounted (Germany had beaten Russia in the First World War and seemed well able to do so again), the ratification of the Franco-Soviet pact was tellingly delayed for nine months and Great Britain was even further from considering such a reversal of alliances.

In July 1936 (the month in which sanctions against Italy were abandoned) a revolt broke out against the republican government of Spain. The ensuing civil war cemented the alliance between Hitler and Mussolini who recognized and helped the forces of revolutionary Fascism under General Francisco Franco; it created a new threat to France's back door; it crystallized and embittered the ideological conflict in Europe between Fascism and communism and added to the perplexities of democrats; it raised the level of violence and made it international, for in Spain battle was joined internationally as foreign volunteers and foreign governments took sides in a war which ended only six months before the beginning of the World War in Europe.

The sources and course of the Spanish civil war will not be related here but we have to consider its effects in Europe as a whole. All the principal European powers were faced with the question whether to intervene and, if so, how and how much. The insurgents appealed at once to Italy and Germany for aid. The government appealed to France. Italy and Germany responded promptly but with different motives. Mussolini, and even more so his son-in-law and Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, were comparatively wholehearted in desiring Franco's victory. On the German side such a victory would bring advantages; in a future European war Germany would be entitled to expect Spanish help in the form of submarine bases and iron ore and even possibly co-belligerence, while active participation in the civil war would, as Goering pointed out and as the town of Guernica later discovered, give the Luftwaffe useful training. But Hitler did not want the civil war to turn into a general war for which he felt himself as yet unprepared and he therefore reacted with some caution and limited German aid to the insurgents until he came to feel that this risk was very

small. German and Italian help to Franco were decisive on more than one occasion.

The British government was as determined as Hitler to prevent the extension of the war, and this determination overrode all other considerations. In France, Léon Blum wanted at first to help the legitimate Spanish government with arms but changed his mind owing to opposition in his cabinet and parliament: he feared civil war in France too, were he to persist in supporting a Spanish Popular Front which included communists. British opposition added to Blum's constraints. His more right-wing colleagues urged him not to get out of step with Great Britain. Thus the war in Spain intensified French dependence on Great Britain and its right-wing policies at the one moment in the thirties when France, under a socialist Prime Minister, might have been disposed to seek an opening to the Left in its foreign policy and an understanding with the USSR.

There was also a division of opinion in the United States administration where the anti-interventionists, led by the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, won the day, again partly influenced by the British decision. A Non-Intervention Committee, comprising two dozen states, was created and continued to function throughout a war in which intervention was unconcealed. The principal effects were three: first, that the continuance nonetheless of Italian and German help created profound cynicism; secondly, that the persistence of Great Britain and France nonetheless in the policy of non-intervention earned the one a reputation for hypocrisy and the other a reputation for feebleness which were equally deserved; and thirdly, that the Spanish government could get help from nowhere except the USSR which supplied it to the considerable benefit of the Spanish communists who were able greatly to enhance their initially modest position on the government side. Stalin's attitude to aid for Spain was much like Hitler's. He decided to give some aid but not too much. He too feared the extension of the war (if everybody had known of everybody else's fears, each might have been less afraid), but he also feared a Franco victory which, by further distracting and weakening France, might encourage Hitler to press his ambitions in eastern Europe.

In retrospect the Spanish civil war appears as the extreme example of a phenomenon of much wider extent in Europe. It has often been said that one of the most upsetting changes in twentieth-century Europe was the dismemberment of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, but no less upsetting was the disintegration of apparently more coherent societies like France and Spain. In Spain, as the civil war revealed, the nation dissolved into groups which not only warred among themselves but looked beyond Spain for friends and helpers. Even in countries which did not disintegrate

so spectacularly as Spain national bonds were so far enfeebled that ideological chieftains like Mussolini (a successful one) or Charles Maurras (a relatively unsuccessful one) were able to treat whole sections of their fellow-citizens – communists, socialists – as inferior parts of society, as outsiders within the walls. Social conflict was internationalized as these groups looked increasingly to their friends in other countries to help them against their own governments.

The war in Spain had a further consequence for European politics. The tactical and psychological successes of the German dive-bombers, the Stukas, created a false impression of the power of modern air forces, an impression which was immensely to Germany's advantage and played a substantial part in conditioning Anglo-French policies in the year of Munich. The Stukas in Spain spread fear far beyond it.

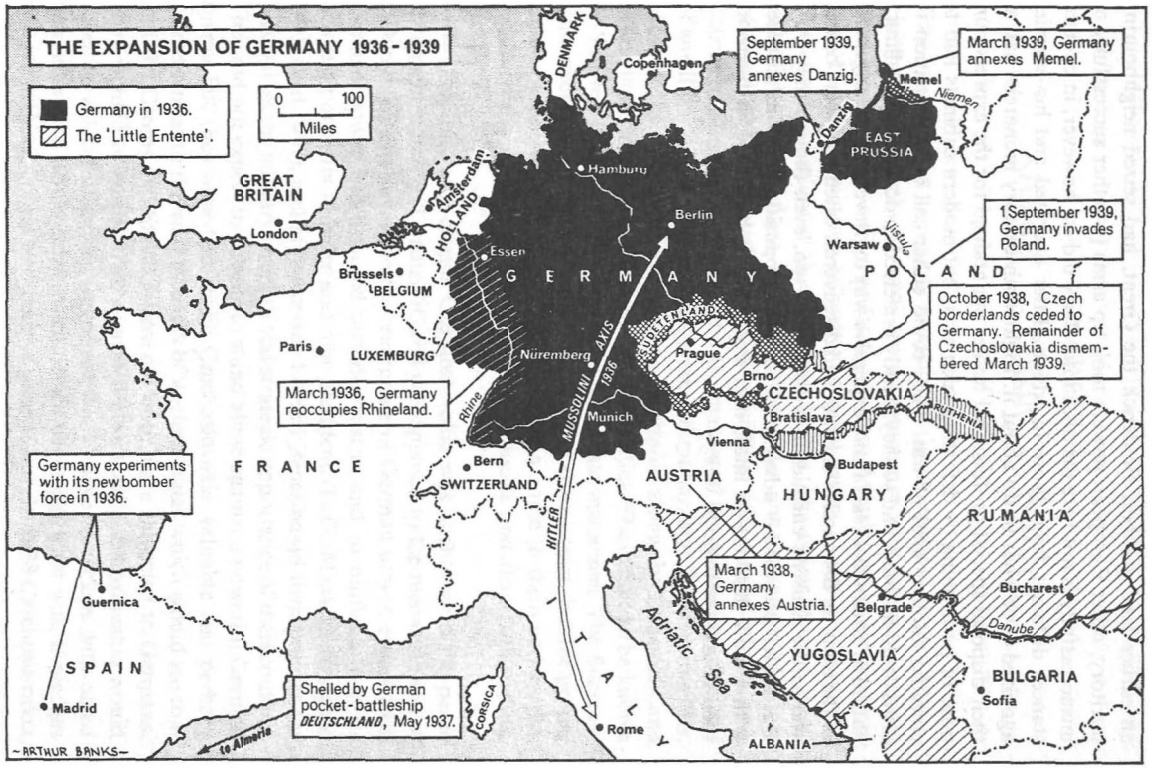
In November 1936 Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, a short document by which the signatories undertook to exchange information and consult together about the international activities of communism and to concert counter-activities. Other countries were invited to adhere and Italy did so a year later, but the main point of the published agreement was to worry the USSR about its eastern frontiers and Great Britain about its position as an Asian power. By a secret protocol signed on the same day as the treaty Germany and Japan promised, in the event of an unprovoked attack or threat by the USSR against either of them, to do nothing which would make things easier for the USSR; each of them also promised to enter into no treaty with the USSR without the consent of the other. This secret part of the pact was not all that Hitler desired since Japan had declined to give positive help to Germany in the event of hostilities between Germany and the USSR. Japan was not to be drawn into a European war.

One of the most important pieces of evidence which we have concerning Hitler's intentions at this period is a document known as the Hossbach memorandum. This document was written by Colonel Hossbach five days after a meeting in Berlin on 5 November 1937 which he attended and at which he secretly took notes in spite of instructions by Hitler to the contrary. The meeting was attended by Hitler, his Ministers for War and Foreign Affairs (Blomberg and Neurath) and his three Commanders-in-Chief (Fritsch, Raeder and Goering), and lasted from 4.15 to 10.30 p.m. It consisted of a long statement on foreign affairs by Hitler, introduced with unusual solemnity as the fruit of four and a half years' reflection and as his political testament in the event of his death. Hitler stated, not for the first time, that the object of German policy was the security and multiplication of the German people. He repeated what he

had said and written publicly on other occasions about *Lebensraum*. He rejected colonies as a solution; the necessary space had to be found in Europe, although later generations might have other problems which would force them to seek other solutions. There could be no solution without force, and this meant risks. Hitler then got nearer to details. He said that although nobody could tell what the situation would be in the years 1943–5, one thing was certain: Germany could not wait longer than that, partly because he himself would be past the peak of his powers and partly because Germany's advantages would begin to wane as its armament became obsolete and its enemies caught up. At that point he would in any event attack in order to resolve the space problem. Before it he would be guided by circumstances. He would watch his western and south-eastern flanks and he envisaged action against Austria and Czechoslovakia if France were weakened by trouble at home or by embroilments with Italy in the Mediterranean.

This document demonstrates once more Hitler's two main characteristics in external affairs: the fixity of his purpose, which was Germany's forcible territorial expansion in Europe, and the vagueness of his timing. Apart from setting an ultimate date – at least six years in the future and possibly eight – when he would definitely take the initiative, Hitler was leaving everything to opportunity, and in the event he attacked Austria and Czechoslovakia separately and not simultaneously, without the benefit of such a French crisis as he had envisaged or of a diversionary Mediterranean war. When he invaded Austria on 12 March 1938 and annexed it to the German Reich he did so because the Austrian Chancellor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, forced his hand. Schuschnigg decreed a plebiscite in order to strengthen his position in dealing with Austrian Nazi excesses – and Hitler feared Schuschnigg might succeed all too well. There were many stories at the time of the unreadiness of the German forces. Hitler had taken one of the risks which, as he had said in his lecture in the previous November, always attend the use of force. It was not a very big risk. Nobody did anything to stop him. Mussolini acquiesced. He had no choice, but Hitler's effusive thanks reflected his concern about Mussolini's reaction to the flouting of a basic precept of Italian foreign policy. Hitler's relief on this occasion may explain his loyalty to Mussolini through the next seven years.

In the eighteen months following the *Anschluss* Hitler attacked two other states, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The difference between the Austrian case and these other two does not lie in the result: all three states were eliminated. Hitler reckoned that he could have his way with them because greater states than they did not want to fight for their sake. When


THE EXPANSION OF GERMANY 1936 - 1939
Germany in 1936.
The 'Little Entente'.
0 100
Miles
September 1939, Germany annexes Danzig.
March 1939, Germany annexes Memel.
1 September 1939, Germany invades Poland.
October 1938, Czech borderlands ceded to Germany. Remainder of Czechoslovakia dismembered March 1939.
March 1936, Germany reoccupies Rhineland.
March 1938, Germany annexes Austria.
Germany experiments with its new bomber force in 1936.
Shelled by German pocket-battleship DEUTSCHLAND, May 1937.
DENMARK
Copenhagen
Memel
Niemen
Danzig
EAST PRUSSIA
Hamburg
Amsterdam
HOLLAND
Berlin
GREAT BRITAIN
London
Essen
Warsaw
Vistula
POLAND
Brussels
BELGIUM
GERMANY
SUDETENLAND
Paris
LUXEMBURG
Nüremberg
AXIS
1936
Prague
Brno
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Rhine
MUSSOLINI
Munich
Bratislava
RUTHENIA
Vienna
Budapest
FRANCE
Bern
SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
HITLER
RUMANIA
Guernica
Adriatic Sea
Belgrade
Bucharest
Danube
YUGOSLAVIA
SPAIN
BULGARIA
Madrid
Sofia
CORSICA
to Almeria
Rome
ITALY
ALBANIA
~ARTHUR BANKS~

an earlier land-grabber, Frederick the Great, had seized neighbouring territory, other European powers took up arms (whether successfully or unsuccessfully is not here the question). They did so, however, in circumstances different from those in which Hitler operated and his enemies agonized over what to do about it. Eighteenth-century monarchs had at their disposal special professional bodies maintained for the express purpose of performing or defeating such acts, but modern cabinets had to consider another kind of war. They could either call a whole nation to arms or do nothing, and so they greatly preferred to do nothing. Calling a nation to arms was a fearful and expensive way to prevent a rearrangement of the map, as Bismarck's enemies had discovered when they were beaten and as the Kaiser's enemies had discovered too, even though they won. But Hitler pressed his adversaries too far. Opposition to him stiffened with a slow desperation until, over Poland as it happened, it overbore their reluctance to go to war.

CHAPTER 4
Munich . . . Prague . . . Warsaw

CZECHOSLOVAKIA was a product of the disruption of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It was a sturdy democracy with natural resources, modern skills and – except on its southern or Austrian side – strong frontiers. But this promising offspring of the doctrine of self-determination was also a negation of that doctrine. It was, like Great Britain at the end of the Middle Ages, a mixture of peoples not yet congealed into a nation. It had a population of 14 to 15 million, of whom 10 million were Czechs or Slovaks, 3 million were Germans and the remainder consisted of small but self-conscious Hungarian, Ukrainian and Polish minorities. Most of the 3 million Germans lived scattered along the Bohemian and Moravian borderlands and in the principal cities. They came to be known as Sudeten Germans, but this was a deliberate misnomer. The Sudetenland, properly so called, lay north and east of their homes, but for propaganda purposes it was convenient to attach a name to them and so give the impression that they constituted a compact and detachable ethnic group.

By its nature and origins Czechoslovakia was anchored to the peace settlement which had created it, and was opposed to the reconstitution of a Danubian empire and to the resurgence of German power, especially a German power which would include Austria and so outflank it at its weakest point. Its founder and first president, T. G. Masaryk (resigned 1935, died 1937), and his successor Edvard Beneš based their policies for survival on the military strength and strategic importance of their country. They did not expect to be able to stand alone against a powerful German enemy but they aimed to make Czechoslovakia valuable and perhaps even essential to the vital interests of western states which would see to it that the Czechs and Slovaks were not once more subjected to Germans. They wanted to ensure that an armed attack on Czechoslovakia would never be a local affair; an aggressor would have to reckon with allied powers and so would think twice before beginning what was, if pledges meant anything, bound to become a general war. In 1938 Czechoslovakia had one of Europe's most noted armaments industries and an army which was almost the equal of the German army in men and equipment, though inferior in staying power because of Czechoslovakia's smaller population