Post-War Problems

2s.6d.net

THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

The Royal Institute of International Affairs

Post-War Problems

2s.6d.net

THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

The Royal Institute of International Affairs

THE PROBLEM OF GERMANY

AN INTERIM REPORT
BY A CHATHAM HOUSE STUDY GROUP

London
THE ROYAL
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

New York Toronto Bombay Melbourne Cape Town
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

First published, June 1943
Reprinted, with certain revisions, October 1943
Reprinted, April 1944
Reprinted, June 1945

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE BROADWATER PRESS
WELWYN GARDEN CITY, HERTFORDSHIRE

CONTENTS

I am glad to take this opportunity of thanking on behalf of the Council the members of the Group for giving so much of their time to the preparation of this report.

ASTOR
Chairman of the Council.

Chatham House,
10 St James's Square,
London, S.W.1.

May, 1943.

I. OUTLINES

THIS is a study, undertaken from the point of view of the security of Great Britain, of what we believe are likely to be the main problems affecting Anglo-German relations after Germany's defeat. We have tried to select those issues the crucial character of which will be least affected by the passage of time, rather than those (such as the punishment of guilty persons and the reparation of war damage, or immediate problems of order and reconstruction) which belong more especially to the clearing-up process. The steps taken and the attitudes adopted during that process will indeed have a most important bearing on the sequel, but should themselves be directed by longer views.

An unofficial inquiry such as the present cannot dogmatically recommend particular solutions, but it can help to uncover the practical implications of various possible alternatives. Our method is to examine each question from both of the standpoints which are, as it were, the poles around which all discussion in Britain of post-war Anglo-German relations turns—the policy of force, and the policy of non-force or co-operation. Naturally, actual decisions on policy will be taken not according to the requirements of one selected principle of action, but in the light of the whole concrete situation as it will be when the need for each decision arises. Thus, of the principles which we have chosen as the two best vantage grounds from which to survey the field, the actual policy towards Germany will almost certainly rely on the one in some cases, on the other in others; the practical problem will be to decide which is the more appropriate in a given case. To some extent, though without precision of detail, this decision has already been taken, in the declaration of principles known as the Atlantic Charter, and in the Anglo-Russian Treaty of May 26, 1942.

THE GERMAN PROBLEM IN ITS WORLD SETTING

The question of Anglo-German relations can be considered in isolation only if the provisional character of this procedure is fully realized. German aggression has threatened other Powers than Britain, and Britain has found herself threatened, though less immediately, by the aggression of other Powers than Germany. After the defeat of the Axis, the eyes of China, of the United States, of the greater part of the British Commonwealth, and perhaps even of Russia, will be turned towards Japan at least as much as towards Germany. With the

extension of the effects of aggression the circle of those who will claim a voice in the settlement also extends, and the Rio de Janeiro Conference of January, 1942, by imposing on Latin-American countries the duty of defining their position in the conflict, removed the last possibility that any important group of states could fail to be directly interested. The policy to be adopted towards Germany will, therefore, owing to the circumstances of the war itself, be of general concern, and will be worked out jointly with the Dominions, the principal Allies, and the other United Nations. However, Britain's own policy towards Germany will be an essential thread in the skein, and provided we remember that it is but one thread, to follow it up should in our view be a useful contribution, both in itself and as a way of approaching wider questions of international order.

Recognition of the truth that the security of Britain is bound up with that of other countries is no guarantee that a sufficiently broad basis of security will in fact be provided. So far as military support is involved states have hitherto concerned themselves but reluctantly with the security of other states, even on a close calculation of interest. In the inter-war period it proved impossible to build up a defensive situation on the basis of common resistance to aggression, in spite of formal commitments both general and particular. In the present war, apart from the intervention of the British Commonwealth and France on behalf of Poland, and by the Dutch East Indies and Central American countries after Pearl Harbour, no state made common military cause with a victim of aggression until itself attacked. At a time when strategic and technical factors render a neutral position ever more precarious, the determination to remain neutral or non-belligerent as long as possible has actuated the policy of great and small Powers alike, and even one of the major belligerents, France, withdrew from the fight. It is hoped that the time is coming when France can and will be fully in the fight again, but the mere fact of this withdrawal by the former leader of European politics is significant. On the one hand, therefore, states have been unwilling to increase their immediate risks by collective action; on the other, experience seems to show that security is not to be won in a cramped and passive attitude of isolated self-defence. A country which aims merely at national security, in the narrow sense, is likely to fail of its object. It must aim at this, it is true, but it is more likely to attain its purpose by reaching forward also to wider objectives.

It may be suggested that changes in the political structure of Europe, or in its social systems and ruling ideas, would allow us to by-pass the present inquiry. Though nationality may, in time, lose something of its sovereign significance, there are no signs at present that Britain and Germany will cease to be independent states, or be fitted into a federal system. Even if there were to be federation, the American Civil War is a reminder that federation is not necessarily a guarantee of peace. It has often been stressed that we are in the midst of a revolution, and that revolutions cut across the vertical divisions of nationality by horizontal alignments of common class interests, or sympathies of ideas. We do not know what the impact of such a situation on Anglo-German relations is likely to be in the long run, but hitherto it has merely accentuated the conflict, as the religious revolution of the sixteenth century accentuated our conflict with Spain, and the political revolution of the eighteenth century our conflict with France. The essential point is that Britain and Germany are tough power structures. Only on the assumption, which nothing authorizes us to make, that their fundamental purposes will in future necessarily be harmonious, can the problem of their relations be relegated to the background.

Can we, for the moment leaving on one side all questions of moral and political consistency, nevertheless foresee some position of Britain's affairs which would enable her virtually to ignore Germany's continental ambitions?[1] Might we, for instance, look forward to a mutual reinforcement of British and American sea and air power—should we add land power also?—so massive and unconditional as to permit us to observe the European scene with the same security of mind as we enjoyed in the nineteenth century? In great affairs, policy cannot be based on a mere possibility, however attractive it may seem to many. Incidentally, the reliance by Britain on American aid may cause some to ask whether this whole problem should not be regarded as fundamentally German-American rather than Anglo-German. It is imperative, however, that British people should think out their own position in a matter so vital to their country's existence.

Nor is it possible to base policy on the assumption that Russia, however important her part in the defeat of Germany, will be willing or, until her industrial development has proceeded further, able to act as a complete counterweight to German aggressive

[1] The case for is argued by T124 in *Sea Power* (Cape, 1941); the case against by E. H. Carr in *Conditions of Peace* (Macmillan, 1942).

designs. The Anglo-Russian Treaty officially confirms this view. In these circumstances Britain cannot rely on the existence of an equilibrium of continental forces of a kind which would enable her to maintain an attitude of comparative detachment. Still more precarious would be an equilibrium resting on a combination of a liberated France with Germany's other European neighbours against Germany. Quite apart from the insufficiency of the industrial basis for such a combination, the clear lesson of recent events is that France must not again be counted upon, without massive aid on land from the very beginning, to take the first shock of a German westwards drive. It is, of course, possible that in time there will be not only recovery in France but such rapid progress in Europe's politically and socially depressed areas as to render them a less easy prey to German exploitation and intrigue; but only if Britain is amongst those who aid the process. It is the intuition of this possibility which lends force to Hitler's appeals for the "expulsion of Britain from Europe."

If, therefore, force is again required to restrain German aggressiveness, it will be for Britain to help in supplying it, and to pay the price in material and moral effort which the use of force will exact. If, on the other hand, we were to rely on trust and co-operation, Britain must, with the others, accept the risks of failure. We may, of course, discover that owing to events independent of our will the cycle of German aggressiveness is closed—as might be the case if the strain of the two world wars were to lead to a failure of German vital energies, or if the Germans themselves were unmistakably to shatter the frame, and renounce the doctrines, of militaristic statecraft. But emphatically we cannot build on these uncertainties.

While the war is in progress and German power bears down upon us, there is little likelihood of minimizing the dangers which it carries for the future. But for some time after Germany's defeat it will be easy to forget that the momentary power ratio between Germany and ourselves does not express the permanent facts. We shall become increasingly aware of preoccupations of internal policy, as well as of other tensions which will at that moment seem to concern our security more nearly than the possibility of renewed German aggression. Public opinion on Germany is likely to be bounded by two extremes: those who would have a settlement in which passion replaces calculation, and those who, having failed to realize what the German attempt to dominate Europe really meant, allow themselves to be persuaded by reasons of self-interest

or of intellectual fashion to deny the existence of a German problem.

The danger, however, will remain that Germany may again unloose a cataract of evil upon the world. However complete may be her military defeat, and however completely that defeat may be demonstrated,[1] there will almost certainly survive in Germany: (*a*) a nucleus determined to re-create, openly if free to do so, but otherwise secretly, Germany's military power; (*b*) a population still susceptible to war enthusiasm in spite of disillusionment, loving military action and display, discipline and comradeship, and deriving much of their sense of personal significance from their service with what they will continue to regard as the greatest of armies. Part at least of that population, even if for a while it revolts against the purely military view of life, will probably retain its arrogant persuasion of German racial superiority and perhaps much of its reverence for Hitler, and will be liable, in certain conditions, again to be shaped by the war party to its own design. If precedent is followed, the psychological preparation will begin immediately, and will consist in keeping the masses indoctrinated with the various beliefs[2] required to resist any tendencies to build international life on a co-operative basis. Above all, it will be necessary to show by the appropriate myths that the German army was not, in spite of all appearances, defeated in the war. Economic and military preparations belong to a later stage. We must be prepared to find that even after defeat the Second World War will appear to the German war party to have been on balance a favourable operation. What will be remembered will be not so much the actual defeat as the nearness to victory, leaving as ultimate result: (*a*) the conviction that for the future all continental European countries west of Russia may be eliminated as serious deterrent factors; (*b*) the hope that Russia may be neutralized; (*c*) the hope that Britain will have no more heart to resist a third attempt than France the second; (*d*) the hope that the United States may be so worked upon as to meet a third attempt unprepared. This all-embracing will to mastery, and the latent responsiveness of the German people, are the heart of the matter.

[1] "(Les allemands) avaient vu les soldats de Napoléon passer sous la porte de Brandenbourg, et chacun sait qu'à Leipsig ils l'avaient oublié!" Clemenceau, *Grandeurs et Misères d'une Victoire*, p. 98 (Paris, 1930).

[2] "The leaders of the German people saw to it that the necessity for and inevitability of war as the outcome of an immutable natural law should become an axiom of faith among the German people." E. Muller-Sturmheim: article on "The Spiritual Problem of Germany," *The Fortnightly*, March 1941.

This preface calls for two final observations. First, our provisional concentration on the German problem carries with it the risk, which must be guarded against, of forgetting not only the threat represented by other aggressors, but also the claims and interests of allies and neutrals. A special concern with Germany, even if to begin with it is of a defensive nature, could in time become a preferential concern, as happened to some extent in the inter-war period. Next to success, nothing would suit dreamers of pan-German dreams better than that the thoughts of other countries should be held to Germany as to a magnet. It is, therefore, essential that those whose duty it is to consider the protection of their country from German designs should feel their real objective to be that there may be secure, lawful, and decent living throughout Europe and beyond. Secondly, a study which examines a number of theoretically possible solutions may seem to imply that the freedom of choice for those who make policy is greater than it will actually be. Even after victory the situation will not be wholly plastic; but it will be more plastic then than at any other time.

OLD AND NEW ASPECTS OF THE GERMAN PROBLEM

We have set forth in Appendix I what seem to us the chief assumptions responsibly made, including some made by Germans, regarding the causes of Germany's renewed resort to war. Political action is not likely to be based on the clear and general acceptance of any set of assumptions as valid, and we do not even make such a choice in this study. There is a measure of truth in several of them. We think it a first step to clear thinking to bring these assumptions to the surface, so that those discussing a remedy may at least know what the various diagnoses are. A policy which relied entirely on force would probably be found to rest on the assumption that Germans are for all practical purposes incorrigible: a policy of pure non-discrimination on the assumption that they do not differ in any important aspect from other nations. While we discuss assumptions regarding Germany, the question at once arises: "What of Britain?" Are we amongst those that are whole, and need not a physician? What Britain is to do to herself may be a more pressing subject than what she is to do to Germany, but it is not the theme of this study. The method of treating Anglo-German relations provisionally as a problem in itself has at least the advantage that it forces us to inquire concerning any proposed solution, not only whether we and our friends should like it, but also whether we for

our part should be prepared to pay the price. There is hardly any policy worthy of the name, especially any implying the use of force, but will require a high degree of unity, determination, perseverance and strength.[1]

Many books have been written explaining the historical developments and the teachings which have fostered aggressiveness in the German people. It is the phenomenon of the "soft"[2] Germany, ready to support its leaders in their aggressive designs, which is the more interesting; the leaders themselves—the "hard" Germany—are a ruling group not essentially dissimilar from ambitious groups to be found in several other countries, whose actions can be explained by plain love of power rather than by any special characteristics or conditioning. We shall not attempt to traverse the ground covered by these writings; but it may clear our vision if for a moment we look at the general background with the eyes of the last generation. The first of the following extracts was written in 1910, the second in 1916:

". . . from the moment of the breach with free trade in 1879 . . . the alienation of the German mind from all English sympathies was complete."[3]

". . . It is, surely, evident that Germany is now so formidable a foe, and one that so profoundly requires defeating, not directly because a false doctrine peculiar to herself possesses her, her devotion to this conviction being just what the Allies would give to any conviction of theirs; but because a spirit of sheer money-making and boundless commercialism, which more or less dominates and vulgarizes us all, and which we ourselves rather than they began, has, in the German, found a lodging within an incredibly vehement and concentrated, systematic and visionary soul."[4]

These quotations reflect the outlook of an age predominantly commercial in its interests. But the commercial system of the time

[1] A general objective for national policy is given by Sargeaunt and West in *Grand Strategy*, p. 157 (Cape, 1942): "the turning of national energy to sustaining such a high pitch of efficiency, and therefore of both actual capacity for the arts of peace and of potential capacity for the most modern form of war, that few would wish, and none readily dare, to risk the military challenge." An attempt to analyse the elements of power is made in the next chapter.

[2] F. W. Foerster: *Europe and the German Question*, p. 334 (Allen and Unwin, 1941).

[3] Quoted by Philip Kerr, afterwards Marquess of Lothian; article on "Anglo-German Rivalry," *The Round Table*, November 1910.

[4] F. von Hügel: article on "The German Soul and the Great War," *The Quest*, January 1916.

did not generally favour the concentration of power within the hands of the State. How modern technical conditions favour this concentration, with consequences scarcely imaginable to the last generation, is illustrated by the following quotation from a contemporary writer:

> "The whole structure of modern society is governed by the fact that new technical inventions (such as aeroplanes, bombs, railways, the telephone and wireless) and the large-scale organization of industry, finance, administration, education and other means of influencing public opinion have created key positions which make it possible for those who hold them to dominate society. This offers a strong temptation to the ambitious to seize these centres of power and, when they have embarked on this course, they are driven on to gather into their hands all remaining positions of control. Even those who are naturally averse to such a course may be forced into it by the fear that their opponents may act first."[1]

It seems to be the part of Germany to reflect with special clearness and on a magnified scale certain features of contemporary society as a whole. Thus Germany has mirrored in herself what, for a time at least, appeared to be all Europe's failing concern for freedom; the subordination of economic to political purposes; and the growing centralization of power which science facilitates. One observer[2] describes a condition in which a "rage of technics" has taken possession of the younger and stronger elements in Germany, to whom, thanks to the new means, nothing seems impossible.[3] If divorced from any humane purpose, this rage can have no issue except in destruction on the one hand or tyranny on the other. As it necessarily communicates itself to the like-minded in other countries, it throws into vivid relief the urgency of thinking out the ends for which modern organization and technique are to be used. This issue is directly raised in the appeal of President

[1] K. Mannheim, in *The Christian News-Letter*, May 27, 1942.

[2] H. Rauschning: *Makers of Destruction*, p. 68 (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1942).

[3] *cf.*, also, this passage: "From the origins of its greatness Prussia has been imbued with the conviction that, given sufficient effort and pressure, sufficient 'Prussian efficiency,' anything can be made out of everything, that the human material can be formed, and transformed, *ad libitum*. It was a natural viewpoint for a power wholly founded upon a *tour de force*, hence contemptuous of traditions, and adoring efficiency as its God. The Nazi idea of creating an entirely new human type by terrorism, propaganda, transplantation of populations, wiping out of the recalcitrant, is in the line of this Prussian tradition, the most Prussian feature of this otherwise so profoundly un-Prussian Nazi movement."
Franz Borkenau: article on "The Myth of Prussia," *Political Quarterly*, April–June, 1942.

Roosevelt to the whole world to acknowledge the Four Freedoms as valid objects of policy. It is significant that Hitler claimed to speak for the German people in rejecting the President's "new and detestable alien world."[1]

More fundamental than differences of political purpose are differences of belief concerning the actual nature of things. Much instability of judgement in regard to the German situation is due to misunderstanding in this sphere. We shall attempt in a later chapter to disentangle some of these differences, and will not at this stage offer any assessment of their political influence. There is, however, one which seems to us to be of cardinal importance in practice. It appears to be fixed in the mind of most Germans, both of the ruling élite and of the masses, that power inevitably asserts itself to the uttermost: that those who possess a giant's strength cannot but use it as a giant. People brought up in the western tradition no less firmly believe, or unconsciously assume, that the exercise of power can and should be limited by respect for the rights of others, however weak, and that growth and development can and do take place on this basis. Obviously, it is a matter in which self-deception is easy, and if we were to give as concrete examples the omission of Britain and the United States to force Eire and various Latin-American States into the war, the Germans would show to their own satisfaction that both omissions were tactical. Yet would Germany, in a similar position, have accepted the strategic disabilities which this respect for the position of militarily weak neighbours has entailed?

The fact that modern techniques permit an extension of the administrative area beyond anything that was possible before, the assumption that those who hold power must exploit its full possibilities, and, lastly, the conviction of being a *Herrenvolk*, converge to produce in the German mind those grandiose schemes for the unification of Europe and beyond against which the world is now reacting. On a German view such reaction is vain, a mere kicking against the pricks; even if it might for a time succeed, on this view no result could follow except the establishment of the hegemony of some other Great Power—Russia or the United States. It is very certain that Europe is not going to accept unification through the German will to power. But it is possible for peoples to reject German claims while sharing in some degree the general outlook which they reflect, and we have been reminded that several Euro-

[1] Quoted in *The Times*, March 16, 1942.

pean countries "have derived their thought on social and political matters largely from German sources."[1] The ideal of co-operation proclaimed by the United Nations as the basis of their common dealings may fail to attract, unless it clearly carries with it an organizing principle sufficiently energetic to meet the real needs of the new European situation.

(*a*) WHOLLY COERCIVE, (*b*) WHOLLY CO-OPERATIVE POLICIES

The Atlantic Charter has already afforded a general answer to the questions with which we are concerned. We are there given one main objective (disarmament of aggressors) which depends entirely on force—as also does the fulfilment of the Anglo-Russian Treaty—and various social objectives which are to be sought through co-operation. However, what is important in regard to these and similar aims, such as the Four Freedoms, is not so much the quality of the aims themselves as the power and intention to give effect to them. Great aims—"international co-operation," "international peace and security," "social justice"—were written into the last Peace Treaties, and no mean exertions were made to fulfil them. The fact that similar aims have been put forward twice within a single generation implies confidence that they are intrinsically realizable. It is assumed that it is in fact possible for a group of nations to disarm and keep disarmed another group of nations over an indefinite period, and also that it is both possible and desirable for every one to have more butter on his bread. It seems to us clear that there is no technical obstacle to the realization of these purposes as declared by the leaders of the United Nations. The open question is whether their own and other peoples will endorse them, to the point of action.[2] The failure to realize similar aims in the past has usually been ascribed to a lack of will and of goodwill in the peoples, and especially the Governments, concerned. There is much justice in these charges. But the failure is also due to the fact that the aims themselves can get in each other's way. This possibility is very obviously latent in the Atlantic Charter. That document is certainly not condemned thereby. But the whole policy will be frustrated unless we consider in time where the

[1] F. A. Hayek: article on "Knowledge of Germany," *The Spectator*, December 26, 1941.

[2] ". . . the generality of mankind do not acquiesce, and until their educational level has been raised, will not acquiesce in the organization of a general prosperity. Let us entertain no delusions about that." H. G. Wells: *Guide to the New World*, p. 139 (Gollancz, 1941).