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*The German Resistance*



GERHARD RITTER

# The German Resistance

CARL GOERDELER'S  
STRUGGLE  
AGAINST TYRANNY

Translated by R. T. Clark

FREDERICK A. PRAEGER, PUBLISHERS  
NEW YORK

BOOKS THAT MATTER

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## FOREWORD<sup>1</sup>

IT WOULD take a good many pages to name all the people who have helped me with information, often very detailed information, and accompanied by documents; no one from whom I asked ever refused. I take this opportunity of expressing to them all my warmest thanks. I only regret that it was not possible to make full use in this book of all the information which I got; it is not intended to be as complete a book as possible, an enumeration of *all* the 'Resistance fighters', and an estimate of the part each played, but to be a history of the Resistance movement as a whole, grouped round a leading figure against the background of the history of the Third Reich. I have, for instance, not told again the story in detail of July 20, 1944, not merely because Goerdeler was not directly concerned in it, but also because to have done so would have been to exceed the limits set for this book.

No professional historian who concerns himself with the most recent past in which he himself lived, will do so lightheartedly. It is hard in so narrow a space of time to see things as a whole or to estimate the true historical significance of the details. It is painful and often disillusioning to deal with source-material which is still, so to speak, a floating mass and, steadily accumulating, makes one's work seem to get out of hand. But thereby the lesson is forced on one how from 'incidents' history grows; out of the misunderstandings, misinterpretations and half-truths of political writing, — which so seldom is wholly true yet is so overwhelmingly effective politically, — hardening by time into legend; through the accusations and apologies made by those engaged in the conflict which lead to exaggeration and error until everything seems covered in thick dust-clouds which conceal what really did happen. To understand what did happen in its real context, to create a picture out of little pieces — like those small stones of which a mosaic is made — which is, at least, in its basic elements enduring, is a toilsome business; often when I was engaged on it I thought it the most toilsome I had ever undertaken in my literary life. But assuredly it was also the most moving, demanding all one's most human perception, exciting and even stimulating. For how could a book like this be written dispassionately? Whether personal feeling and personal experience has hindered sober critical judgements the reader must decide.

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this foreword dealing with sources has been placed at the head of the bibliography which I have ventured to compile from Prof. Ritter's notes.

*Translator*

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In any case the historian must not wait until the legend is established. He must seek to shape the historical picture of our times even if he runs the risk of becoming subconsciously involved in the political struggle he describes, of re-opening wounds that have barely healed, and of raising against him angry protests from more than one side, for he cannot escape speaking from a political and moral viewpoint and confessing where he stands.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

TO BRING Prof. Ritter's big book down to a size suitable for publication here, the translator was entrusted with the task of greatly reducing its bulk. This has been done by omitting the appendices, by confining the annotation to references to sources and to important additional information about the conspiracy which is given in it, by some omission and by compression. Anyone who has ever tried to translate a work by Prof. Ritter will be well aware of the dangers and difficulties involved. I can only hope that I have omitted nothing of first-class relevance or misinterpreted an author with so individual a style and such sensitiveness of appreciation.

I have added to the index identification of the persons mentioned which will, I hope, be useful to readers who have forgotten events which at the time were to people here as mysterious as they were intriguing.





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## Introduction

THE HISTORY of the German Resistance movement poses a historical as well as a political problem. Reflection upon it constitutes an inescapable part of that political self-appraisal which we Germans are required to undertake by this most awful of the long series of catastrophes which have plagued our history. Why is it necessary and important to revive its memory time and again? It would be dubious if we did so only or principally in order to take comfort in the fact that by no means all Germans sacrificed to the great Baal; for in all too many cases that would amount to a mere suppression of a guilty conscience, and would on the whole contribute more to a stubborn and callous national self-righteousness than to a firm and healthy national self-assurance. This self-assurance, already beginning to reawaken after a period of total confusion and insecurity, must at all costs be kept away from a renewed commitment to false concepts of honour and ideas of power. It is simply not true that the power-political interests of the nation can gloss over the fundamental difference between right and wrong; on this point the testimony of the Resistance movement against Hitler is eloquent. It is simply not true that the solidarity of the national community is superior to all other human and moral obligations, that it constitutes a moral *non plus ultra* before which all other moral values should pale into insignificance. 'Right or wrong, my country'<sup>1</sup>—not even in wartime, when the survival of the state is at stake, can that slogan claim to go unchallenged as the supreme law. There can be no national honour where no distinction is made between good and evil; there can be national honour only where a people and a state prove their worth by moral accomplishments too. If we try today to build a new political community on the ruins of Hitler's Reich, then it is all-important that it shall not again be a community based on brutal national ambition and a ruthless quest for power, but rather an ethical community, founded in internal affairs on a respect for the dignity and freedom of the human personality and in foreign affairs on a respect for the vital interests of other nations.

There was, to be sure, a time, immediately after the great catastrophe when it seemed urgent to confront public opinion abroad, filled with hate and a desire for revenge, with proof that not the whole German people was deserving of such hate or even of the reproach of mere cowardly servility; that, on the contrary, a distinction had to be made

<sup>1</sup> In English in the original.

between the blind followers of Hitler and another, a better Germany, whose leading spirits became victims of Hitler's executioners. Today, however, it appears more important to make known the political ideas, guiding the German Resistance movement, and the moral and religious convictions which lay behind them. For here in truth are revealed ideals of a new and better Germany and a new and better Europe whose intrinsic merit will survive their progenitors. The spirit of these men, the moral and political opinions which drove them into opposition, must be kept alive among us too, if our own work of reconstruction is to prosper.

The manifestations of this spirit are very various and of very different value according to the depth and sincerity of the motives driving a given individual into resistance. National Socialism owed its great seductive power to its message of national self-adulation and ideological glorification of natural vitality. In the last resort only a genuine religion could hope to compete with this pseudo-religion, or at the least an ethical and political conviction which had its roots in the tradition of true religion. Not everyone who for any reason was dissatisfied with the Hitler régime, criticized it, and took a stand against it in some way or other can be classed with the 'German Resistance movement' in our sense. That movement was, after all, not a matter of unsatisfied ambition, but of a sincere patriotism which tried to wrest our people back from an abyss of ethical, spiritual, and political corruption.

If the history of the movement is regarded in this way, the figure of Lord Mayor Dr Carl Goerdeler automatically becomes the focus of attention. For in him, moral indignation as the essence of the Resistance, a passionate desire to construct a new and genuine national community founded on ethical principles and a new international community based on mutual respect, can be discerned with particular clarity as the paramount motive of all political activity. The spiritual heritage of that uniquely German liberalism which had developed during the classical period of German idealism from Kant, Humboldt and Stein to Dahlmann, Droysen and other leading figures of the Frankfurt Assembly lives on in Goerdeler. But there are also external considerations which made it appear advisable to use Goerdeler's biography as a focus for a historical narrative of the German Resistance movement. Many more sources and much more evidence survive on his activities at almost all stages of his development than in the case of any other politician of the German Opposition. That this should be so is no accident. No one delighted so much as he in putting his thoughts and plans down in writing. Even in the last days of his life his pen was still tirelessly drafting new memoranda, appeals,

declarations of faith in Germany's future, and plans for its construction. Thanks to the foresight and good sense of loyal friends at home and abroad, an amazing proportion of all this has been preserved; most of it never even became known to Hitler's secret police, but even those parts of it which were seized are still generally accessible.

Above all, Carl Goerdeler was for a long time more than anyone else at the centre of the conspiracy against tyranny; he was in immediate personal contact with almost all of the groups and parties — and not only as a tirelessly active director and recruiting officer for the movement, but at the same time as its most productive mind when it came to working out comprehensive and mature plans dealing with both foreign and domestic problems. The movement in its entirety can be surveyed very clearly from the vantage point of his biography. And conversely his biography is of historical significance only in the framework of this general setting. His work can be correctly estimated only when it is constantly compared with that of his colleagues.

In saying this we have already indicated the danger of a one-sided appraisal implied by our portrayal of the German Resistance movement with a central figure as focus. Every biographer is tempted to overestimate the personal achievement and significance of his hero; and doubly so if he was in close personal contact with his hero while he was alive. But the author has been fully conscious of this danger from the very beginning; moreover, he feels that he has guarded against it by considering the biographical material not as an end in itself, but only as a means to the understanding of recent events transcending any individual. The history of the German resistance movement has hitherto been written predominantly in the form of a justification and defence against its critics, accusers, and apostates. Not infrequently it has acquired something of the flavour of a gallery of heroes or even of the lives of saints. We are here attempting something else; namely, to attain, by a critical and sober study, a grasp of the historical truth, and beyond this to search our own hearts with a new understanding. For this purpose it was indispensable to depict the German Resistance movement against the background of international politics, so far as relevant sources are now available. Likewise, the development of the movement's ideals of freedom and plans for reform had to be traced back into the time of the Weimar Republic. And finally, its development and the political attitude of its leaders needed to be appreciated in terms of the internal and external history of Hitler's Reich.



## CHAPTER I

### *The Early Years and The Leipzig Mayoralty*

THE IMPRESSIONS of his parental home never ceased to guide Carl Goerdeler's mental development. Over and over again, throughout his life, he speaks of the intellectual and especially the moral heritage that he received there; and even at the end, in prison, faced with a horrible death, he looked back nostalgically to the sunny *bourgeois* world of the nineteenth century from which he sprang. The incomplete memoirs of his youth, written during his flight from the Gestapo, are suffused with the spirit of the old conservative Prussian civil service which still persisted in the last years of the Bismarckian era: full of pride in the tradition of Frederick the Great, full of confidence in the secure might of the Prussian-German monarchy. These memoirs vividly depict life in the two West Prussian towns of Schneidemuehl, where Carl Goerdeler was born on July 31, 1884, and Marienwerder, where his father took up the post of district judge in 1890. Despite a simple way of life, the circumstances in which the boy grew up were none the less comfortable: a very large and intimate circle of relatives, gay social occasions of all kinds, including considerable intercourse with the titled landowners of the neighbourhood. There was no lack of interest in the arts, but the cultural emphasis was decidedly on politics and history, especially after his father had become in 1899 a Free Conservative deputy in the Prussian Diet. The colour of the political debates in the household can be inferred from this affiliation: the Free Conservatives were the party of 'Bismarck *sans phrase*'.

Carl Goerdeler studied law at Tübingen from 1902 to 1905, but by 1911 he was quite clear in his own mind that he would be most content with a career in administration and economics. Above all, municipal administration, with its manifold problems of organization, its highly modern challenges, and its close contact with economic life excited his lively mind. It was not by chance that the posts of magistrate and lord mayor in the big cities had attracted such a plethora of political talent in Germany since the nineteenth century. Goerdeler was always very proud of the personal initiative in the selection and training of the personnel, as well as in the successful completion of difficult technical tasks, that he had been able like so many of his predecessors,

to develop as the administrative head of a great city. He possessed to an outstanding degree all the mental gifts and personal qualities required in such a position. His real talents lay in the field of local administration and local politics; he not only started there, but up to a point, in his thinking habits, he always remained there. The merits, but also the limitations and weaknesses of his character may be grasped most easily from this point of view.

On October 1, 1911 he went to the Rhenish town of Solingen and was soon appointed assessor. At the end of 1912 he was unanimously elected to be the principal assistant, and at times the deputy, of the lord mayor — he was the only member of the Solingen municipal administration with legal training — posts that he held (formally) until early 1920. According to the testimonials of the lord mayor he had 'a really eminent talent for organization', and was fully capable of discharging 'the most difficult tasks in all fields of administration'; but they emphasize especially his ability to combine an unequivocal and firm demeanour with winning charm.

The war likewise offered him an opportunity to display his administrative ability. In 1918 he was charged with organizing the financial administration of a large area of White Russia and Lithuania occupied under the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, a task that he approached and accomplished in a humane spirit. But the year 1918 also brought with it the fall of the monarchy and the revolution in Germany. Anyone who was as devoted as Goerdeler was to the old monarchical institutions was bound to be severely shaken by these events, and for some time he was undecided whether to remain a public official in this new republican Germany or to take up an entirely independent livelihood. Finally, in April 1919, he did take up his position again, and immediately put through a number of reforms with his accustomed zeal. But as early as June he went on leave to his West Prussian home, there to launch a political adventure that for the first time reveals some of the typical traits of character of the later conspirator.<sup>1</sup>

The signature of the Treaty of Versailles was imminent. In East and West Prussia there was great excitement; popular demonstrations against the cession of German territory were organized, and the idea was even mooted of secession from Germany in the last resort if the government proved incapable of active resistance to the 'dictated peace'. In that case the plan was to form a separate state in the East whose whole population would be mobilized against Poland. It was the

<sup>1</sup> Much of this comes from a folder containing notes and correspondence on his activities in the East. V. also G. Lawin, *Die Volksabstimmung in Westpreussen*, Koenigsberg, 1926.



call of this movement for national defence that Goerdeler followed to West Prussia, a movement which passionately aroused his whole being. Nowhere was the artificial creation of the Polish Corridor and the Free State of Danzig regarded as so unnatural and taken so hard as in this strip of West Prussia just beyond the Vistula. But what Goerdeler demanded, and the manner in which he demanded it, already clearly anticipate the memoranda in which he later called over and over again for 'action' against Hitler. For him it was a matter not merely of preventing the Poles from marching in, but of 'knocking them down'. When a Danzig assembly of workers under radical leadership decided on a general strike if the military should launch a frontier war, Goerdeler urged the arrest of the ringleaders and of the advocates of a Danzig Free State and the declaration of a state of siege, and persisted in these demands even after both military and civilian leaders had rejected them. He cannot escape the charge of judging in these matters purely as a patriot and not as a politician who has to take account of realities. His attitude witnesses to that magnificent fearlessness and refusal to compromise which were characteristic of him throughout his life — but also to that almost blind faith in the power of political ideals and moral principles in public life which later caused him to be meshed in so many illusions.

Goerdeler did not intend to return to Solingen again after these adventures, and he became a candidate for the post of deputy mayor in Königsberg. At first he encountered the resistance of the Social Democrats, to whom he was rightly suspect as a conservative and a nationalist; but eventually he was elected, and ten years later he had the satisfaction of seeing the Social Democrats, who had ostentatiously boycotted his inauguration, appear as a body to cheer him at his farewell ceremony. The winning power of his personality and his objective achievements quickly overcame all obstacles in Königsberg as they had in Solingen.

This biographical sketch which is principally concerned with Goerdeler as a politician may not linger long over a description of his undisputed achievements as the mayor of big cities. And, indeed, his sphere of activity soon widened: he became a member of the committee on personnel and transport of the assembly of delegates of German and Prussian towns, as well as deputy chairman of the employers' union of the association of German communities and towns, frequently also acting in a public relations capacity on behalf of the latter body. At the same time he often had to deputize for the lord mayor in Königsberg, with whom he shared strong interest in plans for the reform of local administration. It was in fact to his prominent participation in this wider field of activity that Goerdeler chiefly

owed his growing reputation, and in the spring of 1930 he was elected Lord Mayor of Leipzig. As the head of one of the largest and economically most important cities of Germany, and no longer geographically isolated as in Königsberg, he rapidly became one of the leading figures in German local politics.

The revolution of 1918, by introducing universal suffrage in local elections, had brought these into line with the national electoral system. It followed that local elective bodies became miniature copies of the state parliaments, that objective discussion of local administrative problems was disturbed and confused by partisan debates conducted with all the doctrinaire obstinacy of petty German politicians, and that party advantage became an issue in municipal appointments. A man of Goerdeler's energy found it difficult to tolerate the unnecessary delays and bitter struggles that often ensued. The remedies that he proposed consisted of a severe restriction on the plenary sessions of municipal assemblies and the remission of most of their business to committees, and a reform in the position of the lord mayor, who must be given power to act 'on his own initiative in cases where the local representatives act contrary to current needs'. We must guard against applying the catchword 'reactionary' to this attitude. The tendency was universal to adapt the cumbersome traditional system of administration by joint boards to the technical requirements of modern local government by instituting a stronger executive bureaucracy under the control of the mayor.

Goerdeler was also particularly concerned with the economic and financial aspects of local politics. In his essays he repeatedly complained of the irresponsible frivolity with which national and local bodies were constructing luxurious public buildings, fostering all kinds of cultural enterprises and sponsoring increases in wages and salaries, without regard to Germany's grievous impoverishment due to the war, and financed by lighthearted borrowing (especially of foreign capital). Goerdeler for his part advocated the puritanical principle of thrift, to be pursued courageously even in the face of unpopularity; and he could claim that as Lord Mayor of Leipzig he had himself restored the shattered municipal finances to order by practising rigid economy. With regard to another much discussed problem Goerdeler, without abandoning liberal, i.e. non-socialist principles of political economy, urged that communities must take an active part in those areas where in the nature of the case economic problems could best (or only) be solved by a public monopoly. In this connection the question arose as to the extent of the state's right to supervise and intervene in the affairs of the local communities, a question on which Goerdeler, contrary to majority opinion, in conservative circles,

strongly defended the principle of the greatest possible freedom for local self-government.

In his general political theory Goerdeler undeniably tended to authoritarianism; he mistrusted parliamentary government in the sense of the western democracies, and in cultural matters he took a frankly conservative position, as was customary in the German Nationalist Party. But the authority of the national government which he wished to strengthen was to depend not on brute force but on general confidence; it was to be strictly bound by law — though able, to be sure, to carry out unpopular measures required by the higher interests of the state. These ideas had always been common currency in German right-wing liberalism, and they took a new lease of life in the so-called young conservatism of the Weimar period — not without becoming tragically entangled in the toils of a political movement which abused them. On the other hand, Goerdeler had nothing in common with the Junkers or the industrial magnates, and his membership of the executive of the German Nationalist Party was a mere formality long before 1931. He never shared the antagonism of the true 'capitalists' against the social aspirations of the workers, even though his fundamental convictions in political economy were the antithesis of socialist thinking.

Disappointment was general in the Weimar Republic that the government, contrary to what the constitution promised, had in practice not increased but rather reduced the freedom of local self-government. The opposition to the conditions arising from this growing state interference burgeoned into a reform movement among German local politicians which extended not merely to matters of concern to the towns, but to the larger problem of the administrative structure of the state as a whole, for it was recognized that the special handicaps from which local government was suffering could be effectively removed only as a part of a general reform in the Reich and in the Laender. Goerdeler's Königsberg colleague, Lord Mayor Lohmeyer, published a reform tract in 1928 entitled 'Centralism or Self-Government'. This plan resembles later reform writings of Goerdeler's in so many details that there can be no doubt of an intellectual connection. Even Lohmeyer's most radical demand, for the conversion of the Laender parliaments into mere provincial Diets and of the Laender themselves into mere districts of the Reich (*Reichsgaue*), recurs a number of times with Goerdeler. He wished to free their deliberations, like those of the municipal assemblies, from politics, a process which would of course involve depriving the political parties of their power in this sphere. Both Goerdeler and Lohmeyer, on the basis of their practical experience, looked with apprehension on the

irresponsible radicalism and thirst for popularity of democratically elected representatives, especially in financial matters. Both sought a remedy that would not involve a reactionary limitation of the right to vote, and their most important proposal was to strengthen the President's position in relation to the Reichstag. Goerdeler went very far in this direction: in his view the President should not be bound by a vote of confidence in the Reichstag on the appointment of ministers — in other words, that he should be able to form Cabinets based on presidential favour alone! According to Goerdeler such Cabinets would enjoy the advantage of remaining in office for a considerable time (perhaps up to seven years) and of being able, if necessary, to put through unpopular measures. Important reforms, in his opinion, simply could not be executed without a fairly long clear run.

Meanwhile a move was under way to amalgamate all the leagues of local government organizations (*Spitzenverbände*). The plans, which had been completed before 1933, were not put into practice until the spring of that year in the wake of the National Socialist 'co-ordination' (*Gleichschaltung*) which involved the replacement of most lord mayors, mayors, and rural district councillors. Goerdeler was one of those who brought the idea of amalgamation before Hitler personally and was charged by him with supervising its execution. Subsequently he became the most influential member of the twenty-man executive of the new Diet of German Communities (*Deutscher Gemeindetag*).

The most important of the measures discussed in this body was the new uniform code for local government which became law on January 30, 1935 and applied to all communities. Goerdeler took a leading part in its formulation and repeatedly praised it highly, a judgement at first glance surprising in view of the fact that the code consistently enforced the so-called 'leader principle' (*Führerprinzip*) and the one-party system and severely restricted local self-government by permitting state supervision. But Goerdeler's estimate can probably be explained by reference to the high hopes that he had set on the promulgation of such a law and to his refusal to give up these hopes even when they had been disappointed. He especially valued the financial and economic sections of the code, which he went so far as to describe as a 'fundamental law of all political economy'; and he attempted to validate his own criticism of the economic and political policy of the Hitler régime by basing it on these provisions.

Hitler was, in fact, surprisingly amenable to Goerdeler's proposals. The latter related, in his 1944 depositions, that Hitler had summoned him early in January 1935 to give his opinion of the code which was then about to become law. Goerdeler had stressed that, particularly in an authoritarian state, administration ought to be 'elastically tapered

downward' by means of genuine local self-government in which citizens could share public responsibility; otherwise there would be nothing but passive waiting for apathetic commands and a dangerous shifting of responsibility upwards. Hitler may have found this last observation persuasive. At any rate he ordered some restriction on the state's right of supervision, and he is reported to have insisted, at the Cabinet's final consideration of the subject, that not only party members or members of party organizations but 'ordinary citizens' should be appointed local councillors.

If these reports are correct, then it appears that Hitler at that time was still aware that his party followers were not suitable for all administrative positions. At any rate, Goerdeler was given the impression that his opinion counted for something in this sphere, and he obstinately continued to maintain that the code of 1935 could be put right by a few simple adjustments.

The upshot of this and all the other developments related here was, in fact, disappointed hopes and paper plans for reform. Nevertheless, they are indispensable for an understanding of the history of the German Resistance movement; for they show that the opposition of the Goerdeler circle to Hitler, far from being an isolated phenomenon, was directly related to, and drew many of its ideas from, a reform movement dating from the Weimar period. Only thus can we explain the high proportion of senior civil servants in the Resistance, as well as their intensive and persistent preoccupation with detailed plans for a new administrative organization to be introduced after Hitler's fall, even though it was very far from certain that Hitler would in fact be removed.

On the other hand, of course, the Resistance cannot be explained only or even principally in terms of plans for a reform of local government or for organic amendments to the federal constitution. By far the strongest motive was moral indignation, bitter resentment of the tyrant's illegitimate rule of force. Still, the opposition owed much of its special character to the fact that so many of its members had been local or national administrators. Their resistance was not the vague grumbling of utopian idealists or of doctrinaire democrats. It had its roots in the ideals of free personal responsibility, ideals tested in the crucible of local self-government.

*Hindenburg, Hitler and the  
Resignation from Leipzig*

FROM THE time of his appointment as Lord Mayor of Leipzig (May 22, 1930) Carl Goerdeler grew in stature as a political figure, on the strength not of his party affiliation but of his personality. He exercised a strong power of suggestion, rather difficult to analyze, on everyone with whom he came in contact. He himself, however, was rather inclined to attribute his success to more objective reasons and therefore to overestimate the role of objective arguments in the political arena, a dangerous illusion.

He was much occupied with political writing,<sup>1</sup> concentrating in the years after 1929 on the steadily and ominously rising unemployment figures, which constituted the most difficult problem of every administrative body. Goerdeler did not see the world economic crisis of 1929 as another of those financial crises which had occurred periodically for eighty years, but rather as the result of momentous and fundamental changes brought on by the First World War, the dictated Treaty of Versailles, and the destruction of German capital in the inflation. The most pernicious of these consequences, in his opinion, were the reciprocal exclusionist policy of the industrial countries in the wake of general over-production and in the presence of excessive manufacturing costs, and the disruption of normal world trade by the system of reparations and by the constant vacillation of currency relationships. For Germany above all, with her reduced economic resources, restoration of a normal exchange of goods with the whole world was, Goerdeler thought, an urgent requirement; Germany was the last country that could afford an autarchic economy.

But how could the circulation of goods be unblocked? The crucial remedy for Goerdeler was a lowering of prices, by means of reductions in taxes and wages. The reduction in taxes was to be achieved by drastic economies in government, which in turn formed the premise of those demands for administrative reform already discussed above. But his proposals for cutting production costs were of more immediate

<sup>1</sup> Especially those papers existing in typescript, e.g. the memorandum on economic matters dated Autumn 1930; memorandum for Hindenburg submitted in April 1932 and that on the position of the German economy June 5, 1932.

importance. They amounted to a frankly deflationary programme. We ought not, he counselled, to be frightened by the bogey-word 'deflation': its correct 'Prusso-German version' was economy and modesty. The essence of his proposals was to work more without an increase in wages, in other words to produce cheaper goods without reducing the purchasing power of the individual worker. Even the workers must in the end have the sense to see that it is better to have many men employed at modest wages than few at high wages while the majority have to scrape along on unemployment benefits.

Goerdeler acknowledged that such a programme was bound to be highly unpopular. But it was precisely courage in incurring unpopularity that he admired in Bruening, the Chancellor, who was at the time devoting so much energy to reducing government expenditures. Soon Goerdeler himself was given the opportunity to put his ideas into effect as a member of the government. On December 18, 1931 he was appointed by Hindenburg to the post of price commissioner with all the executive powers he asked for. In being selected for this post Goerdeler was, as it were, pried away from Hugenberg's opposition front, a break from which he did not shrink since he was in any event indignant over Hugenberg's refusal to appreciate Bruening's successful reparations policy. Following a meeting with Hugenberg his withdrawal from the German Nationalist Party was publicly announced. Without formally joining them, he became a fellow-traveller with the 'Young Conservative' group led by Westarp, Schlange-Schöningen, and Treviranus.

Goerdeler had not, however, accepted the post without reservations, only they were objective and not partisan. Opposed in principle to any so-called planned economy, a firm advocate of the free initiative and personal responsibility of the private entrepreneur, he was uncomfortable at the idea of state interference with the price structure, the natural regulator of the economy.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the new job, untrammelled by any traditional restrictions, challenged his energies, and above all he hoped to be able to give effect to his own ideas on political economy better in this honorary position without party affiliation than in any ministry.

Goerdeler postulated as an 'immutable natural law' that money could not be artificially created but could only be the result of hard work which produced something of value, and that the stability of the currency could not be secure without a balanced budget. He never tired of repeating these 'natural laws' in ever new phrases in countless essays, lectures, and memoranda. He was unshakeable in his conviction that in these doctrines he possessed a theoretical tool with whose

<sup>1</sup> V. his 'Wirtschaftliche Function der Preise', *Die Bank*, December 1936.

help he could overcome the great economic crisis if only he could get adequate powers. His insistence on Spartan austerity and economy in public administration, on an economic policy of calculating forbearance, and on awakening private initiative, intelligible as it might be in terms of the experience of the inflation, and justified as it might be in dealing with the boom period between 1927 and 1929 and especially with the frivolous and irresponsible financial policy of the Hitler government after 1936, was not only inadequate but mistaken at the time of the Bruening government.

Nevertheless, Goerdeler himself thought as early as March 1932 that his job was already done because prices had dropped by 10 per cent all along the line. Hindenburg, however, asked him to stay on and to submit proposals to deal with the general political situation. He continued, therefore, to occupy his honorary position until December 16th on a very curious footing: as an adviser to the President who was, however, only occasionally consulted and who exercised no significant influence on the great and fateful decisions of this year of crisis.

To begin with he submitted to Hindenburg in April 1932 a large-scale programme for domestic reform containing his familiar proposals, which could, he urged, all be put into effect by means of emergency decrees under Article 48. The submission of this memorandum directly to the President, without consulting the chancellor or the finance minister, seems to have caused a storm in the Cabinet. Even Bruening thought that Goerdeler had exceeded his powers as price commissioner and rejected the substance of his proposals; the friendly relations between the two men, however, seem not to have been disturbed by this incident.

Then, suddenly, it was all over: Bruening's government, dependent as it was on the confidence of the President, was overthrown without warning. In his final fatal audience with Hindenburg, Bruening recommended<sup>1</sup> Goerdeler as his successor, perhaps believing him to be the man, as a conservative and Protestant East Prussian of frank and energetic character, to release Hindenburg from the fog of political intrigue with which he had been surrounded. It was Schleicher who was chiefly responsible for resisting this nomination.<sup>2</sup>

Goerdeler, for his part, was sincerely aghast at Hindenburg's betrayal of Bruening and indignant at the men behind Papen. When he was urged by Papen and Hindenburg to become minister for economics and labour he refused to make a decision without knowing who would be at the ministry of finance; moreover he urgently advised

<sup>1</sup> V. Bruening in *Deutsche Rundschau*, June 1947, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Stated in a letter from Bruening to the author.



them to enter into negotiations with Hitler in order to clarify the parliamentary basis of the new government. Hitler was to be offered two or three ministries; if he accepted, so much the better. At any rate, he continued, it must be made quite clear that the moment the Reichstag obstructed the 'rescuing' of the country it would be dissolved, and new elections postponed for two years; the first thing was to secure the new government against continuous election campaigns. Schleicher answered that he had already discussed everything with Hitler. 'I retorted,' said Goerdeler, 'that in view of the gravity of the situation this was not enough; there had to be a meeting and the position must be clarified before the Cabinet was constructed.' Two of Papen's future ministers, Gayl and Braun, supported this stand, but shortly thereafter accepted the posts offered to them without reservations because 'Hindenburg had ordered that the Cabinet must be ready by tomorrow' and they could not desert him.

But Goerdeler was not to be won over so easily. To begin with he communicated his objections 'to this kind of Cabinet-making' to Schleicher privately, made inquiries concerning the personality of Papen, who was quite unknown to him, consulted with his friends, particularly Bruening, and the next morning urgently warned Hindenburg against appointing Papen chancellor. For his own part, he declared, he could not serve in a Papen government. He thought it likely that Papen would not last long and no doubt believed that his own hour would yet strike.

When, in the end, things turned out quite differently, he bitterly regretted his negative attitude. Even in prison, in 1944, and almost until the hour of his death, he suffered pangs of conscience that he had failed in his duty in not grasping the opportunity at that time to put his economic plans into effect from a position of leadership. Posterity will neither find these self-reproaches justified, nor share Goerdeler's almost naïve faith in the infallibility of his own ideas. Moreover, he undoubtedly overrated the confidence placed in him by Hindenburg. It must also be noted that Goerdeler would have been willing in some circumstances to dispense with the parliamentary basis of government altogether and to rule for years without the Reichstag — a highly dangerous procedure which would lead straight to dictatorship. In fact, Goerdeler lacked practical experience as a parliamentarian and a sure sense of what was politically possible, failings which in a way was the reverse side of his training in local politics. For this reason he did not, with the same sure instinct that served Bruening, perceive the totalitarian striving for power of Hitler's following which made a mockery of any parliamentary form of government. He even turned down Papen's suggestion of forming

a conservative party friendly to the government, if necessary in opposition to Hugenberg.

It seems in general that Goerdeler actually had very few political connections with Papen's government, with which he had declined to co-operate. On the other hand, his political disappointment and his mistrust of Papen's carefree attitude in the saddle by no means prevented him from examining the economic plans of the new government objectively and without prejudice, or even from hoping for their success, although they were fundamentally contrary to his own. Nor was he unduly disturbed by the simultaneous mounting of political tension as a consequence of National Socialist and Communist agitation. In a memorandum written in the second half of December called 'The Situation' he optimistically suggested that the lowest point of the economic crisis had been passed, and that everything now depended on internal consolidation. It was true that the sudden political switch in May had produced as yet unresolved political tensions, but 'I have great faith in the instinct for decency and unity of the overwhelming majority of the German people'.

How far removed was this man from the distorted pictures of Germany's position with which Hitler's propaganda was deluding the masses! But how far removed, equally, was he from the realities of the political situation in Berlin! He was informed of the fall of Papen only on November 17th, after the event, and apparently was kept entirely in the dark about the long negotiations regarding Papen's successor. On the basis of newspaper reports he thought that he himself had a chance of the chancellorship and rather impatiently waited for a summons to Berlin. He believed himself capable of attracting a following both on the Left, among the more nationally minded Social Democrats, and from the ranks of the National Socialists. At that time he was still uninterested in foreign policy, as is shown by his December memorandum, which may be regarded as a kind of outline of a governmental programme. When no summons was received, not even the offer of a ministerial post, Goerdeler accused Schleicher of bearing him a grudge; and he did not accept his formal dismissal from his office of price commissioner (December 16th), which he had previously requested several times, without issuing a warning of the dangers of the new economic policy.

Again he found out only after the event about the confused intrigues which soon afterwards led to the fall of the Schleicher government and to Hitler's appointment as chancellor. Goerdeler related that on the day after Hitler's 'seizure of power' Hugenberg, having realized the hopelessness of his own situation, urgently asked his

help, with the words:<sup>1</sup> 'Yesterday I made the biggest mistake of my life — I concluded an alliance with the worst demagogue in history'. Goerdeler did not turn him down out of hand, but demanded special powers which of course were not to be had; besides, all the ministries had been filled.

It cannot be ruled out that at that time he still thought it possible to put his own plans into effect even under Hitler.

Carl Goerdeler as little as most other Germans fathomed from the beginning the full demonic nature of the National Socialist movement. Its rowdyism ran counter to his conservative, essentially *bourgeois* character, its violence to his strong attachment to law and justice, the unrestrained slander of its propaganda to the store he set by the truth; otherwise he would not have joined Bruening against the so-called 'Harzburg Front', and he would not have refused to join the party when this was suggested by Hitler in the autumn of 1933. On the other hand there was some common ground in their political programmes, or at least in their political criticisms: criticism, above all, of the dictated Treaty of Versailles and its economic consequences, of the eastern boundary created in 1919, and, up to a point, also of the defects of the Weimar Constitution; Goerdeler, too, disapproved of the domination of the political parties in the Weimar Republic, desired to reduce the Laender to mere provinces, and demanded a strengthening of the central executive power. He even shared in that general yearning of the Germans of that period which had recruited so many idealists for Hitler's following, the yearning that the split within the nation which had become so intolerable during the World War, the irreconcilable antagonism between the nationalism of the Right and the anti-nationalist and anti-militarist instincts of the Left, might be healed by a new comradeship of all classes and parties such as had existed in the trenches. It was Adolf Hitler who promised to bring about a permanent reconciliation between socialism and nationalism. As late as 1944 Goerdeler still held the view that National Socialism had been right in two respects. First, it had taught 'that we must help each other and that capital must not be allowed to yield excessive profit' — the social message; secondly, it had recognized 'that life is a struggle in which work and achievement are necessary' — the militant message which Goerdeler evidently interpreted in the sense of his own liberal theory of free competition; for he added immediately that 'it must be a struggle ennobled by obedience to the commands of God'.

Nothing in the way of direct opposition to National Socialism is

<sup>1</sup> From a memorandum quoted in part in F. Krause, *Goerdelers Politisches Testament*, New York 1945, p. 23.

to be found among his papers before 1933 except for occasional expressions of anxiety concerning the threat of a political upheaval as a result of the great economic crisis. But by 1937 he was writing that, while a dictator might be justified in an emergency, Hitler had brought with him the dictatorship of a party. If, he continued, it had been the curse of the Weimar Republic that party interests had been placed above the common weal, then this curse had now been magnified a hundredfold because now 'a party was issuing orders to the state'. 'One man may command, never a party.'

In this fashion he defended his opposition to the Hitler régime. His own proposals for dictatorial power for the President had been intended to serve the interests of the state and the common weal against the interest of the parties; and it was these same values which he now proposed to protect from Hitler's party. 'The National Socialist party', he continued in 1937, 'as a party has made the mistake of the dictators: it has concentrated and abused power'. In its totalitarian thirst for power 'it undermines the natural roots and moral foundations of human society. But since Nature will always be victorious, and since a moral law which makes human society possible is also a necessity of Nature, the party will be shattered on this rock.'

In these sentences Goerdeler reveals himself to us in both aspects, about what kept him out of the party and about the hopes he placed in it. In the end his opposition became rooted in moral disillusionment, but it was sustained by an amazingly optimistic faith, reminiscent of the moral optimism and Natural Law notions of the eighteenth century, in the power of ethical reason which must 'as a necessity of Nature' always prevail in the end. This faith was his strongest support, maintained in the face of many illusions and disappointments.

Goerdeler experienced his first conflicts with the totalitarian ambitions of the National Socialists soon after Hitler's 'seizure of power' when he refused to fly the swastika from the Leipzig town hall so long as it had not been proclaimed to be the national flag. He had the building locked and occupied by municipal police, whom he himself joined until midnight keeping watch against an invasion of storm troopers. He also went in person to protect Jewish shop-owners against marauding storm troopers. But in the spring of 1933 he was shocked to witness and powerless to resist, the occupation and sequestration of the trade union headquarters and the dissolution of the unions amid the feverish applause of the politically blind upper *bourgeoisie*. In spite of such experiences, Goerdeler admitted, he had 'co-operated with the National Socialists with complete confidence in the first years after 1933', a course of action made very much easier for him by the personally decent and intelligent behaviour of the

local party leader Doenicke. In his memoirs he recalls his family heritage: five generations of Prussian officials who had always done their public duty and had not denied the state their services even after the revolution of 1918. But probably his inordinate creative urge was of even more immediate significance, making it quite impossible for him to stand aside in resignation. His laudable intention was 'to influence the course of affairs for the benefit of our people and to strengthen the good elements in the party (without belonging to it myself!)', an intention which he shared at that time with countless people of good will. He did not see how hopeless it was partly because his strong personality again — as earlier in Solingen and Königsberg — managed to get him his way within his limited sphere despite partisan differences.

He tackled his local problems, as always, with burning zeal. He restored the city's finances, simplified the administration and subordinated it more strictly to his own control, modernized the technical arrangements which, for a city which housed an international trade fair, were in part still very backward, completed several large buildings, and obtained large government loans for the organization of the fair; but his main interest was in social institutions and in education. In the latter connection he said that National Socialism was 'in a political sense, too, a healthy reaction against democratic institutions which lack any basis in the political and economic education of the masses'; but now the movement had to show that it could itself develop popular political education. In 1935, therefore, he suggested to Dr Ley that the Labour Front should be used on a large scale for this purpose; but he was rebuffed with an answer which deeply shocked him: 'We'd better leave that alone, otherwise the workers would get too clever'.

In November 1934 Hitler asked Goerdeler 'in a very courteous fashion' to assume the office of price commissioner again, promised him anything he might ask and even placed his private aeroplane at his disposal. In 1931 he had accepted the same invitation because he hoped to put his general reform ideas into effect and because he felt a close affinity with the whole policy of the Bruening government. No such affinity existed in this case; the substitution of blatant tyranny for the rule of law was plain for all to see, culminating in the mass murders of June 30, 1934. One ought therefore to be surprised that Goerdeler in November accepted a government post from Hitler's bloodstained hands — if it had been anyone but Goerdeler, with his unbounded energy, his insensitivity to the demonic powers of evil, and his optimistic belief in his own capacity to do good by talking sensibly to people. 'The signs of degeneration', he wrote in 1944,

'were counter-balanced by more hopeful indications; the army seemed still to be the guardian of the best old traditions'. And it was the army to which he looked for support when he decided to accept the office of price commissioner a second time.<sup>1</sup>

The revival of this post was related to new difficulties in the German economy. Even earlier, several decrees had been issued with the effect of allotting scarce materials to factories at fixed prices. Apparently Goerdeler had been consulted in this connection; his advice was contained in a detailed opinion 'For Chancellor Adolf Hitler' written during the late summer or autumn of 1934, which offered him a welcome opportunity to insert a large number of critical remarks on the general policy of the Hitler government into the economic discussion. The hope that by means of such memoranda he would be able to present his criticisms directly to Hitler constituted one of Goerdeler's principal motives for accepting his post again. This memorandum represented a very vigorous and extremely courageous attempt to induce the National Socialist leader to adopt a *bourgeois* reform programme on orthodox Prussian lines. It is hardly likely that Hitler read it, for he would scarcely have offered the post of price commissioner to its author with such fair words if he had been fully cognizant of its tendencies.

Despite the wide powers granted to him, however, Goerdeler came in conflict with the wishes of the party as soon as he assumed office. On the second day, after he assumed office Ley the 'director for the organization of the Reich' (*Reichsorganisationsleiter*) came to ask him to transfer his executive powers to the party. Goerdeler refused to be intimidated and forthwith delegated his powers instead to the properly constituted local authorities. The next day Hitler, not yet aware of this quick decision, summoned Goerdeler to a kind of audience at which he received him together with the chief of the party central committee, Rudolf Hess, and with his customary torrent of words sought to make it clear to him that he should delegate his powers to the organs of the party rather than to those of the state. He was not a little taken aback to be informed that the decision had already been taken in the contrary sense; Goerdeler immediately added, however, that the party would expose itself to great unpopularity if it took on a job in which it would be able to satisfy neither the buyer nor the seller. 'I could almost feel the weight fall from his shoulders,' wrote Goerdeler, 'when he realized that a decision was no longer necessary. "You know," he said to Hess, "this is really the best solution!" That settled the matter.'

Goerdeler's relationship with the dictator thus seemed secure. The

<sup>1</sup> The appointment was dated November 5, 1934 and extended to July 1, 1935.

press also supported his activities (as he said himself) 'magnificently', and since he managed, as always, to win the confidence of all the authorities and organizations concerned he might well hope for a successful tenure of office. Since he always quite openly opposed the tendency toward a state-planned economy and made no attempt to conceal his uncompromisingly liberal ideas he attracted considerable attention and became highly popular, above all in business circles. This government commissioner whose speeches contrasted so markedly with the usual fare dispensed by important state and party personalities could almost always count on overflow audiences.

The practical effects of his economic policies, however, remained decidedly modest. Prices did not rise, but neither did they fall, and exports continued to diminish. In order to raise them, Schacht, in the spring of 1935, proposed state premiums on exports, the means for which were to be obtained by a general 'export tax' on the economy. Goerdeler objected; he had for some time past found himself in disagreement with Schacht's bold credit policy, which indeed contrasted sharply with his own deflationary programme. The conflict came to a head at a meeting of the two antagonists with Hitler alone. One might be tempted to assume that Hitler would without much ado side with Schacht, who offered him so many convenient ways of financing his policy. But apparently the dictator still felt quite unsure of himself on technical financial questions, and Goerdeler's warnings of a renewed rise in prices and inflation seem to have made a considerable impression on him. He declared himself incapable of deciding as between two such experts: 'I know too little economics for that'. He therefore asked them both to remain in office. Goerdeler, however, refused to do so unless he was given considerably greater powers, including intervention in administrative matters (presumably in the sense of his reform programme). Astonishingly enough, Hitler immediately agreed: 'You will get any powers you want. Submit a draft law to me at once!' That looked like complete success; and certainly it proves better than almost anything else Goerdeler's strong power of suggestion. Two hours later the desired draft was ready (with Schacht's help, incidentally). But its author was himself doubtful that it would actually become law, and therefore at the same time submitted an alternative draft which declared his services as price commissioner at an end. In fact his tenure was not renewed to begin with, but this was far from representing a final decision. In October 1935 he was asked to submit a new memorandum.

I have this document<sup>1</sup> before me in a copy taken from the papers of Ludwig Beck, the Chief of the General Staff, who together with

<sup>1</sup> Loaned to me by Prof. W. Foerster; it is dated Leipzig October 26, 1935.

Fritsch, the commander-in-chief of the army, initialled it at the beginning of November — the first tangible evidence of Goerdeler's collaboration with the future head of the military resistance! In this memorandum the author makes it clear that he will no longer take part in the government as price commissioner, but only as a re-organizer of the entire internal administration, including especially financial administration. Of this, of course, there was no chance; and Goerdeler's memorandum had no practical results.

In the beginning of April 1936, Goering replaced Schacht as the controller of foreign exchange and raw materials. On August 7th Goerdeler was requested by Goering to submit an expert opinion on the situation with respect to foreign exchange, raw materials, and currency; and for this purpose, on Goering's orders, all official sources of information were placed at his disposal. Goerdeler himself always regarded the voluminous paper which he submitted after careful consultation with former colleagues as one of his most important pieces of work. It was also the last which he prepared in the service of Hitler's government. Since it brought the displeasure of those in power on his head, it represents a turning-point in his career.

In this minute on the foreign exchange problem Goerdeler marshalled all the arguments at his disposal into an urgent appeal to the government to alter course in its economic policy. The present policy, he declared, in its excess of boldness ignored natural economic laws. 'Everything is at stake!' To the ideal of national autarchy he opposed the 'magnificent opportunity' of a German initiative in putting an end to the world currency dislocation, of bringing about a general economic understanding, of restoring the balance of payments by means of foreign loans, and of thus finding a way at long last out of the troubles which had followed the war. Such a conciliatory world policy, of course, required a major decision in Germany; for it was predicated on many changes, not least in the treatment of the Jews, the Freemasons, and the Churches. Unrestricted freedom and absolute security in the rule of law were necessary if the German people were to have confidence in the future. But Goerdeler touched on all these difficult points this time only with great caution; evidently he wished to persuade the recipient of the document, to win him over, and did not want to put him off with too harsh a criticism. After examining all the possibilities he had concluded, he said, that salvation for Germany and for the world could be obtained only by self-control, by pursuing modest goals, and by practising strict economy after the manner of Frederick the Great. Rearmament, too, would have to be slowed down.

There can be no doubt that Hitler as well as Goering read this document in a shortened version. At a meeting of the Cabinet on



September 2nd Goering, presiding, mentioned it and called it 'entirely useless' because among other mistaken notions it suggested significant reductions in the rearmament programme. This, obviously, was the crucial point: further co-operation became impossible. Goerdeler's memorandum probably had the same effect on Hitler as did those of Beck later, confirming him in his resolution no longer to pay any attention to the misgivings of the experts and to rely entirely on his own intuition in economic as well as military matters. Publication of the brochure was prohibited by the Ministry of Propaganda a few days after Hitler's speech at the Nuremberg party meeting (September 8-14, 1936) in support of the new economic 'Four-Year Plan'.

Goerdeler himself subsequently always regarded this as the great turning-point in his public career, putting an end to any practical possibility of bringing about a change in the course of events by direct influence on those in power. Nevertheless, true to his activist nature, he did not cease to propagate his ideas, especially by journalistic means. But journalism now perforce turned into political opposition and since open opposition was impossible under Hitler's régime of coercion, indirect criticism was the only means left to him.

Still, Goerdeler characteristically continued in spite of everything to try to influence at least those ministers with whom he was personally friendly. But these men, of course, no longer had any real power of decision; since 1936 they were nothing but tools. So Goerdeler found himself inevitably forced into a new position: from that of counsellor and adviser to that of a determined opponent.

In the long run Hitler's displeasure was bound to have its effect on Goerdeler's position in Leipzig as well. So long as he was in the good graces of the men at the top he was immune from the attacks of local party potentates. When his term of office expired in the summer of 1936 he was re-elected for twelve years, and the representatives of the party assured him that this was precisely for the reason that as a non-party member he could look after the city's interests with greater independence. His personal relations do not seem to have suffered from the events of the autumn either; but the party now became more insistent about its programme. Ever since the spring the National Socialist city-councillors especially his deputy Haake had been pressing for the removal of a statue of the composer Mendelssohn who was a Jew. The lord mayor had opposed this anti-Semitic demand and had even obtained support from Goebbels' ministry. The quarrel dragged on into the late autumn. In early November he went to Helsinki, in response to an invitation from the German-Finnish Chamber of Commerce, to give a lecture; this was the first of a large number of trips abroad during which he made contacts with leading non-German

politicians. In Stockholm where he began that intimate contact with the banker Jakob Wallenberg later to be of such importance, he received the news that the statue had been removed despite his veto. Haake had taken advantage of his absence in order, as he said, to 'relieve the lord mayor of a difficult decision'. But Goerdeler did not dream of allowing the party, and least of all one of his subordinates, to overrule him like that. On his return he immediately presented the party with a demand for the return of the statue; otherwise he would resign. The answer, of course, was in the negative, and the next day Goerdeler, as always quick to make a decision, handed in his resignation. At Christmas he went on leave and on April 1st he retired.

After all that we have learned about him it goes without saying that it was desperately difficult for Goerdeler at the age of 52 to give up a post which suited him better than any other. But it was a matter of principle, and for him there was no other way. What was at stake was his mayoral responsibility to himself alone, his determination to maintain his independence against all comers, including the party, and last but not least his authority in his own bailiwick. But above all it was a matter of conscience, of his responsibility before all the world as a bearer of German culture, of German respect for law and decency. Of this he was never in doubt. He was not aware, as he later admitted, that 'this meant a complete end to all public activity'. And in one sense it was, indeed, only the first prelude to public activity. None of his earlier achievements did so much to make the name of the Lord Mayor of Leipzig at one stroke well known and popular throughout Germany as this clear and courageous protest against an outrage to German culture. Everyone could feel that here truly was a man of rare quality, one who relinquished his office so as not to endorse a shameful deed with his good name, even if only apparently and indirectly. With his departure from his Leipzig post he was at last free to undertake a new mission.

### CHAPTER III

## *The Origins of Opposition and Resistance*

#### I: THE POLITICAL LEFT, THE CHURCHES AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

FROM 1937 Goerdeler's life becomes part of the history of the German Resistance movement. That movement can hardly be understood without reference to the state of things which permitted the rise to domination of National Socialism. Did it, as many critics especially foreign ones, assert, spring from specifically German roots, or from a development common to Europe but which in Germany took an individual form? The second view is an exaggeration if Hitlerism is regarded as a sort of denationalization of the German way of life, as contrary to our national tradition, as a mere episode in our history. Yet there is no doubt that wherever there existed deep-rooted fundamental resistance to it, there was behind it the passionate belief that National Socialism was a satanic falsification of the true German tradition.

The question cannot be decided by appeal to 'the psychology of peoples'. Every nation is a complex of innumerable contradictions. In each — this is true at least of Western civilization — there are the same, or similar, possibilities of spiritual and intellectual development, and it is meaningless to talk of 'the romantic and imperialist Germans' of the 'rational and peaceloving French', or, if one wants to explain historical phenomena, to contrast the alleged servility of the Germans with the natural love of freedom of the British. Those who seek to explain the triumph of Hitler by the traditional German subservience to superiors and unquestioning military obedience, should remember that Germany was not the first but the last of the European countries which from 1917 submitted to the totalitarian tyranny of the one-party state and that the Austrian-born Hitler found the model to be imitated not in the state of Bismarck, but in Mussolini's Italy to whose citizens no one will attribute an excess of submissiveness and discipline.

On quite a different footing is the search for certain political traditions and actual historical situations which made easier Hitler's rise to power. It is not irrelevant to that rise that political self-consciousness awoke later in Germany than in Western Europe, and from its

first appearance in the wars of independence from 1813 to 1815 had a pronouncedly military character which was intensified by the experiences of 1864-71 and even by those of the First World War.<sup>1</sup> The catastrophe of 1918 interrupted that rapid political and economic progress begun under Bismarck, but it could not destroy the enormous vitality of the German people, their economic power and their political self-confidence. As a result, there were tensions which actually invited a demagogue to seek to resolve them and to use the feeling of discontent with a distribution of power in Europe which the Germans found unnatural, to coin war-slogans for the masses. Nothing is so easy in this age of mass-democracy than, when crisis comes, to preach distrust in the rulers of the state and hate of the foreigner and to brand patience and rational policy as weakness, even treason.

It may be admitted that in Italy the attempt by militarization in the realm of thought and education to turn a whole people into a nation of heroes, and an instrument capable of serving the ends of rash imperialist policy had no hope of final success. It was not so with Germany, because of the work of education done by the Prussian-German army and thanks to the fact that the stirring sound of the military marches was intimately connected in the mind of the average German with memories of Imperial days, the days of splendid political achievement and greatest material prosperity. To that extent it can be said that the peculiar tradition of the Prussian-German state did make Hitler's success easier. Add to that the fact that, from its origin, German liberalism was different from Western European liberalism. While the latter arose out of internal struggles for power, the former was the product of wars of independence against the foreigner. Liberal ideas in Germany were therefore bound up with desire for strength and from the foundation of the Bismarck state liberalism lessened as nationalism increased. In the mass of the German middle-class there was no distrust of the 'strong state', but a great confidence — since 1866 strongly reinforced — in authority which diminished under Wilhelm II, seemed deeply shaken by the 1918 revolution, but in 1933 blossomed out again in a blind and widespread confidence in Hitler's good intentions; his first programme as Chancellor was full of noble promises which indicated peaceful policies. To that mass the theory that — under the auspices of the aged Hindenburg! — it had fallen into the hands of a government whose head was a conscienceless adventurer would have seemed quite grotesque. The few

<sup>1</sup> V. on this and what follows my own *Europa und die deutsche Frage*, Munich 1948; my study on The Historical Foundations of the Rise of National Socialism in *The Third Reich*, London 1955, and my lecture 'Vom Ursprung des Einparteienstaates in Europa', in *Historisches Jahrbuch* 1954.

who, like the author, knew that to be true, can still recall the utter despair which this blindness produced in them since they foresaw the catastrophe which was to overtake German culture.

None the less, it is fundamentally untrue — the later development of the German Resistance movement would not be intelligible if it were true — to say that National Socialism was the result of earlier German history, the last consequence, the fulfilment of German tradition. Where the tradition of the old Prussian military state was strongest — in the Army — Hitler was regarded from the beginning as something foreign to it, and none were so bitterly disillusioned as those idealists who had been so credulous as to expect from him a revival of the idea of unity which was that of the old liberalism, which was the child of the wars of independence. National Socialism is at bottom not an original German phenomenon, but only the German form of a European one — the phenomenon of the one-party state — and that is to be explained not as arising from an old tradition, but as arising from a specific contemporary crisis, the crisis of the liberal society.

Hitler was a master of the art of ruling the masses as few others have been. That art shrank from no exaggeration, no calumny, no accusation in order to arouse discontent, distrust and anger against the Weimar 'system'. But incitement to hate was only one side of his popular preaching; he would have had only a partial success, had he not been able to offer a new and positive ideal of the future. The crisis of the Weimar Republic was a crisis of confidence. Hitler knew how to use, not only the economic discontent, but also the impatience, of the nation which was the reverse of its strong will to live. The crisis of 1923 was overcome because the armed forces and the so-called national associations had lent their aid; now everything and everybody which could be considered Right wing desired a German re-birth, a total revival of German life, and that revival Hitler promised to accomplish; and so he caught innumerable idealists in his net.

Above all, he promised to found a new and deeper national community — not simply by ending the strife of parties but by eliminating class conflicts. Admittedly the effort towards a 'national community', the creation of a unified national will and the reconciliation of conflicting interests, has characterized modern democracy since Rousseau and the French Revolution. The unity of the national will is necessarily bound up with the conception of a complete 'popular sovereignty' in Rousseau's sense. But for Germans the new national unity had a special meaning. That sad legacy of the Bismarck state, the class conflict between employers and workers, had greatly intensified especially on questions of rearmament and foreign policy. During the First World War the controversy on war aims had amounted

to a formal division of the nation. The political life of the Weimar Republic was permanently poisoned by its continuance, the quarrel over the 'stab-in-the-back' legend. When Hitler opened before the nation the prospect of reconciling Nationalism and Socialism in his National Socialist party, he seemed to many patriots to be the healer of an old and unhappy rift in the body politic. The monarchy under Wilhelm II had renounced the task which the Western statesmen had so brilliantly accomplished, the fusion of national unity in the fire of war. The 'unknown corporal' of the First World War promised to accomplish it. It was his custom to proffer the 'comradeship of the trenches' as the model for the political life in peace time; that, without any doubt, was the most effective of all his appeals and not only to the ex-soldiers. His programme of a 'national socialism' was vague and romanticist, but it worked alike on the patriotism and the need for self-assertion of so many, especially the lower middle class, the salaried class and those sections of the working-class who shrank from association with the genuine proletariat and with Communism; the class war seemed outmoded, National Socialism the creed of today and tomorrow.

There were very few who recognized at the time that the new government, like Mussolini's eleven years earlier, was merely a prelude to dictatorship, and that Hitler claimed to be the only true incarnation of the people's will just as the Duce, Lenin and, nearly a century and a half ago, Danton and Robespierre had done. But Hitler knew his Germans. He took care not to make clear the revolutionary character of his position as Fuehrer and presented them with the famous comedy of Potsdam (March 21, 1933) with its public reverence of Frederick the Great and Hindenburg who carried on the Frederician tradition with a success so complete that not only in Germany but also, and for longer abroad, he was regarded as the political heir of Prussia's soldier-kings. That this stage-work was necessary makes it plain how little the mass of the Germans, even the educated classes, were ready for a genuine revolution or were intellectually equipped for one.

What differentiated the Resistance movement in Germany from that in other lands was that it was resistance against its own country's government and against a government, too, which, for ten years had gone from one success to another and finally had triumphed over nearly all Europe. For the nations under Hitler's yoke, armed resistance was the national outcome of patriotism; for the German Opposition, it was a matter of conscience not to rejoice at the government's victories and to fear that these would only strengthen an

accursed system. Anyone who experienced that situation must shudder at recalling it, and many survivors belonging to the Opposition would like best to dismiss the remembrance as one dismisses a nightmare.

Before 1933, Hitler's unbridled preaching of hate and the remarkably dubious characters who were his closest associates had provoked moral opposition. The indignation<sup>1</sup> was widespread at his telegram to the murderers of Potempa, the five S.A. men of Upper Silesia who in the autumn of 1932 had clubbed to death a Communist fellow workman and whom Hitler addressed as his 'comrades', but it was without any appreciable effect on the succeeding election. In the weeks from the formation of the coalition cabinet to the day of Potsdam (March 21st) a wave of optimistic illusion swept over the whole country. Even opponents of the Hitler party clung to the hope that the Conservative majority in the Cabinet could dam the revolutionary flood. The excesses of the S.A. after the Reichstag fire, the brutal ill-treatment of their old Communist enemies, the first concentration camps, the great anti-Jewish outburst on April 1st, the occupation of trade union offices and the dissolution of the unions themselves, and finally the dissolution of political parties other than the National Socialist, soon undeceived them. Individuals, like Goerdeler in Leipzig, courageously opposed the first S.A. outrages. But of the worst excesses the public in general knew little or nothing and the obstinate resistance to them of the old Prussian police still under the Socialist Severing was never made public.<sup>2</sup>

Organized systematic resistance was to be expected first from those who were the earliest and sorest tried victims of the new régime, that is, the Communists and the Social Democrats. The Communist Party in these years was singularly unskilfully lead. Its steady collaboration with the National Socialists in undeviating opposition to the governments of the centre parties during the crisis of 1930-1933 had greatly contributed to the collapse of the Weimar Republic, had made impossible the formation of an anti-Nazi Coalition government in Prussia and so made smoother Hitler's path to power. For its errors the party paid a terrible price. In the summer of 1933 some 20,000 of its members were in prison or in concentration camps after the arrest of the leaders immediately after the Reichstag fire.<sup>3</sup> It put up no fight but went underground — as did the Social Democrats, for the latter were in no position to answer the dissolution of the trade

<sup>1</sup> For an illustration of that anger v. *Herr Reichskanzler von Papen, loesen Sie auf*, by P. Rohrbach 1932 (published privately).

<sup>2</sup> V. R. Diels, *Lucifer ante portas*, Zurich, esp. p. 127 sq. and cf. Gisevius, *Bis zum bittern Ende*, Zurich 1946, vol. i, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Diels, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

unions by a general strike; they acted just as in 1932, when they took no action after the Papen government had forcibly ejected their Social Democrat ministers in Prussia.

The fact that at the moment of the great upheaval there was complete abandonment of revolutionary programmes is of the greatest significance in the history of the German Resistance. Only ten years before the Communists had organized most dangerous risings. Why did they not do so now? Why did Torgler, instead of calling the party to arms, voluntarily surrender to the police in order to demonstrate his innocence of complicity in the Reichstag fire? Was the revolutionary power of the Communists of whose dangerous character National Socialist propaganda made so much, actually non-existent? Or were there positive instructions from Moscow?<sup>1</sup>

If the latter is true, then there is no escaping the feeling that the Comintern leaders had underestimated the strength and violence of the National Socialist movement as seriously as did that Social Democrat chairman who, at the last great party meeting in Berlin (March 1933), said confidently: 'Harsh rulers don't last long'. The same illusion is visible in the opinion of many middle-class politicians. For the Communists the dogma of the self-destruction of *bourgeois*-capitalist society still held good; thus in the 1933 upheaval they saw the much desired 'revolutionary crisis'.<sup>2</sup> The Social Democrat leaders were encouraged in their self-deception by the fact that they had astonishingly maintained their strength at the election of March 5th; they thought of Hitler's 'seizure of power' as just another episode in the eternal game of the rise and fall of coalition governments, and saw as their next task the riding of the storm thanks to the massive organization of their party and a timely accommodation to present but transient circumstances. The revolutionary energy of the Communists was seriously impaired not only by the sudden arrest of their leaders, but by the fact that at that election a considerable section of their adherents had gone over to the enemy. Worse still, the S.A. ranks were filled with suddenly 'converted' Communists; in Berlin it is said up to 70 per cent were ex-adherents of that party. Because the balance of power had obviously shifted in favour of the brown shirts, a great many of the unstable saw where the chances of success lay and with all their old energy they now fell upon their former comrades.

Nothing however altered the fact that a revolution cannot be

<sup>1</sup> Diels, *op. cit.*, p. 141, says Stalin did not wish a Communist rising because of Russian economic interests and to avoid a breach with Hitler of whom he then had no fear — which does not sound very convincing.

<sup>2</sup> V. J. B. Jensen and Stefan Weyl, *The Silent War*, Philadelphia 1943, esp. p. 96 sq.



made against the stream of events. After all the experiences since 1914, the Marxist slogans no longer had the old magical force; they did not find that unconditional acceptance without which there can be no civil war. That is certainly true of the Social Democrat leadership which had borne the chief burden of responsibility since 1919 and become in many cases tired and sceptical; their adherents had long ago changed from a party of proletarian class war to a liberal, anti-militarist workers' welfare party. Of the genuineness of their love of liberty there is no doubt, but none of the necessary political conditions were there such as would enable them to fight Hitler at the head of workers' battalions — against the Reichswehr, the armed Storm Troops, the National Socialist *bourgeoisie*, with their deadly enemies, the Communists, ready for the stab in the back.<sup>1</sup> They at first hoped it would be possible to conduct an effective parliamentary opposition; when that hope was shattered by the Enabling Act they went underground into 'illegality'.

The story of the Socialist underground is a striking proof of the impossibility under totalitarian rule of keeping alive a political revolutionary popular movement and making it successful. They had to await defeat for that — unless there was a *coup d'état*, that is, a revolution from above.

The chief weakness of the Socialist opposition lay in the impossibility even in 'illegality' of co-operation between Social Democrats and Communists. The great division between East and West which today splits the world in two was first proved irreconcilable by the experience of the Socialist 'emigration'. At first there were groups within the Social Democrat party which repudiated the old leadership now established in Prague, and blamed weak 'reformism' and lack of a revolutionary will to act as the cause of the disaster of 1933 — the groups known as 'Neu Beginner' and the 'Revolutionary Socialists'.<sup>2</sup> They still thought that the Hitler régime would soon fall apart, and they demanded the organization in Germany of a 'revolutionary advance guard' capable of action, and co-operation with all 'anti-fascists', particularly the Communists. Such tendencies were reinforced by the fact that, through fear of the National Socialist menace, Russia entered the League of Nations, drew closer to the Western democracies, signed the pact with France, issued a new and apparently democratic constitution, made the Comintern conform to the new policies; as in France, the Communist movement in-

<sup>1</sup> The sharpest criticism of the S.D. leaders will be found in the writings of Julius Leber (executed in 1944) after his arrest in 1933, published in 1952 under the title *Ein Mann geht seinem Weg*.

<sup>2</sup> The clearest account of these is in Matthias's book.

creased its strength. The 'Popular Front' in France and Spain induced the Social Democratic Left to co-operate with the Communists. But how could the Soviet system and the dictatorship of the proletariat be reconciled with the Western ideal of freedom, that is, the protection of personal liberties? Disillusionment first came with the great trials in Russia, that of Zinoviev and his colleagues in April 1936; three years later the Hitler-Stalin pact completely wrecked 'co-operation with all anti-Fascists'. Nor could the Russo-German war of 1941 restore it. The radical groups rejoined the party and the fact that the central offices of the 'emigration' had to leave Prague in 1938 for Brussels and Paris and later for London drove Social Democracy completely into the Western camp.

As is the case with all 'emigrations', the Social Democrats in exile were in danger of losing any living connection with conditions inside Germany. Their friends and comrades in Hitler's Reich could only be a tiny *élite*,<sup>1</sup> for the mass of the workers as of the middle class had made their peace with the new rulers;<sup>2</sup> it is not given to everyone to be an underground fighter. Besides, Hitler's social promises did not remain dead letters. Unemployment was surprisingly quickly overcome without that fall in real wages which Goerdeler recommended, becoming necessary. Despite all the terror, corruption and brutality Hitler's labour laws and regulations had brought progress. It was only after rearmament with consequent shortage of consumer goods and heavier demands on labour and the later intolerable war-economy that the masses became restive again.

None the less, there were many Social Democrat party officials who remained true to the old ideals especially in the trade unions. The elections to the Works Councils in 1936 were to the National Socialist officials unpleasant proof how strong the feeling of the trade unionists was. A new wave of arrests sent many old unionists to concentration camps, and a new wave of emigration was the result, while the war and Hitler's conquests brought contact with the West virtually to an end. Yet we shall find leading Social Democrats in the Opposition groups of Goerdeler and Moltke and that the old trade unions connections were used to extend the net of conspiracy over the whole country.

If the Social Democrat leaders had to strive against the feeling of despair, the Communists were in no such difficulty; if there were many deserters, there was all the more fanaticism up to martyrdom among the faithful. In the Gestapo prisons in 1944 I met Communists who had been there for eleven years and were unshaken in their faith.

<sup>1</sup> Matthias says the 'Neu Beginner' never had more than 300 members.

<sup>2</sup> V. Brill, p. 42.

It is impossible to read the story of the Communist resistance without very mixed feelings. Dictatorship of the proletariat faced the dictatorship of 'the unknown corporal', one fanaticism against another. Numberless and indescribable martyrdoms resulted from the carrying out of individual actions which seemed hopeless and therefore meaningless, but which were in keeping with the teachings of revolutionary Marxism. As the proletariat is the destined instrument of revolution, Communist activity was almost entirely within its ranks. Tiny Communist cells were established in factories, groups of three, five or eight, who did not know each other but were kept in communication by a highly organized courier service with the help of carefully organized 'contacts' and even something like central offices. Their work was to study and discuss Marxist teaching, particularly by the printing and circulation of leaflets,<sup>1</sup> printed, written and hectographed journals, handbills, chain letters 'to pass from hand to hand', the pasting-up of wall posters and the scribbling of slogans, smuggling and concealment of weapons and explosives for bombs, helping those pursued by the police, maintenance of contact with foreign countries, with Russia especially, forging of passes and passports in carefully camouflaged offices and the like. It was 'illegality' based on the old romantic traditions of the Russian *émigrés* of Czarist days. But the Gestapo had a long and intimate acquaintance of such methods and had devised their own special organization to cope with them; the number of their spies and 'contact men' drawn from deserters and bought helpers rose appreciably making the whole business more hopeless than ever.<sup>2</sup> The effect of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact of August 1939 and the complete reversal of policy by the Russians who now asked of their followers to turn friends to Hitler may be imagined. Inevitably many underground fighters left the Communist party.

Yet barely two years later a very different situation arose. Hitler's invasion of Russia gave the Communists new, and this time very clear, aims; sabotage of the war effort became their main task and they were very zealous in performing it. Foreign broadcasts were listened to and spread; they soon had their own receivers and even senders made by themselves or smuggled in from Russia; forbidden news was passed on by word of mouth or in writing; anti-war propaganda got to the front line by men returning from leave; there were attempts to delay or directly sabotage war production often in collab-

<sup>1</sup> In the Ostberliner Institut fuer Zeitgeschichte I found an astonishingly long list of these; there are photographic copies of 200 in the Hoover Library.

<sup>2</sup> V. Diels, *op. cit.*, p. 175, and SS report on July 20, 1944 published in *Nord-westdeutsche Hefte*, 1947, ii, p. 30.

oration with foreign workers, even thefts of weapons and munitions.

These were the laborious sabotage efforts of little people. There was, however, one very serious undertaking organized and carried on by highly educated men which penetrated into the central strongholds of the Third Reich — the so-called 'Rote Kapelle' organized in 1940 by Schulze-Boysen and Arvid Harnack. Schulze-Boysen was a senior lieutenant in the Air Ministry, Harnack, a nephew of the great theologian, was a senior counsellor in the Ministry of Economics; others of the conspiracy were in the Supreme Command of the Army and in the Foreign Office. The organization reached as far as Paris and the Low Countries; it received instructions from Moscow in broadcasts in code via Paris and Brussels. Its spiritual leaders — among these were the author and journalist Kuckhoff, the Latin Professor Kraus, and a number of artists and university men — belonged to that Communist aristocracy which had fostered in the party not just hate against Hitler but the intellectual development of the individual. Intellectual adventure had its inevitable attraction especially to the romantic Schulze-Boysen with his vague social enthusiasms and in Harnack's case there was admiration for the technical and economic achievement of the Bolshevik system. Whatever their motives, they made themselves the most dangerous tool in the service of the enemy. Schulze-Boysen was closely connected with the Communist education and propaganda groups and he and Harnack supplied them with material.

Their most important — and most dangerous — work consisted in steadily supplying the Russian Army Command with important military information, and that not only on matters of armament production, but on plans of attack and of action behind the front line thanks to their access to special information from official sources. Russian transmitters and codes, Russian agents dropped by parachute, German *émigrés* and prisoners of war who now acted as agents, were all pressed into the service of the espionage organization. Not until August 1942 did the Gestapo discover its leaders and expose the whole conspiracy. The resultant trial could have no other end than a mass execution.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Rote Kapelle' conspirators have since 1945 been honoured in the Russian zone as 'Heroes of the Resistance' — and rightly. Yet with the 'German Resistance' they had nothing at all to do. They were frankly in the service of the enemy. They not only sought to induce German soldiers to desert, but they betrayed military secrets and so

<sup>1</sup> Numbers are uncertain; in M. Roeder, *Die Rote Kapelle*, gives 44 death sentences. Dulles in his book says there were 78 executions: Weisenborn gives 118 arrested of which 22 were liberated.

destroyed German troops. They were in fact traitors and not merely according to the letter of the law. It should not be denied — this indeed is the problem of this book — that there is a moral obligation which, under certain circumstances, takes precedence over the claims of national loyalty. Formal treason can become a moral duty, a paradoxical but inevitable consequence of the totalitarian system with its reversal of the normal conditions of law. But that can be pleaded only if there is the serious purpose behind it of saving one's country through such a breach of law — militarily from helpless surrender to the enemy's will, politically from the loss of all liberty and morally from the triumph of evil. The Opposition which gathered round Carl Goerdeler also had much dealing with other countries, but always with a view either to prevent the outbreak of an unjustified, and in the end hopeless, war or to help by any means to end it and save Germany from catastrophe. What the 'Rote Kapelle' wanted was a Russian victory in order with Russian aid to make Germany a Communist state on the Russian pattern, a state which could have been established only by force against the will of the overwhelming majority of Germans, and would have made all Germany such a Russian satellite as Poland and Czechoslovakia are today.

Later, as we shall see, the Russians went outside the Communist movement and tried to attract support from the patriotic elements in the army and the nation. We may ascribe to this activity the conference of German Communists 'for an immediate peace' which was held somewhere in the Rhineland in December 1942. The 'ten-point programme' that emerged from it is completely liberal in tone and nothing in it resembles the typical Communist manifesto.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it does resemble the 'Manifesto' issued six months later by the German *émigrés* and prisoners of war united in the Moscow 'National Committee of Free Germany' which was hailed as the first call to 'national resistance'. The little which we know of the underground movement to the last years of the war shows the same tendency. Its leaders, the Berlin lorry-driver Anton Saefkow and the two Hamburgers, the locksmith Franz Jakob and the precision tool-maker Bernhard Baestlein, produced a great 'constructive programme' for the creation of a 'national unity front' in which it seems there was much mention of a 'people's militia', of works councils and 'peoples' committees' which remind us of the workers' and soldiers' councils of 1918-19. We hear too of attempts at contact with Social Democrat and middle-class resistance groups, in part with the help of the wife of the well-known editor of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, Rudolf Pechel who was then in prison. 'For the sake of unity' wrote Saefkow to his

<sup>1</sup> *V. Deutsche Innere Emigration*, p. 46.

attempt to destroy theological teaching in the universities by refusing teaching permits to the younger generation.

How is this success of the Evangelical Churches' opposition to be explained? These, unlike the political opposition groups, had a forum of their own, places where they could demonstrate and into which the police were disinclined to enter and did not risk entirely closing. There was also a Church 'underground' with secret meetings of committees and of groups of friends in unlikely places not readily accessible to the police,<sup>1</sup> with a cleverly organized information service and the circulation of handbills and roneoed news sheets. Under Niemoeller's leadership a 'pastors' emergency league' was formed which by Christmas 1933 had some 6,000 members, i.e. about a third of all the pastors, which helped brothers driven from their pulpit or otherwise in need with generous subsidies. There were also educational centres for young theological students, a Church assistance scheme for Christians of Jewish origin whose leaders Pastors Sylten and Grueber ended in concentration camps, and finally an elaborate system of getting news to co-religionists abroad. The committees even risked acting publicly. It was they who inspired the synods and formed a 'provisional leadership' which was in practice recognized in place of the official authorities. It is astonishing to what extent the law courts risked decisions in favour of the Evangelical Churches. 'My Fuehrer', wrote Frick to Hitler in connection with his talks with evangelical leaders, 'the bishops have a powerful weapon in their hands; every case against them will be lost'. The same was true in the concentration camps; numberless pastors in them had evidence, often in striking form, that their gaolers were on their side and did their official duty with a bad conscience.

All this was possible because originally the Evangelical Church confined its efforts to the defence of purely religious interests. To stand up against secular authority was a new experience for German Lutheranism and one in contradiction of all its traditions. It was, therefore, a very long step from the obedience of the subject to organized resistance, from blind confidence in Hitler's recognition of Christianity<sup>2</sup> as the 'unshakeable foundation of the moral and ethical life of our nation' to extreme mistrust and illegal action. The step was taken by various leaders over a relatively long period and led to a deep cleavage within the Church itself, between the cautious and the temporizers and the fighters to whom any compromise was abhorrent. But Hitler himself took the measures which ensured that this cleavage did not really destroy the unity of the Evangelical op-

<sup>1</sup> The author personally took part in many such meetings.

<sup>2</sup> In his Reichstag speech of March 23, 1933.

position front for, first at the time of the attack on Czechoslovakia and then completely during the war, the satanic nature of his power was revealed.

For that reason it was not possible to confine opposition to the religious sphere alone. First, there was the intrusion of anti-Christian elements and the struggle with the 'German Christians', Hitler's zealous supporters with a strongly secularized theology. Supported by Hitler personally, they won the upper hand in the July 1933 church elections in the regional churches and the synods. The result was the enforcement of the 'Aryan law' by the removal of all pastors of Jewish or half-Jewish descent. The 'German Christians' then began to be classed as 'heretics' and the Churches' struggle was seen as an internal religious one. But it soon became more than that, for under the 'German Christians', political and secular conceptions crept into Evangelical theology and preaching, particularly the conception of the 'Third Reich' as a divine dispensation, and so buttressed the totalitarian claims of the one-party state. It is here that the orthodox theologians under the leadership of the Bâle theologian, Karl Barth, performed eternal service by recognizing the danger in time and unswervingly meeting it. Of course liberal theologians also strove against Hitler's dictatorial régime, but, generally speaking, the danger of falling victim to National Socialist propaganda became the greater in proportion as Protestant belief moved away from the old biblical foundations. It was only round the hard core of orthodox theology that a real resistance could form. But even there the real nature of resistance was not appreciated. It was no longer a case of resisting state encroachment on the church's sphere — there had always been that — but of resistance to the claims of the state to control every human activity, including intellectual and religious activity and so of preserving the very basis of western culture which is impossible without a definite limit being set to state interference. The Roman Catholics found this task easier for they possessed a hierarchical organization permitting no deviation from the general line, and based on the Papacy, which had innumerable connections abroad and which could base itself on its traditional dogmatically defined 'natural law'. The Evangelical theologians had no such advantages, and now had revealed to them how badly equipped they were intellectually to embark on so hard a struggle. The old Lutheran teaching of the 'Two Kingdoms', the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world and of the 'Christian supremacy' needed developing, renewing and reinforcing. Through deep spiritual effort new bases were found for practical resistance to the totalitarian state and a doctrine worked out on Lutheran principles of the right, aye, the duty, of the Christian to

resist godless tyranny. Only then was it possible for Evangelical Christians, including several notable professional theologians, Dietrich Bonhoeffer among them, to stand with a good conscience in the van of the political opposition and work directly with it for the reconstruction of the state after Hitler's fall; the Opposition movement was thereby spiritually reinforced to an extent which should not be underestimated.

The 'theological declaration' of the Barmen Synod of May 1934 with its sharp rejection of totalitarian claims, ranks as a basic 'confession of faith' of the Church militant; it was also a political event. Its line was followed in various statements declaring that the oath of loyalty to Hitler — and equally 'the oath to the colours' — was valid only if it was not in violation of 'the laws of God', and protesting against the oaths imposed on young people and children. The tendency to enter the political sphere is seen at its height in the pronouncements of the Prussian Confessional Synod and the 'provisional Church government' as long as these were under Niemoeller's influence. A pulpit announcement drawn up in Dahlem on March 5, 1935 denounced the racial theories of Hitlerism, and protested against the deification of an 'eternal Germany', the 'religious glorification' of the secular power and the misuse of the oath. Its public reading led to the arrest of 700 pastors. A manifesto to Hitler drawn up by the second 'provisional government' went still further; by ill luck it went not to Hitler but to the foreign press. It protested not only against the 'de-christianizing' of youth and the persecution of Christians by the Nazi party, but against the destruction of the constitutional state, the muzzling of the press, the falsification of results at the Reichstag elections, the concentration camps and the arbitrariness of the Gestapo. When the danger of war first became real in the autumn of 1938, the leaders of the old Prussian Union Church drew up the form of a service of intercession which contained in its penitential prayer such a series of accusations against existing conditions that the Lutheran bishops rejected it, thus causing a difficult crisis for the Evangelical Church. Not long after, the November 1938 violence against the Jews showed that, against the régime, no call to repentance could be over-earnest, no accusation too severe. Nor were there wanting courageous preachers who independently risked attacking this shame to Germany from their pulpits.<sup>1</sup> During the war Bishop Wurm of Wuerttemberg became more and more the spokesman of the Evangelical Church, and his letters to the parishes and his memoranda to

<sup>1</sup> The most impressive is the sermon by the Dahlem pastor Gollwitzer (now a professor in Bonn) (November 11, 1938); it is printed in *Evangelische Theologie*, 1951-2, No. 4.



the government brought to public notice the extremity in which the Church found itself. The half-Jews and the partners in mixed marriages had his intervention — in conjunction with the Catholic episcopate — to thank for at least a momentary exemption and his courageous protest to Frick on July 19, 1940 against the extermination of lunatics and mental defectives is one of the noblest documents of the German Resistance.

Wurm and his fellow-bishops only in extreme cases and reluctantly protested against abuses that, strictly speaking, did not directly concern the Christian religion. They were less forthright than Niemöller in whom Hitler's sure instinct recognized the régime's most determined political opponent and so never allowed him to leave prison. They feared, and had some reason to fear, that the 'Confessional Church' would become a reservoir for the discontented of all sorts from outside it and that the Church's Gospel mission would be distorted and falsified by elements hostile to Christianity itself. But they never abandoned the view that a Christian Church which let itself be forced out of the peaceful work of religious edification would be untrue to the mission assigned it by its Founder to be 'the salt of the earth' and that it could not escape responsibility for the actual political and social conditions.

In the Roman Catholic Church too, there were fears that the Church's struggle with the régime would become political, but so far as a non-Catholic can see, they were less fundamental in character. The Roman Papacy had certainly abandoned its old mediaeval claims to world dominion and their furtherance by political means and, since the Council of Trent, had based its activities on increasing and deepening its spiritual strength. The German episcopate had become a body of zealous and devoted shepherds of souls, who stood aloof from political activity and were interested in politics only in so far as they were concerned to fight for the rights given by the Concordats. There was no reproach which it sought more carefully to avoid than that of 'political Catholicism', a reproach which since the time of the Kulturkampf had been levelled against them by Liberals and was now repeated by Hitler's supporters. In the days before 1933 it had tried to combat National Socialism by warnings and interdicts, but the effort was purely religious in character; it was concerned with combating the 'new heathenism' and the racial myth. This activity was considerably lessened when Hitler, by one of his cleverest camouflage manoeuvres, concluded through his vice-chancellor Papen the Concordat of July 20, 1933, the first treaty by which his régime won international recognition. In precise language the rights of the Church

were assured in exchange for the recognition of the régime and renunciation by the Catholic clergy of political activity. The 'political priest' who had played so conspicuous a role in the old *Centrum* party vanished from the scene.

But, although the priests were forbidden to take part in any form of party politics, the Catholic bishops soon had to recognize that the other party to the Concordat had every intention of encroaching on the Church's rights where it seemed advantageous. Now the Concordat had this to be said for it that it did define those rights and so was a means of defence, but on the other hand its existence acted as a brake since it could legitimately be feared that over-loud protest would endanger the rights that were left untouched. As a result, the Catholic Church in the first years of Hitlerism shrank from open conflict with the régime although the Evangelical Church had been fighting it since the end of 1933. None the less, in the summer of 1933, the episcopate in pastoral letters, while recognizing the new régime as the lawful authority, had uttered plain warning against over-extension of the authority of the state, against an un-Christian 'policy of revenge' against other nations, against exaggerations of the racial doctrines of the party and against the curtailing of the right of association and the freedom of the press. From 1935 the protests in pastoral letters<sup>1</sup> and in memorials to the government became increasingly serious; they were against the abusive attacks on the fundamental beliefs of the Catholics in the National Socialist press and against the infringements of the rights of Catholics to associate and in 1936 they speak of the 'incredibilities' of the Nazi movement. The most significant achievement in this sphere was the scientific refutation of Rosenberg's 'Myth' which appeared in December 1934 as an official supplement to the 'Church Advertiser' of the Cologne diocese — a theological treatise as solid as it was courageous which was warmly welcomed by the faithful in every camp in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

It came to open conflict after the publication of the great Papal Encyclical of March 14, 1937 which was a tremendous attack on the new heathenism and with its appeal for loyalty to their church addressed to priests, members of religious orders, the laity and the Catholic youth, had the effect of a call to battle against the Third Reich. The police could prevent its circulation in printed form but not the reading of it from the pulpits. The party's answer was the great campaign led by Goebbels of accusation and calumny against the monasteries and their occupants which produced a crop of court

<sup>1</sup> V. J. Neuhaesler, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz*, 2 vols., 1946.

<sup>2</sup> A Protestant refutation of the 'Myth' by W. Kuenneth went through three editions in 1935.

actions on charges of violation of currency without damage to the general respect in which the accused were held. The war brought no armistice in what had become a fierce conflict. On the contrary, it gave the National Socialists the chance to plead 'military necessity' and to commandeer monastery buildings, to forbid new entrants to the religious orders, to curtail and even ban religious processions, and to interfere everywhere with the Church's press, its right of association and its work among young people.

In the Catholic resistance an important part was played by the Catholic labour movement with its labour association and Christian trade unions. The Ketteler House in Cologne and the Berlin secretariat of the labour association which was dissolved in 1936, served as key points for the exchange of information and in the reinforcement of the resistance to the Hitler régime; there seems to have been as strong and unobtrusive inter-communication between old members and colleagues of the Catholic labour movement as in the case of old Social Democrat trade unionists. Leaders of Catholic associations like Otto Mueller and Josef Joos, the journalist Nikolaus Gross, and secretaries Bernhard Letterhaus and Jakob Kaiser not only kept in touch with each other and with representatives of other associations (Habermann, Leuschner) but were more or less active in the military conspiracy of the Beck-Goerdeler group. Mueller, Letterhaus and Gross in 1944 sealed their testimony with their blood.<sup>1</sup>

The names of the bishops who were specially active in the defence of their church are well known — Cardinal Bertram of Breslau, the spokesman of the Bishops' conference at Fulda, Count Preysing of Berlin, the helper of those pursued by the state, Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich, the learned defender of the Old Testament, Archbishop Conrad Groeber of Freiburg, the most unwearied of all the Catholic writers and publicists and, last but not least, Count Clemens August von Galen of Muenster. The news of his great protest in the summer of 1941 quickly spread abroad and were, alas to the detriment of the cause for which he stood, used as material for foreign radio propaganda. From 1934 he had spoken out in pastoral letters and in sermons against the new heathenism in which there was a sharpness of tone unusual in Catholic writings. In them was heard not only the voice of a Catholic priest and Christian believer, but the voice of a Westphalian aristocrat who expressly rejected the repeated offers of a truce as being inconsistent with the honour of a gentleman and the knightly traditions of his family and refused to have dealings with his enemies even though as a Christian he prayed for them. No one

<sup>1</sup> V. Pechel, p. 58 sq. V. also H. J. Schmidt in the brochure *20 Juli 1944* (a special edition of the weekly *Das Parlament* of July 20, 1953).

spoke so courageously, so popularly and therefore so effectively as Count Galen.

There is no stronger evidence of the popularity of the Church opposition than the fact that the dictatorial régime did not dare lay hand on any of the bishops of either confession. When in Hitler's most intimate circle, someone proposed to hang Count Galen, Goebbels said they could then 'write off all Westphalia for the duration'. He knew his Rhinelanders and Westphalians and remembered the uprising of the Oldenburg Catholics who, in 1936, had compelled their Gauleiter to restore the crucifixes he had had removed from the schools. But, if the régime feared to touch the bishops, it raged against the pastors and the chaplains hundreds of whom were consigned to concentration camps<sup>1</sup> and many condemned to death by the 'People's Courts'. In the end the Catholic Church could no more draw a clear line between religious and political opposition than could the Evangelical. The Catholic bishops were never in doubt of the definite provisions for freedom in the 'Christian law of nature' which to the Catholic is the basis of social ethics. In their pastoral letter of 1942<sup>2</sup> they declared expressly that they were obliged to enter the lists on behalf not only of religious and ecclesiastical rights but of 'human rights as such' without which culture must collapse. They therefore never shrank from even stronger protest than that of the Evangelicals against the arbitrary confiscation of private property, against the concentration camp, against the methods of police spying, against the shooting of innocent hostages or prisoners and the abduction of foreign workers and of course against the extermination of the mentally afflicted.<sup>3</sup> It was all in vain but as with the Evangelical Church so the Catholic Church won new respect in circles long estranged from it.

The strength of the movement of resistance to the Hitler tyranny lay in the genuineness, the clarity and the depth of its belief in freedom. Outside the Churches that belief was not just of a moral and religious character but had behind it political opinion of the most varied kind. If one wishes to define the middle-class opposition which was divided among so many political camps one may say this: all its members, historically educated as they were, felt in their hearts moral

<sup>1</sup> A list drawn up in Dachau in 1942 (Neuhaesler i, p. 336) shows 225 priests there: in 1945 there were 1493 of various nationalities of whom 791 were Poles.

<sup>2</sup> V. Rothfels, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum of Cardinal Bertram to the German Government of December 10, 1941; the letter of August 1943 will be found in *Das Christliche Deutschland* Catholic Series No. 2, p. 68 sq.

obligations to the German past; they refused to let the best traditions of German and Prussian history be falsified, misused, discredited and destroyed. On what actually were 'the noblest values of German history' there was certainly much difference. There were the old Prussian and old Bavarian monarchists, the romantics of restoration; there were the disillusioned republicans who felt it better to obey a conscientious King, heir to a strong tradition, than a conscienceless demagogue; to these, monarchy appeared an emergency provisional solution. But much more important than the monarchized form of the Prussian state was the ethical basis of its system. That tradition fostered over many generations was very much alive in the minds of very many Germans including even leaders of the Social Democracy for the strength of the Prussian state to create men in its own pattern was the strongest force in Germany; it can be compared to the strength of Puritanism. There were, too, other values of which many Germans were conscious, above all, the many-sidedness of the political and cultural life which was one of the conditions of Germany's intellectual richness now so threatened by the levelling and centralizing decrees issued by the all powerful, all penetrating state party. German liberalism in the old days had never thought of the people as a uniform mass, but as a political society manifoldly divided whose vitality, expressing itself in free, creative and self-conscious personalities, appeared as the highest of all values. Such ideas had not disappeared from the world of education even if their maintenance was difficult within the framework of a modern industrial society. No one in whom they lived could fail to repudiate the idea of a single national will made uniform by all the arts of propaganda and terrorism. Such a person sought safety under the roof of the 'constitutional state', at whose creation so many generations of Germans had so fruitfully laboured. Finally, there was a German consciousness that saw the special merit of the German way of life in its 'rich heritage in spirituality' as Edgar Jung phrased it, and in its liking for metaphysics and in the sincerity of its religious feeling. What was regarded as the greatest danger of National Socialism was its spiritual corruption of the masses, the young especially, by a politically bounded, and in the end, satanic conception of life.

Anyone, it is true, could interpret all this in ways which would exclude him from the ranks of the Opposition and even permit him to row in the Hitlerite boat. It is characteristic of our times that moral and political ideals become hazy, and fundamental oppositions are smoothed away or neutralized. Everywhere reckless publicists strive to bluff their readers by clever contemporary diagnoses, by confusing political conceptions, if not actually turning them upside down, for

since Nietzsche's day, shocking the good *bourgeois* has been the hallmark of wit to our continent's men of letters. Times of class and general unrest, such as resulted from the collapse of the Imperial régime and of nineteenth-century *bourgeois* society at the end of the First World War, are the most fruitful soil for this sort of literary activity. In the days of the Weimar Republic all sorts of voices were raised appealing to 'the experience of the front line' and in the name of the 'front line generation' presenting every sort of scheme for the renewal of the life of Germany with a strange mixture of conservative and liberal ideas, of the manly old Prussian ideals with romantic revivals of the old 'Empire', of *bourgeois* concepts of freedom with socialist schemes often mingled with 'racial' postulates and with the hazy, often adventurous, romanticism of 'organised' youth.<sup>1</sup> Anyone reading this chaotic stuff today is shocked at such superficiality and such defencelessness against the power of the slogans of the rising National Socialism.

Much had been done before 1933 by writers like Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck and Juenger, and by the confusion of ideas, to make the old Prussian traditions readily usable by National Socialist propaganda. But 'Prussianism' had other sides and, as the realities of history show, it was not akin to National Socialism but its opposite, the opposite of inflammatory nationalism, of the 'cult of the mass', of lawless dictatorship. Answering the piece of theatricalism of Potsdam, I myself wrote<sup>2</sup> in 1938, 'We who were at the front in 1914 were proud to be sons of a people who honoured in the highest degree the old Prussian culture with its sober practicality and its silent fulfilment of duty, to be soldiers in an army which . . . saw merit only in the leadership of service in war as in peace'. Here was the basis for any opposition which was true to the tradition. There was, too, the inherited conception of honour and the ideal of courage of the Prussian officer corps with its aristocratic past and its ideals of service, self-respect and responsibility for the fate of those under its command — all in utter contradiction to the brutalities of the National Socialist dictatorship.

The heritage of German liberalism was equally threatened by self-deception and misunderstandings. With that heritage went the consciousness of possession of a very different, and as men believed, a deeper conception of political unity than the liberals of the West possessed. German romantics and historians had developed a social doctrine in which the concept of an organic national unity transcending and absorbing differences played a great part, and an idea

<sup>1</sup> V. Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland*, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> In *Friedrich der Grosse. Ein historisches Profil*, 1936 (last pages).

of freedom not as an uncontrolled right of the individual, but as a moral right to be exercised only in the service of the community. To the West European conception of the 'nation' as a political community of free citizens, they opposed the conception of the 'people' which was not the result of political decisions, but grew and developed by an historical process out of community of blood, speech, ways of life and morals. German national consciousness in the nineteenth century was not, as was the French, the result of a great democratic revolution, but of the recognition of a spiritual and intellectual unity which received political form in the wars against revolutionary and Napoleonic France which had as their aim the restoration of the old historic authorities. Thus national consciousness in Germany was not bound, as was the case in the West, to democratic ideas; it rested on the strong traditions of the German middle-class education even if liberals as liberals were to some extent opposed to them. Even after 1918 the admirers and advocates of Western democratic constitutions and ways of life were only a minority.<sup>1</sup>

It was for that reason that the National Socialists' propaganda had such astonishingly corrupting effect in the educational sphere. If they mocked at the democratic ideology of the West, spoke of 'national' ideals, of a 'new birth' of Germanism, of 'loyalty' and 'devotion' as opposed to blind obedience to command, of a German 'people's community', of an organization of the people into classes and professions, provinces and communes, of the attachment of a true 'nation of blood and soil' in contrast to the uprooted, homeless masses in the great cities and industrial centres and when they went on repeating that the new state would be only an instrument of the German people which would go beyond political frontiers to create a mighty power in Europe — all that sounded like the fulfilment of the old romantic longings. Numberless Germans, especially those who had been in the Youth Movement, let themselves be deceived and heard in all this shrill propaganda something which corresponded to their view of the true way of life for Germany and of its political mission.

It was indeed not long before they awoke from their dreams and in bitter disillusion saw the 'Third Reich' for what it was, a revolutionary power in the style of the French, Russian and Italian terrorists made legitimate by appeal to the equalitarian 'common will' of Rousseau which recognized no rights to a minority and tolerated no opposition, no difference of opinion.

<sup>1</sup> The fact that Socialist ideology was influenced by the West increased the gulf between the Social Democrats and the 'bourgeois-national' parties. This is interestingly brought out in Matthias's book.

Where belief in freedom and justice as ideals was genuine, the true nature of Hitlerism was soon recognized. The development of the gifted writer, the Munich lawyer, Edgar Jung is proof of that. His book *The Rule of the Inferiors* (1927) belongs to the 'Young Conservative' movement with its romantic ideals of Germanism, of German 'self-sacrifice', of German spiritual life, of German claims to leadership in the East through the 'defeat of the Western concepts of the national state' and above all the rule of the state by a 'superior élite'. Here was no armour against National Socialism. Yet he, not only from the outset as an honest and humane thinker, as a Christian and as heir to the European tradition, rejected Hitlerism, but took practical steps to fight it and as the assistant of Papen whose opposition to Hitler he helped to stiffen, drafted the famous Marburg speech<sup>1</sup> (June 17, 1934) which was the first trumpet blast of open resistance. He was one of the first victims of the blood bath of June 30th.

In the 'Herrenklub' of which Jung himself, Papen, Schleicher, Treviranus of the Young Conservatives, Heinrich von Gleichen and others were members, there was much intellectual — perhaps too much and too intellectual — discussion on reform and on the tactical problems of behind the scenes political activity to the loss of ordinary political instinct. Yet all that was needed to see through National Socialism with its preaching of hate and its corruption of public opinion was that ordinary instinct and the possession of an unshakable and human sense of right. Men who refused to let themselves be deluded had regarded the Hitler movement with horror long before it came into power and the pogroms of April 1, 1933, the atrocities committed by the S.A., the lies about the Reichstag fire and all similar incidents only confirmed them in their fears. There were not a few such men in the German middle class, but very few had the courage and the opportunity to oppose the régime openly. Those who were in Berlin and were personally connected with the government offices did much as individuals to stem or weaken the evil. We know, in 1933, of many groups which formally conspired against the régime, protected or aided the flight of the victims of police persecution, sought to influence in some way men in the new government, meditated on every possibility of overthrowing it. Bruening who was for a time the centre of such efforts speaks of 'widespread attempts at open resistance', of contact with 'strong groups in the Army' and of 'the growing number of prominent Nazis who were discontented with the

<sup>1</sup> Pechel's assertion (p. 75) that Papen was only Jung's 'loud speaker' is rightly contested by Papen in his memoirs, (p. 364.) Discussions with Papen in Ankara in 1943 convinced me that he had no need to borrow another man's ideas.



régime but who never got beyond vague hints about where they stood.<sup>1</sup> This much is clear, that immediately after January 30, 1933, Bruening got in touch with Schleicher and that the latter saw a prospect now of Hindenburg and now of General von Hammerstein intervening. Hammerstein, who was the Army commander-in-chief until January 1934, belonged to the Opposition. Rudolf Pechel,<sup>2</sup> the editor of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, knew of a sort of alliance between Bruening, Treviranus and Edgar Jung who had plans for a *coup d'état* and had worked out a new list of ministers. Was Papen's Marburg speech conceived as a sort of signal for a *coup*? Jung who was a man of great political ambition and, according to Papen, made no attempt to conceal the fact that he was 'the soul of the Resistance' was assuredly not murdered simply for the Marburg speech; his plans seem, it is true, to have been rather vague but he pursued them with utter lack of caution. Bruening and Treviranus had to flee the country in these days of the blood bath.

It can, therefore, be said that, since its first years, there was a middle-class conspiracy against the régime and that an end was put to it in the horrible deeds of June 30th. Yet there remained some brave souls who, just as Goerdeler did in Leipzig, sought as best they could to oppose the terror. The lawyer Fabian von Schlabrendorff who was active in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, tells us of the courageous attitude of his chief Herbert von Bismarck and of his old Conservative friends, like Ewald von Kleist, and county councillor Osten, who even before 1933 had striven in vain to divert the German National Party from the dangerous course which it was taking under Hugenberg's leadership;<sup>3</sup> they let no danger deter them. Ewald von Kleist was one of the victims of July 20, 1944. Among them were a disproportionate number belonging to the Prussian aristocracy, as was natural for in them lived the old Prussian tradition. But it would be unjust to stop there and not say that among the earliest of Hitler's opponents were Catholics and South Germans like Graf Ketteler, Papen's adjutant, and Freiher Karl Ludwig von Guttenberg, the publisher of the *Weisse Blätter*, a monthly review which, as did the *Deutsche Rundschau*, took up the task of leading openly or covertly, leading to what lengths were possible the literary opposition. All the professions were represented in the slowly forming middle-class opposition. Thus we find in the Berlin circle the ex-diplomats Mumm von Schwarzenstein and a little later Ulrich von Hassell, the wholesale merchant Nikolaus von Halem, one of the most active members of the Op-

<sup>1</sup> V. *Deutsche Rundschau*, June 1947, pp. 18, 20 sq.

<sup>2</sup> V. Pechel, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, p. 21 sq.

position, Bruening's doctor, Prof. Zanter, scholars like Eduard Spranger or Rudolf Smend and many others. From the end of 1933 the influence of the Church opposition grew ever stronger; Niemoeller of Dahlem hid conspirators under his roof and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, as a Berlin professor's son had wide social connections, did not only not shrink from political activity but held it his duty to embark upon it.

What differentiates the middle-class opposition from that of the Churches or of Socialist Labour is the fact that the former did not think in terms of raising a great popular movement against Hitler. If they did discuss concrete plans they felt these could only be realized by a *coup d'état*, by revolution from above. A *coup* was unthinkable without the support of the armed forces. Thus, long before Goerdeler took political action, the relation of the politician to the soldier had become the key problem of the middle-class and nationalist resistance movement.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Origins of Opposition and Resistance*

#### II. THE ARMY

TO UNDERSTAND the soldier's attitude to the Hitler régime one must go back to the tradition of the Reichswehr, the professional army of the Weimar Republic. Its characteristic is its ambivalence. In the older officers who had served in the old Imperial Army the old professional ethics still lived, but the sense of personal loyalty to the head of the state had been destroyed by the events of 1918. To place that authority above everything was before 1918 not just professional duty but a veritable 'affair of the heart'. It did not seem the same under Ebert, nor even under Hindenburg despite a common memory of Imperial days and respect for the Field Marshal's fame as a soldier for these had been gravely impaired by the later memories of 1918 when Hindenburg had deserted the Kaiser, severed his partnership with Ludendorff, replaced him by Groener and placed the defeated army at the service of the new régime. The two men to whom this was in the main due, Groener and Schleicher, were not popular with the Reichswehr since they felt themselves more closely bound to the Weimar régime than to most of their comrades. They conducted themselves as soldiers of the Republic, but without enthusiasm for a totally different relationship. Their ideal of an officer was best represented by the organizer and head of the Reichswehr, Seeckt. It was long customary to describe him as the model of the 'unpolitical soldier'. But, as his memoirs show, that is not wholly true. He was not without political ambition; he possessed a certain political cleverness of his own and he had his own political aims. He had more than once had presidential aspirations and in pursuit thereof had not shrunk from interfering in foreign policy. When, during the 1923 crisis, Ebert had handed over to him 'full powers', he had for a time toyed with the idea of a personal 'seizure of power' and a radical constitutional reform with the strengthening of presidential power as its aim — ideas in which Goerdeler who sent him a memorandum on reform, seems to have encouraged him. But he was too able a man to endanger the hardly won internal peace and the Reichswehr by political adventures. So he gave back his 'full powers' as soon as he

saw that his temporary popularity was rapidly waning because of unpopular measures like the dissolution of the extreme parties on right and left.

Efforts such as Schleicher made to gain contact with the Left and with the trade unions he never made; such intrigues were foreign to his nature and did not interest him. Fundamentally he was interested in one political issue and one only which, indeed, interested every soldier — how to make Germany once again an 'active power'. But the conduct of an 'active policy' meant for him 'preparation for the struggle' against France and Poland with the destruction of the Versailles settlement as its aim and that, too, with the help of Russia, for he thought of the Red Army as an ally and zealously strove to strengthen it. That struggle he believed to be inevitable if Germany was not prepared 'to eat for ever out of the hands of Poles and Frenchmen'. His endeavours to build up an armaments industry to supply both the Bolshevik and the German Army are well known. The fears of many of such an alliance he dismissed as 'tales to scare children'.

The great memorandum which in 1922 Seeckt sent to Wirth, the then Chancellor, is a classic formulation of 'the spirit of the soldier'. In that spirit, Seeckt trained his senior officers and, as he himself in his biographer's phrase 'awaited his hour', so did they all. It is true that it was not another war on two fronts or a world war that they awaited — they dreaded either as a child dreads fire — nor was war their aim. They wished for a new international power situation in which Germany would be able to rearm so strongly that she need no longer fear a Franco-Polish attack, and thus could pursue an 'active policy' as a result of change in the balance of power. They would not have been soldiers had they failed to follow a leader who promised them that. The conception that somehow Russia could be an ally was so deeprooted that Blomberg, Hitler's Minister of Defence, took care to maintain friendly relations with the Red Army for years after Hitler's seizure of power, and that despite all the anti-Bolshevik declarations of the National Socialist party.

Seeckt was dismissed in 1926 over a trivial incident; behind the dismissal was the distrust of the Republic of a dictator. Under Gessler and Groener attempts were made to educate the officer politically in the spirit of Weimar democracy through lecture courses and other methods of teaching, attempts which Schleicher, as head of a newly created, and purely political department zealously furthered. As those who had personal experience of them said, it was just like water on a duck's back but it shattered confidence in the High Command. Under Seeckt's second successor Hammerstein, an aristocrat who was as lazy in his office as he was frank in his political judgements

— he was reckoned a 'red general' and one of his daughters was a Communist —, the shattering process continued. When Fritsch succeeded Hammerstein in February 1934 he found what he called a 'scene of wreckage'.<sup>1</sup> It was Hammerstein, Groener and Schleicher who had most bitterly combated National Socialism. To conclude from their failure that the majority of German officers were favourably inclined to National Socialism would, however, be superficial. For the average officer the Weimar Republic meant Social Democracy of which he was exceedingly distrustful. Its hostility to the Army before 1914 was not forgotten, nor was its struggle against Ludendorff in the war-years. Nor did the alliance which its leaders, Noske and Ebert, had concluded with the generals in the struggle with the extreme Left greatly alter the situation, and later events like Scheidemann's disclosures of Seeckt's Russian transactions or Loebe's proposal to place the promotion of officers under the control of parliament only increased it. The Social Democrat press was still publishing articles against the Army and there was always the fear that a situation would arise in Germany like that in France after the Dreyfus case, that the 'civilian minister' would destroy the principle of leadership in practice by wrong appointments and demands. Any army would have resisted that and it explains why Col. Beck, later to become head of the movement against Hitler, when he commanded his regiment in Ulm, sought to protect his lieutenants Ludin and Scheringer when they were sent for trial for disobeying the order forbidding National Socialist activity.

Zealous defence of independence from politics, safeguarding the special position of the Army as a 'state within the State', devotion to the leadership principle — all that meant resistance to any party influence, including the Hitler party. That resistance was strengthened by the natural unwillingness of the professional soldier to see a militarization of the national life which would mean the disappearance of what was 'military' as such, by the contempt of the professional, for the dilettante activities of the political, soldiers, by the fear of a competition between the Party army and the Reichswehr and by the realization that the para-military drill of the Brown Shirts made a bad, and not a good recruit. Finally, and not least, there was the hostility of an officers' corps with aristocratic traditions and brought up in the upper and middle-class way of life to what was proletarian and charlatan in the Hitler movement and the brutality of its battles in the streets and in the beer halls. Up to 1933 the attitude to Hitler of the older officers who were products of the old army was one of reserve, scepticism and even of sharp rejection. There was a

<sup>1</sup> Hossbach, p. 172.

single exception, Col. von Reichenau who was regarded as an ambitious intriguer.

As Chancellor, Hitler devoted more attention to the officers' corps than to any other class; his first steps in politics had been taken under Reichswehr auspices. Certainly no other politician worked so hard to obtain and secure Germany's right to rearm; that meant much to an army officer. How seductive that could be is seen in the case of Seeckt. It is true that he never became a convinced National Socialist, but stood as aloof from Hitler's as from any other party. Yet in 1930 he answered the question put to him in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* whether he thought the Hitler party should enter the government with an emphatic 'Yes; it is not only desirable, it is necessary'. In the spring of 1931 he had a conversation with Hitler which made 'an extraordinarily deep' impression on him, though he told the Fuehrer he could not alter his personal attitude. A year later, he advised his sister to vote for Hitler rather than Hindenburg and so renounced any hope of his own of the presidency.

By then he was long out of office, but he was still the foremost representative of the spirit which animated the majority of officers. Meantime National Socialist ideas had been steadily capturing the lower ranks and even penetrated to the higher ones. By 1932 so large a number of young men of military age and wanting to join the Army were in the Hitler camp,<sup>1</sup> that the Army leadership no longer dared to exclude party members, that in June Schleicher, against Groener's opposition, forced the lifting of the ban on the S.A., and at the beginning of December declared that it was impossible to do what Papen asked, wage open war on the Party with the help of the Army.<sup>2</sup> He then tried to make the movement less dangerous by splitting it. Seven weeks later he was checkmated. As a result of the rejection by the parliamentary parties of his 'presidial cabinet' Hindenburg was placed in a position in which he had only two courses left him, either to violate the constitution openly and with no other support than the Reichswehr govern without parliament, or to summon Hitler to be chancellor — with the guarantees devised by Papen against a Hitler dictatorship; the future showed how ineffective these were. It can be understood that he was highly peeved when at this moment the head of the Army appeared and said that Schleicher's dismissal would be 'intolerable' to the Reichswehr. According to Hammerstein himself he was received with growling disfavour when he appeared a second time; the 'old gentleman' did not want any political

<sup>1</sup> Including Lieut. Graf Stauffenberg, the hero of July 20, 1944.

<sup>2</sup> *V. Papen*, p. 246, cf. *Meissner*, p. 266.

tuition from his generals;<sup>1</sup> they had better get on with preparations for the autumn manoeuvres and leave politics to other people — a natural reaction of an old soldier at conduct which he, in the old Prussian way, regarded as 'insubordinate'. Hammerstein's fears were well-founded as was his anxiety lest the Army should be 'dis-integrated' by National Socialist propaganda and at the political 'extravagances' of Hitler; the fears later events justified. But it was politically hopeless to think of avoiding the coming disaster by protests. Nor did the views of the generals correspond to those of their chief.

Out of his protests arose the legend that he had urged Schleicher as a last act of the Defence Minister to call out the garrison of Potsdam to prevent by a *coup d'état* Hitler's nomination as chancellor, by arresting the Fuehrer, and, if necessary, banishing Hindenburg to East Prussia. Rumour told of an excited meeting of Schleicher's friends on the morning of January 29th, which Hammerstein may have called and in which he certainly took part. Without further knowledge of what was taking place in the presidential palace, the meeting discussed what the Reichswehr could do to maintain its political influence on the new government. Schleicher, it was held, was still indispensable as the political representative of the Army. An outsider, Otto Wolff of Cologne, telephoned the advice to take military action against the President who was no longer in full possession of his faculties and would fall an easy prey to political adventurers. Schleicher certainly never thought of following advice so absurd. Instead, Hammerstein was induced to see Hitler in the afternoon, to get more information about what was going on and to (as I presume) insist on Schleicher's retention as Minister. This was the result of the news that Hindenburg had abandoned Schleicher and had telegraphed to Blomberg, an old friend from East Prussia, who was then at the League of Nations Disarmament Commission in Geneva, to return to Berlin. Hitler told Hammerstein he was ready to have Schleicher in the cabinet as defence minister; clearly he no more feared the master-intriguer as minister any more than he feared Papan as vice-chancellor.

At the last moment another negotiator made his appearance. This was Werner von Alvensleben, a political speculator who, as manager of an obscure anti-Comintern organization, tried to make himself important as a go-between the Government and the Hitler party,

<sup>1</sup> This story has the stamp on it of verisimilitude. Berndorff (v. p. 261 of his book) told me he got it directly from one of Schleicher's adjutants Capt. Noeldechen and the editor of the *Taegliche Rundschau*, W. von Oertzen. Oertzen had it directly from Schleicher.

and offered himself as honest broker now to one side, now to the other. In the evening of the 29th, he scared the little clique who led the party and were awaiting Hitler's appointment with the news that Schleicher was about to order the Potsdam garrison to march on Berlin and carry through a *coup d'état*. His report caused immense excitement, the alerting of the Berlin S.A. and a friendly police chief whose task would be to give the Wilhelmstrasse armed police protection and the despatch of a message to Papen for Hindenburg. The 'old gentleman' was quite unperturbed; he thought the whole thing a lot of nonsense. But his son Oskar and Papen were not so sure. The practical result was that Hindenburg named at once the new defence minister even before the cabinet was completed and so put an end to Schleicher's intrigues. An attempt by Hammerstein to intercept Blomberg on his arrival at the station from Geneva, and persuade him to refuse the appointment failed, for at the station Oskar von Hindenburg met the general and took him straight to his father's palace where he was appointed defence minister. Two hours later the Hitler cabinet was complete. This was the last act of the drama in which soldiers and politicians were rivals and the beginning of Germany's woes.

Blomberg's appointment was a stroke of luck for Hitler who did not know him and whom Hindenburg had appointed as an 'unpolitical soldier' in the traditional sense of the words, and as a man who had his confidence. None was better fitted than this representative of the old Imperial General Staff to maintain the outwardly unchanged independence of the Reichswehr and by scarcely observable stages turn it into a mere tool without will of its own. He was receptive to the suggestive art of the great demagogue — in contrast to those less impressionable comrades of his who were technical experts in the art of war. He soon won Hitler's full confidence more than any other general ever did.

In the formal sense no German defence minister had ever such fulness of power as Blomberg when, after Hindenburg's death in 1934, he became Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht, that is, the possessor of power of command over all three services. Yet never was it plainer how little the external appearance of the military organization corresponded to the real power relationship between the soldiers and the politicians, and how everything depended on personalities and on the political structure. Blomberg, even had he wished and he did not wish, could never have become a political figure like Seeckt, Groener or Schleicher. To the post which Schleicher had made the basis of his power, he appointed the only convinced National Socialist on the General Staff, Reichenau. Thus Hitler had no fear in leaving



Hammerstein at the head of the Reichswehr, although it was in his house shortly after the formation of his government there was held that reception for the generals at which Hitler explained his programme, the speech which he said later was for him one of the most difficult to deliver because of the icy coldness of his audience.<sup>1</sup> With great ability Hitler dealt with the susceptibilities of the Army so long as Hindenburg lived, and even formally won its sympathy; the 'day of Potsdam' (March 21, 1933) was designed to that end. Up to 1937 he treated the generals with great respect, concerned himself with questions of education, tactics, and strategy, but never with promotions and kindred subjects and did not simply dismiss complaints against the Party which were brought to his personal notice. On several occasions he defended the Army against political slander by the Party and against the rivalry of the S.A.; on January 5, 1935 he formally expressed his complete confidence in the Commander-in-Chief (then Fritsch) despite the slanderous attacks on him by the S.S.

That, of course, was only tactics. On decisive points in his military policy Hitler cared not a whit either for the advice or the claims of the professional soldiers. His alone were the decisions to reintroduce conscription in 1935, to occupy the Rhineland in 1936; he never asked for a military opinion. When Blomberg first heard of the forthcoming announcement of the new army law and of Hitler's plans for the great army expansion he was outraged, for he feared prompt foreign armed intervention. The generals received the law with mixed feelings since the return of conscription meant the breaking down of the barriers which so far has preserved the officers' corps and the units from being swamped by fanatical party members. When one is considering the renunciation by the Army of resistance to Hitler, this breaking of the barriers should be mentioned first.

Usually the blame for that renunciation is placed on 'Prussian discipline', the lack of political education and the exclusively military thinking of the officers' corps. But without strict discipline an army cannot be led and political education is no guarantee against political foolishness, for politics is less a matter of knowledge, than of instinct, will and character. Admittedly, the average German officer was no worse politically educated than the average German citizen.

The officer was indeed specially trained to obey, but the ability to obey can be a political virtue, and by all historical experience, even in Prussia and Germany, the political soldier is more harmful than useful. It is, of course, part of the tradition of the old Prussian army that the heads of the military hierarchy have a certain liberty of decision. Moltke attached great importance to the higher com-

<sup>1</sup> V. Foertsch, p. 33.

manders, giving them information and missions to fulfil rather than orders; with that tradition Hitler was the first to break. To discharge an independent responsibility requires men who are in themselves free and the heads of the Army must shoulder a good deal of political responsibility for the great questions of armaments, of education and training, of war and peace; the problems of leadership in modern war are also political problems of the first order. It was for that reason that Clausewitz conceived the idea of 'natural war-leaders', military geniuses who were gifted both militarily and politically, not merely 'military technicians'; unfortunately they are very rare phenomena. Among the German generals of the Second World War there was none who combined military genius with political insight and that made it easier for Hitler, the brilliant dilettante, to play his senseless game with the lives of men. Nor could any such general have appeared for, from the outset, the great adventurer knew how to prevent men of character and independence from getting high command. Thus all military opposition was made abortive; all the protests of the leaders in the field failed before the submissive loyalty of Keitel and Jodl.

But there was another and a deeper cause. Armies are instruments of power in the hands of policy, but they have no inherent political power of their own. What then had the Reichswehr to defend against Hitler? Its tradition was to be non-party so as to be able to be at the disposal of any legitimate government. Hitler's accession to power was legitimate and constitutional and in the one-party state the non-party standpoint had no meaning. True, they could defend themselves against attempts to mix politics and military business. But Hitler was too clever to give his generals the chance. He protected them against all the pressure of his party associates and in 1934 made a grim bloodbath of his S.A. leaders who threatened the Wehrmacht's monopoly; he also realized, as Pilsudski did in Poland, that, if he reduced it to a mere party-army, he could lose his strongest instrument of power; just as little could the Army permanently exclude the extreme 'party men'. In the one-party state the law is clear: who is not for me is against me. As the mass of the people followed Hitler up to 1937 the Reichswehr, if it sought to steer its own political course against the head of the state and the general will of the people, would have had to mutiny.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Reichswehr's traditions were no sound basis for a political resistance on its part. Besides, it was in complete disorder once the great rearmament began, and the personnel of the 100,000 army were needed as leaders and instructors in the effort to create quickly a 'national' army. That creation

<sup>1</sup> V. the classic formulation possibly by Blomberg in 1934 in Foertsch, p. 58.

they could not prevent and saw, in bitterness but in impotence, how the traditional comradeship of the officers' corps dissolved and political tuft-hunting invaded the messes and the barracks. There was no basis for a military resistance in the tradition as such; there was in the moral sphere, in the private decisions of individuals whose eyes were gradually opened by the atrocities committed by the régime, who came to realize its true character and whom moral indignation compelled to resist despite all the claims of military loyalty. In such indignation much of the tradition and professional ethics lived on; fundamentally the attitude of the officers' opposition differed not at all from that of the middle class.

There is no need to detail all that was done by the Army leaders in protest against the brutal persecution of the Jews and the Churches, against the illegalities of the police and the S.A., against the enrolment of the very youngest in the Hitler Youth, or for the protection of the persecuted and the like.<sup>1</sup> Even Blomberg took part, though with little energy and without great success, and it caused a rift between him and his subordinates, Reichenau on the one side and on the other Fritsch, the Army Commander-in-Chief, and Beck, the Chief of the General Staff, who reproached him with over-consideration of the Party's wishes. When Hammerstein had to go at the beginning of 1934, Hindenburg had a good deal of trouble in preventing Reichenau succeeding him. Instead he appointed Fritsch, the model of the conservative Reichswehr general, who was a soldier and nothing more. Rather optimistically the discontented pinned their hopes on him. Fritsch certainly was not a National Socialist and with his Christian upbringing he was hostile to the Party's spirit. He watched over the interests of the Army with the traditional dignity and energy and was proof against all the wiles of the Fuehrer who almost feared him. But as Hitler knew Fritsch's ability and the great authority he enjoyed with the soldiers, he used him as long as the organization of the new army was incomplete. Yet politically Fritsch was as helpless as a child and anxiously avoided having any concern with political problems as Goerdeler learned on his first meeting with him in, it seems, 1934.<sup>2</sup> The most impressive proof of this is his answer after the bloodbath of June 30th to Papen who wanted him to intervene: 'I can act only if I receive an order from the minister (Blomberg) or from the President'. His advice to his officers was: 'We cannot alter politics; we must quietly continue to do our duty'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. Foerster, *Ludwig Beck*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Communicated by Prof. von Dietze from a talk with Goerdeler.

<sup>3</sup> V. Papen, p. 357; Foertsch, p. 58.

The fact that the mass murders of June 30th, including those of two of its generals, Schleicher and Bredow, could take place without the Army reacting is shattering proof of the weakness of its position in the Third Reich. Admittedly, there was no practical possibility of causing the fall of the government on this issue when one remembers the helpless weakness of the almost moribund President. Now Hitler posed as defender of the Wehrmacht while, so far as the public was concerned, a heavy cloud of mystery hung over these horrid deeds. If, as has been considered possible,<sup>1</sup> the Defence Ministry through Reichenau was concerned with the preparations for June 30th, that may explain Blomberg's attitude. The warning Fritsch gave to his officers was, as we now know,<sup>2</sup> the result of the efforts of the Commander-in-Chief and Beck to get the cases of Schleicher and Bredow before a court of honour or a military tribunal. Blomberg had rejected their request, appealing to the incriminating documents of which Hitler had told him and which showed both generals to have been traitors. The protesters may have been bluffed thereby, but why did Blomberg not demand the production of these documents (probably the inventions of some informer) and ask for judicial proceedings? And why were the generals content in the seclusion of the 'Graf Schlieffen Association' to set up an unofficial investigation on court of honour model and announce in private its verdict that both officers were innocent? No matter how one seeks to explain or excuse, the political fact remains that in those days the Wehrmacht lost a decisive battle without noticing that there was a battle. To the clear-sighted it was obvious after June 30th that Germany was ruled by a criminal gang and had ceased to be a constitutional state. For the first time, many of the upper middle class were utterly horrified. But they saw the Reichswehr tolerating the shooting down of its comrades, one a former Minister of Defence, like mad dogs without an investigation and a verdict as the immediate sequel. It was a stain (as so many felt) on its honour which is lasting. Even the fact that the cabinet on July 14th declared the whole action against Roehm to be legal did not remove the stain, for it should have been the duty of the Defence Minister to prevent any such declaration.

The helpless, undignified dependence of the Wehrmacht on Hitler's will was soon emphasized once again by the new oath to the colours which shortly after Hindenburg's death and Hitler's succession Blomberg presented to the troops. The soldier once had sworn truth and service to 'the people and the fatherland'; now he had to swear 'unconditional obedience' to the person of Adolf Hitler as 'Leader

<sup>1</sup> V. H. Mau in *Vierteljahrshäfte fuer Zeitgeschichte*, 1953, p. 119 sq.

<sup>2</sup> V. Meissner, p. 372 sq.

of the German Reich and Nation'. If it is true<sup>1</sup> that the Defence Minister thought the oath of no great concern and never sought the advice of legal experts, it is a shocking proof of the levity with which, in the absence of parliamentary control, the affairs of state were conducted. How carefully did the Weimar Republic after the events of 1918 frame the oath to be taken by its new army. Then there was no mention of unconditional obedience; the soldier simply swore to obey the Reich's president and his officers and to be loyal to the constitution; 1933 had freed the soldier from the latter part of the oath. What Blomberg was obviously trying to effect was a restoration of the old personal relation between the officers' corps and the Kaiser in the old Imperial days. But in those days the oath was to the head of the state not to a single specified person; the new style in its exaggeration of obedience was wholly in the spirit of National Socialism. It involved a complete confusion of conscience. The Evangelical Church had always taught that not even an oath taken in God's name can be kept if the keeping of it involves offence against God's law. There were many army leaders who by the wording of the new oath felt themselves prevented from action against conscienceless tyranny and thousandfold illegalities and from fulfilling their superior duty to their country by formal disobedience. To others, perhaps, the oath afforded an excellent excuse for getting out of the dilemma of conflicting obligations. In any case, it was one of the most difficult obstacles in the way of building a military *Fronde*. That was foreseen by Beck who said to a friend as they went home from the ceremony: 'This is the blackest day of my life' and later, his conscience smiting him, he wondered whether he should not have refused to take an oath which he felt had taken him by surprise.<sup>2</sup>

At the time not many thought as he did. The average officer was delighted at the immense expansion of the Army, at quick promotion and increased responsibility or simply was too much concerned with the difficult day-to-day duties which the expansion laid upon him. With the cunning which he had brought to a fine art, giving ever new evidences of his favour and confidence, Hitler was able in 1934-5 to win over the generals of whose technical skills he was so greatly in need and so to lessen the shock which the sudden revelation of his true self would cause the best of them. The Army certainly felt itself to be more in favour, and those who were worried by the new régime could hope that they could educate the Hitler youth now coming into the Army; it is certain that the Army did serve even as late as the

<sup>1</sup> V. Foertsch, p. 64; also v. B. Schwertfeger in *Wandlung*, iii, 1948, part 6, p. 563 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Foerster, p. 27.

war as a city of refuge for those who fled persecution or found the party demands too burdensome. Difficulties with the party now diminished; there was less surveillance and spying, fewer evidences of jealousy and mistrust. Up to 1937 the generals were still confident that they were the subject not only of Hitler's favour, but of his special consideration and respect. It was the new turn in politics which was being prepared as early as 1936 that altered all that.

From the beginning, Hitler had stressed his love of peace. In 1934 when he began rearmament in secret, there was a general conviction that his aim was merely security and the guaranteeing of a position of strength in the foreign political field; the election posters read 'Who votes for Hitler votes for peace'. As late as January 30, 1936, almost a year after the re-occupation of the Rhineland, he said in a Reichstag speech: 'the era of surprises is ended; peace is our highest good'. Later, during the war, he said cynically that he had never thought of the new Wehrmacht as an instrument of peace.

When he first took the decision, undeterred by any dangers of war, to embark on a policy of expansion cannot be exactly established. Certainly from the outset he had regarded the expansion of Germany even beyond the 1914 frontiers as the chief aim of foreign policy and had dreamed of expansion eastward and south-eastward, a continuous dream which each political success encouraged him to seek to realize. After the victory of the Rhineland re-occupation, his self-confidence became boundless. He felt himself superior to the military attachés who had urgently warned him, to Blomberg who at the crisis had 'lost his nerve', and even to Fritsch who had shown himself a doubter; it was from this point that, as he himself admitted, his loss of confidence in the generals began.<sup>1</sup>

Among the latter there was at least one who had long been concerned at the line foreign policy was taking; the Chief of the General Staff, Beck.<sup>2</sup> He had been one of those who had welcomed Hitler as Chancellor for he hoped for the establishment of arms equality and a new German rise to power. But by the summer of 1934 he was anxious about the reckless way in which the risk of war was regarded especially in the precipitate rearmament. After June 30th and the failure of the *coup de main* in Vienna on July 25, 1934 when Dollfuss was murdered, he found the foreign political situation 'deplorable'. The German Government had lost all moral credit and so tensions could arise which would lead to a 'final and hopeless struggle'. When, in May 1935, Blomberg ordered him to prepare a study dealing with

<sup>1</sup> *V. IMT*, xx, 657 (Manstein's evidence). *V.* also P. Bor, *Gespraech mit Halder*, 1950, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Foerster, p. 27.

an — of course purely imaginary — attack on a state in South-eastern Europe — Czechoslovakia was meant — he gave a serious warning on the dangers of any such adventure; indeed he offered his resignation if the study was meant seriously as one for actual preparation for war. His constant warnings went unheard and events seemed to belie him for, instead of that moral isolation which Beck so much dreaded, Hitler had the triumph of seeing world statesmen seek him out, a triumph endorsed by the success of the Olympic Games in Berlin and the pacts with Italy and Japan. None the less Beck's opposition grew harder. In the beginning of 1937 he had to consider the possibility of a military invasion of Austria — if the movement for a monarchist restoration was successful; he declared firmly that 'Germany, so far as the Army is concerned, is not in a position to take the risk of a war in Central Europe'. In support of that he gave a gloomy picture of the straits in which the German food supply found itself; for that he went to Goerdeler's memoranda. With Goerdeler he had long been in close contact — the first 'cell' of the Resistance movement. From 1937 on Goerdeler zealously sought to gain contact with political personalities abroad. So did Beck. He used a trip to the Paris exhibition of 1937 to visit the French Chief of Staff Gamelin and also Pétain and Daladier then Premier. Assurances of friendly feeling were given on both sides which were genuinely meant. It may be presumed that the visit of this honourable soldier who in his responsible post would, they were convinced, do his utmost to prevent war did something to weaken the Frenchmen's distrust of the Hitler régime.

Beck as a soldier was the very opposite of the National Socialist ideal. A man of integrity and refinement and intellectually disciplined by his education as a soldier, he was, in spite of his military bearing, the 'educated officer', a man of high intelligence but with the weakness as well as the strength of such a character. A man of thought rather than of action, he was extraordinarily hard-working; he used to miss lunch rather than leave his desk and often did not leave his office until the early hours. Every step he carefully weighed with reference to the general conditions obtaining, but he took long to make decisions, besieged as he was by doubts and cares. He had in him nothing of that titanic genius which cuts Gordian Knots with the sword, nothing of those demonic qualities which make the true conspirator. What gave him such authority in his office as in conspiracy was less his technical knowledge than his deep spiritual and intellectual qualities and his complete trustworthiness, in a word, his nobility of soul.

What drove him into the political opposition was his consciousness

of moral responsibility not only as holder of his high post, but as a citizen. Moral and religious convictions compelled him as they did Goerdeler to take his stand. To ward off the danger that modern war would become total war, Beck demanded 'a policy with moral bases which knows to retain its supremacy on the foundation of a new moral idealism in the state itself and in its relations with other nations'. All depended, he thought, on the fact that 'a moral man is the maker and conductor of policy, a man who in the final instance is ruled by the inner moral law of conscience'. That was what he missed in Hitler. He thought his plans wicked ones because morally his whole régime was wicked; militarily therefore, they could lead only to disaster. It seemed to him his moral duty to combat them for he held fast to Moltke's conception of the chief of staff; he was to be not only a brilliant technician but also the adviser with equal responsibility of his commander. Beck went even farther. He maintained a constant connection with the Foreign Office (the State Secretary then was Buelow) so as to have regular information on the foreign political situation — until Blomberg forbade him to continue it.<sup>1</sup> In a military memorandum of December 1935 he demanded that the Commander-in-Chief (then Fritsch) should be present at any deliberations of the government and its head if these concerned war and national defence. As Chief of Staff he himself, as adviser to the Commander-in-Chief, would be in a position to influence political decisions; at the moment the General Staff, a purely technical office of one of three services, played a merely subsidiary part. He held that national confidence in the Wehrmacht depended on its refusal to allow itself to be misused as the tool of an adventurous foreign policy. Fear of war already disturbs the masses, according to a memorandum perhaps inspired by Goerdeler, which he sent to Fritsch on January 11, 1937.<sup>2</sup> All hope was placed on the Army; 'the Wehrmacht will never permit adventure for able and clever men are at its head'. Such confidence must not be destroyed if the whole moral responsibility was not to fall on the Army on which 'total responsibility rests for the future developments. There is no escaping this conclusion. At home and abroad that is admitted and it is the truth.' The general conducted his own policy against Hitler in the guise of opposition to war.

Had he any chance of success? The events of the winter of 1937–8 known as 'the Fritsch Crisis' gave the answer. The antecedents and development of that crisis are well known. It began with Mussolini's visit to the German autumn manoeuvres in 1937 when the Duce told

<sup>1</sup> Hossbach, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Foerster, 1st edition, p. 44, omitted from 2nd edition.



Hitler how much his authority would be strengthened if like the Duce he was himself Commander-in-Chief. It was at this time, too, on November 5th, that Hitler openly outlined his plans for the conquest of Czechoslovakia and Austria to the heads of the Wehrmacht and to Neurath the Foreign Minister. No passion for war was visible; Goering alone unreservedly agreed. Fritsch and Blomberg, particularly the latter, raised serious objections and there was a very sharp exchange between him and Goering. Where war was concerned Beck clearly had allies. But opposition only made Hitler seek other ways of gaining his end. The marriage scandal of January 1938 which made it impossible for Blomberg to retain his office seems to have taken Hitler by surprise as did the police revelations about Fritsch. It does not seem that Hitler from the first moment had decided to use this double moral catastrophe to make radical changes; he had thought of Beck as Blomberg's successor; he had for a moment considered Fritsch as Defence Minister; he had doubts about Reichenau and even sought on new appointments the advice of the so distinguished a conservative representative of the old Army tradition as Rundstedt. But, none the less, it is undeniable that he used the chance to rid himself both of Blomberg and Fritsch, the latter before any verdict had been given by a court. For him the main thing was to push through his adventurous plans and he was only too glad to accept Blomberg's own solution of the problem, suggested perhaps by resentment against the attitude of his military colleagues; he took over himself command of the Wehrmacht with Keitel as his Chief of Staff, a mediocre creature without character always ready to compromise and soon to sink into complete subjection. As Fritsch's successor he appointed Brauchitsch who on his entry on his new duties took from Hitler a present of a considerable sum of money to enable him to obtain a divorce. That throws a good deal of significant light on the moral attitude of the higher commanders. Where should one find resistance if the Commander-in-Chief himself could be bought like that?

The officers' corps has often been reproached for not having actively resented the wound to its honour.<sup>1</sup> But it is not easy to see what they could have done after Fritsch's innocence had been proclaimed by the court and after this was announced by Hitler to the same narrow circle to which he had revealed the original accusation, while the general public on the whole knew nothing about the affair.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Foertsch, p. 213, whose formulation seems to me to be a little unfortunate.

<sup>2</sup> The former Admiral Böehm who heard both declarations told me that none of those present doubted the genuineness of Hitler's regret at the unfortunate affair. This is confirmed by General Liebmann (Foertsch, p. 130).

The false accuser had been shot and the general received the honorary colonelship of a regiment. Certainly the officers' corps might have demanded that the men behind the scandal, Goering and Himmler, should be called to answer for it. Brauchitsch did ask for that but in vain, and also for the promotion of Fritsch to field marshal and his public vindication in the Reichstag. But that would hardly have been possible without giving the unfortunate business the widest publicity. Would public protest by the generals have been of any avail just after the forcible annexation of Austria, a foreign political victory which virtually every German, even those first inclined to be critical, saw as the final solution of a century-old German problem.

The 'Fritsch Crisis', even Hitler's bitterest opponents must admit, was an entirely unsuitable occasion for a revolt of the generals. Goerdeler urged various generals<sup>1</sup> to act in defence of the Commander-in-Chief's honour; everywhere he could he raised the possibility of a *coup d'état* in the form of a seizure by the Army of Gestapo headquarters. The impossibility of such action was made plain to him when he talked in Leipzig with the staff officers of the Dresden Command among whom was General Olbricht, later one of the chief actors in the plot of July 20th.<sup>2</sup> The Chief of the General Staff, asked at a lecture by his Quartermaster-General Halder whether he would say anything on the 'Fritsch Crisis', said discussion would be improper and declared: 'Mutiny and revolution are words which will not be found in a German soldier's dictionary' — a noteworthy utterance from the man who was to become the head of the conspiracy.

But at that time Beck had not given up hope that 'without mutiny' he could by legal service representations win his campaign against war. He still thought that National Socialism had 'possibilities of development'.<sup>3</sup> He still had no clear idea of Hitler's demonic will to power, so difficult was it for a man who thought as a soldier to see through the political game of the great enchanter. If we regard the 'Fritsch Crisis' as a whole we cannot escape the conclusion that, in the highest posts in the Army, there were men who made it easy for Hitler to destroy the last remnants of the Army's independence. The significance was soon seen of Hitler's assumption of supreme command, of the appointments of Keitel his creature and Jodl his blind admirer, of the substitution of the old career diplomat Neurath by the foppish dilettante Ribbentrop. The first step in the expansion by force policy, the annexation of Austria, was prepared diplomati-

<sup>1</sup> These included Heitz, List, Högner (Rundstedt's Chief of Staff) and Brauchitsch; he also talked with Guertner, Schwerin-Krosigk and Schacht.

<sup>2</sup> V. Foertsch, p. 236; his authority was Gen. Roehricht.

<sup>3</sup> Bor, p. 113.

cally and politically almost entirely without the Foreign Office by party agents, and the military occupation was ordered without giving the Chief of Staff more than two hours to issue the necessary orders. With the Wehrmacht now under a pure dictatorship there was no longer any question of the General Staff's joint responsibility. The party indeed, particularly through Goering, tried to divide the officers' corps by drawing a distinction between 'the front line spirit' of the young officers who had come from the Hitler movement and the 'reactionary' spirit of the 'general staff men' and the older generation. Hitler's new Army adjutant Schmundt, later chief of personnel, saw to it that zealous National Socialists got into all the higher staffs. On August 17th, the S.S., as a sort of fourth service, was attached to the Army on mobilization; it was easy to see that, at a crisis, it would be privileged to the disadvantage of the old Army. That crisis would soon come was evident from Hitler's announcement of May 30th: 'It is my unalterable resolve to destroy Czechoslovakia by military action in a foreseeable time'. The vain struggle against the 'unalterable resolve' saw the first act of the military resistance which soon became an illegal opposition ready to pass to the preparation of *coups d'état* and assassinations.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Czech Crisis, 1938*

AFTER HIS resignation from his Leipzig post, Goerdeler sought to find a new field of activity which would not be political. As long ago as the autumn of 1935 Gustav Krupp von Bohlen, the 'economic chief' of Germany's heavy industry, had invited him towards the end of his second term as Price Commissioner to join the board of the Krupp Company; he had spent some days in Essen and the offer had remained open.<sup>1</sup> At the end of 1936 when he was having his quarrel with the Leipzig National Socialists, it was again in his mind. But it must not be supposed that the prospect of a highly paid post in industry made easier his resignation as lord mayor, for Krupp whom he met in Berlin, did not risk without Hitler's approval, bringing in a man who was in open conflict with the Nazi party. He had to tell Goerdeler at the beginning of March that Hitler did not want to see a person of his economic views in heavy industry. Shortly after that, Krupp's brother-in-law, Freiherr von Wilmowsky came to Leipzig to offer him a large sum in compensation for his disappointment, an offer which was promptly refused for, as Goerdeler wrote in 1944, he wished to leave Krupp's hands free and to make clear that the offer had had no influence on his decision to resign.

Meantime he had acquired other ties; the little circle of democrats who had gathered round Robert Bosch in Stuttgart had now got in touch with him. Bosch was a very different type of the 'leader of industry' from his contemporaries in the Rhineland and Westphalia. He was a Suabian democrat, deeply rooted in the political traditions of his province. Not only was he a bitter enemy of Hitler personally, but he was one of the active opponents of the régime. He delighted in finding large sums for the relief of its victims, especially for Jews in Suabia and theological students of the Confessional Church and he had gathered round him a company of men who thought as he did. Among them was his own closest collaborators — Hans Walz, the managing director of his firm, Willy Schlossstein his secretary, Albrecht Fischer and Theodor Baeuerle; to them were added friends in Stuttgart including the retired police chief Hahn. Then he found

<sup>1</sup> This and what follows from a Goerdeler memorandum of 1944. V, too, Th. Heuss, *Robert Bosch*, 1946.

contact with leading men of the province, Bishop Theophil Wurm, ex-Premier Bolz, the Lord Mayor of Stuttgart Dr Karl Stroelin. He had even got in touch with representatives of the Army in Wuerttemberg but contact with them was broken when war broke out. The courageous review *Deutsche Rundschau* edited by Rudolf Pechel had Bosch's financial support in its brave fight to waken and maintain opposition to National Socialism and its materialism.

Like Goerdeler, Bosch and his friends were united in the effort to avoid the catastrophe they foresaw. They were soon holding very secret meetings, at first every month, then every fortnight, to discuss the possibilities of fighting the régime. When they reached the conclusion that nothing less than the fall of the Nazi system was necessary, they endorsed the views of Goerdeler who promised to make more intimate his contacts with the soldiers, notably Beck and Fritsch. Bosch brought to their aid the foreign connections of his firm, especially in France and Holland, in order to convey to the statesmen of the West warnings on the dangerous character of National Socialism in the hope that Hitler's plans for war would be frustrated by other countries.

In all these activities Goerdeler was always the expert, well-informed adviser who had his ear to the ground everywhere and was unwearied in his search for new personal contacts. By 1937 there existed between him and Bosch a formal, though rather loose, alliance; Goerdeler became financial adviser to the firm and its representative with the Berlin authorities, but without sharply defined duties. His political journeys had thus, so to say, legal authority. Bosch was immensely generous in giving financial help of all kinds to the Opposition groups mainly from his own private fortune and even during the war put his foreign connections at the service of the conspirators; without this help it is very doubtful if Goerdeler could have played his part as the living centre of the movement, and Bosch's and Walz's help are to be the more highly praised since there was at first a sensible difference between the political ideals of the stout East Prussian conservative and those of Robert Bosch, although later it disappeared as Goerdeler adapted himself to the thoughts and feelings of a South German.

Before his relations with Bosch produced practical results, Goerdeler had been making political use of the Krupp offer. Schacht had inspired the idea of making quick contact with leading personalities abroad — politicians and industrialists — to prove to them that another Germany and a better one existed than the Germany of Hitler and his acolytes. The carrying out of the idea would be the political education that an Opposition leader needed and we may

conclude that, even at this early date, Schacht was already, in spirit at least, an oppositionist. His idea at any rate was very productive; no obstacle was placed in the way of the traveller in getting the necessary funds for his journeys. Passports were a difficulty at first for Muschmann, the Gauleiter of Saxony, had confiscated Goerdeler's and only a personal appeal to Goering secured its release; it also convinced the latter that the foreign travels would be useful; Goerdeler, it seems, had represented his aim in going abroad as to ascertain confidentially and unofficially just in what degree Germany was endangered by the possibility of war. Goering who was already alarmed at that possibility was extremely interested and asked Goerdeler to come to Berlin again before he went to America and to report his impressions of Britain. He was not at all worried by the fact that the ex-Price Commissioner was already thought of abroad as an oppositionist; indeed he thought that of itself might open doors to him and give him valuable information. He did not dream how deep Goerdeler's opposition went; otherwise he would hardly have ended their conversation with the simple admonition to the traveller to conduct himself as a patriot.

Thus the world tour of the man who later was to be head of the Opposition began under the protection of the man who, next to Hitler, was the most powerful of the Nazi leaders. It was one of the oddest episodes of that odd time, this journey in search of information of a private citizen playing the diplomat on his own account, without authority or mission from a government or a party, who none the less would be everywhere treated as a political personality of high importance.

The reports which went to Goering were, in fact, a warning that the Hitler régime was risking a complete encirclement of Germany, but made it plain that there remained hope of a peaceful understanding. But behind them was the hope that, should the worst happen, he had made connections which, if a revolution was successful, would secure for the new Germany a favourable reception to the Western powers. The Western statesmen in his view had to be convinced that a revision of the Versailles settlement was as necessary as the *coup d'état* he planned since only through such a revision as would amount to a great German success in the sphere of foreign policy, could the new régime legitimize itself before the German people and so secure a better authority internally than ever the Weimar régime had won.

In mid-January 1938 Goerdeler had a long talk with Beck and Fritsch. He learned from them that his plans for a peaceful political understanding had no hope of success for on November 5, 1937 they had heard of Hitler's plans for war from his own lips. Goerdeler then

warned Fritsch that the next stroke of the Gestapo would be against the Army; fourteen days later came what is known as 'the Fritsch Crisis' and Goerdeler strove in vain to get the generals who were his friends to counter-attack the Gestapo; it was at this time that he made the acquaintance of Gisevius who has recorded what happened in his well-known book.<sup>1</sup>

His first tour took him to Belgium (June 4-16, 1937) and Britain (to July 15th). Then, after a visit to Berlin, he went at the end of July to The Hague and Amsterdam, in August, via France, to Canada and the U.S. In December he was back in Paris. He returned to Britain in March 1938 in acceptance of a lecturing engagement and also visited France (mid-March to mid-April). He started his third tour in August — to Switzerland (where he stayed till October 10th and met friends from Britain), and then, via Italy, to Yugoslavia, Rumania and Bulgaria. A fourth took him to France and Algeria (March-April 1939) and a fifth (May-July and (?) into August) to Britain, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey and Switzerland. From each country long reports on the impressions gained were sent to Krupp, Bosch, Goering and Schacht and also to Generals von Fritsch, Beck, Halder and Georg Thomas with whom he had long been in touch. At first they even went to the Reichschancellery where Hitler's Secretary, Capt. Wiedemann, received them and promised to pass them on. Their purport was that peace depended mainly on the attitude of the German Government. There was no signs of offensive action on the part of other countries; indeed the Western democracies were ready for an economic and political understanding. There did however, exist very definite limits of tolerance to German claims and plans of expansion. If these limits were overpassed, the danger to Germany could be fatal. His political impressions were buttressed by solid economic arguments.

His efforts failed for, before a final decision on the Fritsch case could be reached, Hitler had made his triumphal entry into Vienna. Immediately after that Goerdeler went to Britain. If his economic addresses were well received, the same could not be said of his political approaches. A last minute misunderstanding prevented him from seeing Winston Churchill as Bruening had arranged.<sup>2</sup> An interview with Sir Robert Vansittart was unfortunate. The talk turned on the Sudeten question which immediately after the occupation of Austria appeared as a new cloud on the political horizon and provoked anxious discussions at a meeting of British and French ministers in London. According to Goerdeler, Vansittart said that Britain was 'prepared

<sup>1</sup> Gisevius, i, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> Communicated to me by Dr Bruening.

to see the Sudeten Germans obtain a degree of autonomy. I answered that the area was German; it had a common frontier with Germany and must be incorporated in the Reich. He rejected that. I said that he should above all things have a clear consistent policy; otherwise he would merely force ambition into territory to which there was no claim. His colleague, the able Ashton-Gwatkin who later went to Prague with Runciman, shared my views.'

To estimate rightly Goerdeler's attitude, the fact should not be overlooked that the surrender of Sudeten territory had at that very time been mentioned as a practical step towards lessening the tension between Germany and Czechoslovakia by Jan Masaryk (then Czech representative in London) in a conversation with the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, in clear opposition to the policy then followed by the Prague Government. In his talk with Vansittart Goerdeler spoke as a patriotic German not at all as a diplomatist, and certainly not as a spokesman of that opposition inside Germany which even then Britain wished to strengthen against Hitler's expansionist ambition and so bring about Hitler's fall, since it was the Fuehrer's policy that was creating the danger of war.

Goerdeler was, in fact, advocating a policy not unlike that policy of 'appeasement' which later took Chamberlain to Munich. Transfer of the Sudeten territory meant handing over the Czech frontier defence system to Hitler. The peacemakers of Munich were confident in the promise that the rump of Czechoslovakia would be preserved. Could a man like Goerdeler be similarly confident? Did he not see how, through his agreement with British policy, he cast doubt on the whole Opposition movement as well as on himself when he advocated a solution which seemed to be that of German imperialism and that insatiable lust for power which was incorporated in Hitler? Did it not appear as if he wished to take advantage of a political success to overthrow him and then resume the political game which the fallen leader had played? That at least was what the Foreign Office became more and more convinced of. In the course of this summer Goerdeler's violent accusations against the criminal folly of the Hitler system carried no more conviction than did his assurances (which he repeated in France) that no one in Germany wanted war except Hitler, and that there was a strong opposition movement among the Army leaders. About the impression these had made he later told his Stuttgart friends; Vansittart had said disapprovingly that he was talking treason!<sup>1</sup>

To prove the serious character of the Opposition, Goerdeler, it

<sup>1</sup> From notes by Herr Walz and Schlosstein and Goerdeler's own memorandum.



seems, had told more restricted circles, including his friends at the Bank of England, that he expected that there would quite soon be a *coup de main* against the accursed régime, and that he was already in touch with Brauchitsch, the new Commander-in-Chief; he certainly was at the time of the 'Fritsch Crisis'. Unluckily through intermediaries some of this filtered through to Brauchitsch who was so outraged that he reported it to Hitler. The result was that the journey to Britain had a most unfortunate aftermath, investigations by officials of the Ministry of Justice which lasted for months and which failed to end in disaster only because of Schacht's clever intervention.<sup>1</sup>

None of this made Goerdeler falter in his convictions. In the report he made on April 30th, he said that, since the entry into Austria, British feelings towards Germany had completely changed; there was such general indignation at the recklessness of German policy that even those most desirous of peace were thinking that war was inevitable, and, as no one could now depend on Germany to keep the peace, Britain had no alternative but to speed up her rearmament. None the less he was certain that the British Government would prefer a peaceful solution to war, knowing that unlimited rearmament would ruin the country financially and that war would completely destroy its prosperity and desperately lower the standard of living of its people. 'I have had my belief strengthened,' the report went on, 'that it is still possible to attain fulfilment of all Germany's national claims including the acquisition of Sudeten territory *by way of negotiation*. I have taken every opportunity I got to repeat that mere autonomy for the Germans in Czechoslovakia will not bring peace to Europe'; it would only create new problems impossible of solution. 'The British,' he added, 'with that cold, clear logic which is at the same time nationally conscious would certainly not let hopes of peace be shattered on that issue if it was part of a general agreement to keep the peace of the world'.

What was Goerdeler's aim in writing such a report? Did he seriously think that it would divert Hitler from the path of force to that of peaceful settlement of international issues? And, if that happened, would not so splendid a political success serve but to strengthen the internal position of the dictatorship, just as the peaceful occupation of Austria had done? It would seem as if this globe-trotter of ours, obsessed by his own idea of a universal peace settlement through an agreement between the Great Powers, had gravely over-estimated the force of conviction of cool reason especially where, as he himself knew, reason had ceased to be used.

When he gave this report at the end of May to Wiedemann, the

<sup>1</sup> Schacht (p. 548) procured a *dementi* from his friends at the Bank of England.

latter refused to pass it on; that would be to risk his own life as well as that of the reporter. War was now resolved upon for the purpose of creating a German Empire which would include Poland, the Ukraine, the Baltic states, Scandinavia, Holland, Flemish Belgium, Luxemburg, Burgundy, Alsace-Lorraine and Switzerland. To Goerdeler's outburst: 'But that means world war' came the answer, 'Yes it is world war'. 'But that is catastrophe' cried Goerdeler. 'Yes it is catastrophe, but nothing can be altered now.' Ribbentrop, added Wiedemann, had had his view accepted that decadent Britain would not declare war for now she was in no position to fight.<sup>1</sup>

No other source confirms the existence at this time of such far-reaching plans; if they were not simply a figment of Wiedemann's lurid imaginings, they must have been deduced from Hitler's very confidential talks in the innermost Nazi circles about which we have no other information.<sup>2</sup> What is certain is that the Dictator was 'mad with rage' at the 'May crisis', provoked by Czech reports that Germany was about to invade Bohemia, reports which in turn provoked threatening diplomatic action by the Western Powers and Russia, that at a 'Fuehrer-conference' on May 28th at which Beck was present and also Wiedemann, Hitler had openly spoken of the German need for space and of his intention to enlarge Germany's territory by the acquisition of Belgium and Holland and the conquest of Czechoslovakia and, finally, that on May 30th that he communicated to the Army High Command his 'unalterable decision to destroy Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future'. Preparation of such action was to begin at once.

That Goerdeler learned immediately from Beck; a more convincing proof of the utter uselessness of his work for peace could hardly have been given him. Now began the first counter-action of the military-political Opposition groups; it came from Beck who had gathered round him a group of like-minded officers. The movement against Hitler began to transform itself into a revolutionary movement, a conspiracy in the proper sense of the word.

For long Beck had protested against the concept of a 'lightning attack' on Czechoslovakia. He refused to allow the new Army to be used for aggressive and expansionist aims, for to him that was a betrayal of the Army's true mission, the protection of the soil of Germany. Naturally he did not base his refusal on moral grounds as

<sup>1</sup> From Goerdeler's memorandum. For Wiedemann's own activities, v. *DBFP*, iii, documents 510 and 511. V. also Foerster, p. 128, E. Kordt, *Nicht aus den Aklen*, 1950, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> For the Obersalzberg Conference, v. *DBFP*, iii, 1, nos. 275, 279 and *IMT* Document 388, vol. 25, p. 414.

many of his foreign critics seem to think he should have done, but on the existence of a system of alliances which, he believed, would at once turn any isolated aggressive action into a European crisis and even lead to a second world war; and a world war would be fatal for Germany. Up to 1937 all the plans prepared under his guidance were entirely defensive ones. As early as 1934 he had feared that Hitler's 'policy of force and perfidy' would one day lead to foreign political adventures. Since November 1937 he knew who the first victim of aggression would be after Austria, Czechoslovakia. Hitler's ravings at the conference with the Army chiefs about fulfilling Germany's need for space by military action made him furious; like Goerdeler's his own belief was that the faults of the Versailles settlement could be remedied by peaceful means. Now on May 30th came the order to prepare as rapidly as possible military action against Czechoslovakia. There was no possibility of making a personal protest to Hitler.<sup>1</sup> He could only influence Hitler through his chief Brauchitsch to whom he sent a series of remarkable memoranda criticizing the Hitler policy both militarily and politically.

His political observation certainly agreed with Goerdeler's reports and his pessimistic assessment of Germany's economic position. No doubt too General Georg Thomas, that able and experienced head of the Economic Section of the Army, had influenced him, for Thomas<sup>2</sup> had long had serious objections to the tempo and extent of rearmament and, as an authority on the American and Russian armaments industries, was convinced that Germany's war potential was not great enough to see her through a world war. In his official reports and in public addresses, Thomas, as early as 1937, critically examined Hitler's 'blitzkrieg' conceptions and Goering's ideas on 'autarky'. His statistics and economic calculations were in the following years one of the most important of the bases on which Beck and Goerdeler wrote their own memoranda.

Beck did not contest the view that conditions in Bohemia and Moravia were in the long run impossible for Germany to tolerate. But he thought (in his first mainly political memorandum of May 5th) that a peaceful agreement with Britain was possible if the German Government agreed to a solution which was not intolerable to Britain; the British Government would never give Germany a free hand. In a later, and mainly military, memorandum he considered a 'case of necessity' involving war into Czechoslovakia, but thought it hopeless 'so long as Czechoslovakia could reckon with military aid from Britain and France'. France, he held, simply could not abandon the Czechs

<sup>1</sup> Foerster, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas's unpublished reminiscences written in 1945-6 were available to me.

especially after Hitler's Austrian triumph without losing both her honour and her position as a Great Power. If Germany got into a conflict with the Western Powers then it was world war; the United States might not be involved, but would assuredly help Germany's opponents with all the resources of a greatly expanded armaments industry. Germany's position would be more desperate than in 1914-18 despite great initial victories in Czechoslovakia of which Beck had no doubt; like Western military critics he reckoned that the Czechs could hold out only for a few weeks. That, however, would be long enough to let the French launch a great attack in the West against which Germany could put up no adequate defence. It was possible that the French Government would not get their people, rightly so afraid of war, to take the offensive. Perhaps the Western Powers would not do more than act on the sea or in the air; they might well abandon Czechoslovakia for the moment and leave the task of her restoration to be undertaken at the end of a long war. But nothing of this could alter the fate of Germany. 'The campaign against Czechoslovakia can be very successful but Germany will lose the war. If Britain and France go to war, Czechoslovakia will then be no more than a pretext. The war will be fought for other reasons and it will at least be a European, and, in certain circumstances, a world war'. And such a war was one of life and death.

Beck was not content just to state his case to Brauchitsch and get him to represent it to Hitler. He tried to win the heads of the services or, if that appeared hopeless, at least those of the Army to his side and get them to make a public protest against war. He managed on August 4th to get Brauchitsch to call together the commanders of groups and armies to let Beck give them his views. The audience, asked to give an opinion, unanimously accepted them; only some Hitler devotees (Reichenau and Busch) ventured to say a word or two about the necessity of trusting the Fuehrer. That should be noted, for it indicates that in the army command of 1938, there was not the slightest desire to fight but only a universal apprehension of the possibility of a world war. Brauchitsch admonished the generals to tell the Fuehrer frankly of their anxieties and so reinforce his own warnings against adventures. Nor was the admonishment without result for, at a meeting of the future chiefs of staff of the armies in the field, which Hitler summoned at Berchtesgaden on August 10th, some of them risked calling attention to the incompleteness of rearmament and the imperfections of the fortress system in the West. They roused Hitler's anger, but that did not prevent Adam, the Commander-in-Chief in the West, saying the same things a fortnight later and bringing down on himself the displeasure of the head of the state. Brauchitsch

himself says that he had several times told Hitler of the anxiety felt by the General Staff and had to endure angry scenes.<sup>1</sup>

But the final result of all this was Beck's own disillusionment. He had increased the pressure on Brauchitsch by demanding a formal refusal of obedience if the Fuehrer was not convinced by their arguments. In an appeal drafted by Beck, the Commander-in-Chief was to demand of the generals that they stand behind him 'for good or ill', that is, present a sort of joint ultimatum to the Fuehrer; if the latter refused to pledge himself to keep the peace in every case, they were jointly to demand his abdication, thus — so Beck hoped — making practically impossible the execution of an attack on Bohemia. That meant a sort of military general strike with far-reaching consequences. Brauchitsch refused and his refusal has been characterized by Beck and his friends as a sign of weakness of character, a verdict which the historians of the Opposition have endorsed. But is it a fair verdict? Was there any really practical possibility in this way and at this moment, that is, before the last choice was made between war and peace, of compelling Hitler to choose the latter? Was it, too, the political and moral duty of the generals to do so? Beck answered that question with an emphatic 'Yes', in the draft of a memorandum which bears impressive witness to the character of the man and is one of the finest documents of the Opposition movement 'The final decisions on the future of the nation are in the balance. History will brand the military leaders with blood-guilt if they do not act according to their professional and political convictions and conscience. Their soldierly obedience has a limit at which their knowledge, their conscience and their sense of responsibility forbid the carrying out of an order. . . . It shows lack of greatness and knowledge of what is one's duty if a soldier in the highest position regards things at this time entirely within the compass of his military orders without consciousness of his responsibility to the nation. Extraordinary times demand extraordinary methods.'

Nothing could make plainer that only an overpowering sense of moral responsibility could have driven the Chief of the General Staff into the Opposition. What he raised here is a question of great importance, the question of the political responsibilities of the soldier. The verdict on the generals in the age of Hitler is too narrow if their reluctance to support a military rebellion is ascribed to weakness of character and to the effects of the 'unpolitical' training of the Reichswehr under Seeckt. The view that the Army is simply an instrument of policy even at the highest level is one of the fundamental principles

<sup>1</sup> V. Foerster, p. 173; Wheeler-Bennett, p. 419; cf. also Brauchitsch, in *IMT*, xx, p. 621.

of modern political doctrine. Without it, it is scarcely possible to create a strong political authority or to meet the challenge of the ambitious commander and the civil war which it produces; one has only to remember the history of Cromwell or Wallenstein or of the French nobility in its feud with Mazarin to realize that only where there is established a strong political authority can an end be put to military plotting. The fact that it was still a danger after the eighteenth century indicates the existence of political unrest and weakening state power, as for example, in Spain and the Spanish-American republics or in the days of the Directory, of Eighteenth Brumaire, and of the rise to power of the Third Napoleon. The Army must be 'an unpolitical instrument', otherwise it is a deadly danger to the state since it alone possesses material weapons in abundance. That is not simply a 'militarist' peculiarity of the Prussian state system; it remains a law of survival of the western democracies up to the present. Under Frederick the Great the 'unconditional obedience' of generals was taken for granted. It was equally so by Clausewitz, who laid down the law that war is only a continuation of policy by other means and that it is therefore absurd to leave plans of campaign to military experts. That was the core of his military philosophy and for a whole century the German General Staff lived in accordance with it. In his *Gedanke und Erinnerungen* Bismarck wrote: 'The task of the Army Command is the destruction of the enemy forces; the determination and limitation of the aims to be realized in war remains, during the war itself, a political task, that is, it is the affair of the statesman not of the soldier'.

Rightly Beck said that extraordinary times demand extraordinary methods. It was certainly exceptional that this time it was not the statesman but the soldier who felt called upon to bring what Clausewitz calls 'an element of moderation' into policy. It was also exceptional that the soldier should use technical military arguments in favour of moderation, since everywhere else they seemed to be used to strengthen the rival case; think of the alleged or actual compulsory force of technical progress which reduces to impotence all efforts of wise statesmanship to restrain war madness. It appeared to a Bismarck 'quite natural that on the general staff of the army there should be not only ambitious young officers but also experienced strategists who felt the need to test the efficiency of the troops they led and their own powers of leadership and to demonstrate it in history'. But it was the task of the statesman 'to keep within bounds the urge to war in the army in response to the claims of the nation's need for peace'. Hitler often expressed his astonishment that the General Staff was not a hound whose thirst for blood could barely be restrained, but

was instead the constant brake on the chariot of his war policy. In this reversal of the normal roles of statesmanship and the professional soldier the entire unreason of the Hitler régime becomes obvious: at the head of the state there was no longer a genuine statesman but only an irresponsible adventurer. In such a situation the moral and political responsibility of the General Staff was much greater than in normal times.

Beck was completely in the right in his struggle for peace against Hitler, and it is a matter for wonder that such obstacles were put in his way by his chief and his colleagues. But an old and well-founded military tradition is not easily transformed into its opposite. Brauchitsch and the generals who supported him did what the German General Staff officer has always done; they made compelling technical objections to the war plans of their supreme commander, but they left to him the responsibility of taking or rejecting their advice. Whoever without more ado condemns them for that comes very near the position taken up by the accusers at Nuremberg who demanded that the German General Staff be declared a criminal organization because it had prepared and carried out what Hitler's war policy demanded. But it is too much to ask of the soldier that, in addition to his technical work, he sees to it that no false war policy is followed.

No one will deny that many who wore the gold stripe of the General Staff lacked true civil courage at critical moments or that their political insight was insufficient and in cases obscured by ambition. On the average their strength of character was no greater than that of the higher civil servants. But is not strength of character one of the rarest of human possessions? Extraordinary times such as were the days of the Hitler régime demand an abnormal measure of moral and spiritual strength and also of political insight. Brauchitsch was not of the calibre to meet that demand but only those who really understand the appalling difficulties of the situation which confronted him have the right to pass judgement upon him.

Beck's appeal to him was first and foremost one to the conscience of the military leader to realize his own responsibility for Germany's destiny. No doubt it was entirely justified for no higher commander can have a moral duty to do what he believes to be madness if he is so ordered and to co-operate in what he sees clearly to be action by the government which will be ruinous both to the Army and nation. He, too, like a civilian, is a patriot, a man who has a moral responsibility and is not simply a technician and a tool. That Hitler on innumerable occasions forced his generals to act both against their better knowledge and their consciences, that he answered their resistance with courts martial and forbade them to send in their

papers, that he dismissed in disgrace from their posts commanders of the highest rank without any military inquiry, or actually cashiered them — that constitutes the most scandalous abuse of which his tyranny was guilty and led directly to the 'officers' putsch'. The justification of July 20, 1944 lies in the fact that such action was the clear duty of every soldier who was in a position to put an end to the horror of a war that was lost, at any cost and regardless of the means he would have to use.

Beck carried this appeal to conscience so far as to demand the joint resignations of all the higher commanders. Since that required a preliminary agreement and a formal ultimatum to the government, it must have the look of mutiny and certainly would be a revolutionary act of far-reaching political significance. 'A dictator' said Manstein rightly before the Nuremberg judges, 'cannot let himself suffer compulsion' and least of all by a refusal to obey orders. 'The moment he yields to any such compulsion his dictatorship is at an end.'<sup>1</sup> It is, at least, very unlikely that Hitler would have let himself be driven to a peace policy by his generals' demands for his abdication. The greater probability is that he would have resorted at once to extreme measures of terrorization; he would certainly have found ambitious younger officers, Hitler devotees like the highly gifted Jodl, who could be promoted to the posts which had been resigned. Beck himself saw that there would be a tense internal situation and 'a decisive conflict between Wehrmacht and S.S.'. How he would have waged that conflict if all the higher commanders had resigned is not clear and if, as he himself said, the conflict was to be waged in the interests of the Fuehrer himself? Did he really believe the absurd theory that Hitler was driven to his fatal decisions by the war-mongers among his adherents? It seems almost as if he did when we hear that he hoped to win over some 'upright and able party men' — like Wagner the Gauleiter of Silesia and Buerckel the Reich commissioner in Vienna, and some Air Force generals. There should be no hint of a plot; the rallying words must be: 'For the Fuehrer, against war, against bureaucracy, peace with the Churches, freedom to express opinion, an end to Cheka methods, the restoration of law, a fifty per cent cut in all exactions, no more building of palaces but building of houses for the people, Prussian decency and simplicity!' Here is a complete programme of counter-revolution and therefore neither plot nor political rebellion.

Beck, in fact, had nothing of the Wallenstein in him. Like Goerdeler whose ideas can be traced in this programme of reform, he held to the hope that the appeal to reason would be successful. Therefore

<sup>1</sup> *IMT*, xx, p. 679.



the making of the appeal should be left to Brauchitsch; the Chief of the General Staff would only supply a draft of what should be said. How could a revolution be made in such a way — a rebellion of the generals such as was contrary to the tradition of the Army, of any Army not merely the Prussian-German one, and against which Hitler would be able to appeal for support in the name of that tradition and brand his opponents as mutineers, even as poltroons and dastards?

There is also this to be considered. If it was really so plain in August 1938 as Beck thought and if it was really recognized by the generals that, under Hitler, Germany was being driven into a second world war which she had no hope of winning, then a military rebellion followed by a counter-revolution could be justified — not indeed if Beck's plans were carried through but by much more drastic action and not with the slogan 'For the Fuehrer' but openly against him. Such a rebellion was actually prepared not by Beck who had left his post on August 18th,<sup>1</sup> but by his successor Halder in conjunction with a group of conspirators which had been formed within the counter-intelligence service of the High Command. This was the first occasion on which resistance seemed to grow into insurrection. But from the outset it was faced with the hard fact that the international situation was not nearly so clear as Beck and his friends believed.

It was part of the demonic character of Hitler's statecraft that, in spite of all the foolhardiness of his forward policy, he was much too cunning and too sure in his feel for a solution ever to present to his opponents an exposed flank, that is, he never gave them the possibility of unmasking him to the world as an irresponsible adventurer. He was so zealous and successful in winning his generals over to his Czech enterprise which, in hours of exposition on August 10th and August 15th he represented to them not only as being in the national interest but also as without real risk; these harangues were incomparably more impressive than any argument which Beck had set forth in his memoranda. He was right enough to compare the weak helplessness of the Western democracies with the iron strength of will of the Third Reich. The danger that France would march and Britain come to her support was not so great as Beck and Goerdeler thought.

Today we can study the confusion into which Hitler's brutal procedure flung the cabinets in London and Paris.<sup>2</sup> In the spring of 1938 the Daladier Government was well aware that no Czech concession

<sup>1</sup> For Beck's resignation v. Foerster and Wheeler-Bennett, p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> V. *DBFP*, iii, 1 and 2. *ADAP*, Series D, vol. ii and books cited in the bibliography v. also G. A. Craig in *Political Science Quarterly*, lxx, 1, March 1950; E. Schieche in *Stifterjahrbuch* iii, 1953.

would content Hitler, and that one day Czechoslovakia would by war be wiped off the map of Europe. Even if he did not know of the secret military plans Hitler had formed in 1937, to put an end for ever to a state which was at once an obstacle to Hitler's schemes of conquest, a Russian air base and an ally of France, Daladier knew well enough what was coming—a step-by-step establishment of German hegemony in Central Europe to be extended later to all Europe and knew that Hitler reckoned on the helpless weakness of the Western Powers which had already allowed him to rearm unrestrictedly and to annex Austria. At a meeting of French and British ministers in London on April 29th he had been quite frank on this point and had the support of his foreign minister, Bonnet, in demanding that both states should now take up a firm attitude and oppose any further expansion of German power. If they failed to do so they would avoid war for the nonce, but increase both its likelihood and Hitler's power to wage it. To that view Chamberlain and Halifax strongly objected. Both declined to commit Britain to any guarantee for Czechoslovakia. They still had the illusion that Hitler might yet moderate his demands, but they were clear that, if it came to war, Czechoslovakia from a military point of view was indefensible.<sup>1</sup> Their arguments could not be refuted for the Chief of the French General Staff Gamelin had said that France could not do more than try to retain a part of the German Army on the Western front, and that would be none too effective. The result of the conference was the feeble agreement to take diplomatic steps in Prague and Berlin to urge a friendly compromise, and also to indicate that warlike action by Germany must have serious consequences to which Britain could not remain indifferent. So Chamberlain said on March 24th and repeated the warning in slightly stronger terms on May 21st at the 'May crisis'. The only result was to make Hitler speed up his preparations and, amid a hullabaloo of propaganda, force on the completion of the 'West Wall'. None the less he refrained from attacking Czechoslovakia as long as he felt himself still militarily insecure. Throughout the summer he allowed the Sudeten Germans to clamour for autonomy and their leader Henlein to go to London to convince Chamberlain that the Sudeten demands were justified. The result was the despatch of a British mission to Prague under Runciman to work for a peaceful revision of the Versailles settlement to the desires of German patriots. Benes was threatened more than was Berlin in order to force him to make concessions. One can only be painfully shocked today at the degree of illusion shown in the reports of the mission and in the despatches of Neville Henderson from Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> V. Gamelin, *Servir*, ii, p. 322; *DBFP*, iii, 1, no. 164.

In such circumstances the Opposition was under the necessity to enlighten the British Government on the real designs of Hitler as the General Staff now knew them. It was not known then that Daladier had already spoken of these plans, and that both Paris and London were well informed about the opposition of the generals. The first warning was given in London as we know now by the landowner Ewald von Kleist — one of Hitler's conservative opponents who had already been arrested more than once — on August 18th while Runciman was engaged in negotiation. Kleist said he came on behalf of 'his friends' on the General Staff adding that he did not know any general in the higher commands who was not against war, not even Reichenau. (He did not then know Jodl's views.) His enterprise was as bold as it was well conducted and his manly uprightness made a deep impression. He confined his visits to Vansittart, Churchill and Lloyd avoiding all useless conversation with lesser political figures, knowing well the mortal danger to which he exposed himself and his friends. He told his hearers that war with Czechoslovakia was not just a danger but had actually been decided upon, that the decision was not the work of some Nazi extremists but of Hitler personally and that he was surprised that the British Intelligence service had not long ago informed them of the exact date; from other sources Lloyd had learned it was September 28th. There was only one way to avert catastrophe. The British Government should leave Hitler in no doubt that the warnings from Paris and London were not just bluff (as Ribbentrop always asserted) but in deadly earnest; a British statesman in a public speech should let the world in general and the German public in particular know that the attack on Czechoslovakia would throw Europe into the misery of a second world war. This would give enormous impetus to the Opposition which saw with rage and despair the coming of catastrophe and be the prologue to the fall of that régime of terror with which no reasonable settlement was possible. Without the support afforded by a plain declaration of British determination his friends had no chance of success; to Churchill he confided his belief that a monarchy was a likely outcome of an internal upheaval.

The reaction of his hearers was characteristically different. Vansittart who had been to all intents and purposes relegated to a merely honourable post in the Foreign Office because he was so decided an opponent of Hitler, contented himself with a long report of the conversations to the Foreign Secretary, but added that Kleist's political plans appeared to him very reasonable and that what he had told them coincided with news of Germany from other sources. Churchill being independent went further. He strove with all his might to

strengthen the confidence of the German Opposition. He spoke of strong tendencies in British public opinion against acquiescence in any new aggression by Hitler. He referred to Chamberlain's statement of March 24th as still valid — he had ascertained this by direct enquiry of Halifax — and showed lively sympathy for a new German Government; he thought France and Britain would go far to meet such a government in, for example, the matter of colonial restoration and the conclusion of trade treaties. He even did not entirely reject the idea of clearing up the vexed question of the Polish corridor on which Kleist had laid stress, though this was not the time to take it up lest Poland be driven into the enemy camp. Finally he gave Kleist a letter to encourage his friends.<sup>1</sup> But he also urged Halifax to restrain Hitler in time through joint diplomatic pressure from Britain, France and Russia with, if possible, American support. In a speech on August 27th to his constituents he called the threatened invasion of Bohemia 'an outrage against civilization and the freedom of the world' towards which Britain could no more remain indifferent than to the attack on Belgium in 1914.<sup>2</sup>

But very different was the reaction of the most important man in Britain, the Prime Minister. He declared (in a letter to Halifax) that the German visitor was simply a blind and rabid opponent of Hitler who reminded him of the Jacobites in William III's time and who hoped to urge his associates to make a revolution. Much of what he had said should be discounted. Other German voices had been heard to say that Hitler was in earnest with his war plans, but they had counselled compromise for that very reason. He rejected the idea of a sharp public declaration for it would only further exasperate Hitler. Still the attention of the Berlin Government might again be called to the declaration of May 21st. They might discuss this with Henderson, recall him to London — that itself would be a warning — and tell him of Kleist's communications.

Actually Kleist had told London nothing that it did not already know. On August 17th the British military attaché in Berlin had reported that, in his address to his generals in Doeberitz on August 15th, Hitler had announced that the invasion of Bohemia would begin at the end of September. On the 21st this had been confirmed from the same source with the additional news that in the General Staff there was much anxiety at the passive attitude abroad. If Hitler succeeded in his aggression, his régime would be strengthened for another ten years. But if, through the firm attitude of the Western

<sup>1</sup> The letter was circulated and a copy was seized by the Gestapo after July 20, 1944; it sealed Kleist's fate (v. Wheeler-Bennett, p. 413).

<sup>2</sup> V. Churchill, *The Second World War* i, p. 227.

Powers, he was compelled to give up his design or be involved in a war whose end was unforeseeable, his régime might break up altogether. Both these items of news came to the attaché from a well-informed German officer. Henderson who had come to London, however, said that the informant whom he knew was in his opinion a pure partisan and his reports nothing but propaganda.<sup>1</sup> On the 25th the military attaché admirably described the currents of opinion in the nation and in the General Staff; everyone feared and recoiled from war; all moderate men hoped for resolute resistance by the Western Powers to Hitler's designs, a resistance which would severely shake his authority. Already preparations for war had disordered the national economy and the Economic Section of the General Staff under Thomas regarded the economic prospects in war as very unfavourable to Germany. All that would not deter Hitler and, if he went to war, his propaganda machine would find it easy to rouse enthusiasm for war by military victories. British policy should make up its mind whether it would consent to give him a victory before it went to war — 'for a rather unreasonable cause, that of the Sudeten Germans'.

The British Government as can be seen was very well-informed about the situation in Germany. None the less it still did not grasp the fact that what mattered now was not the Sudeten Germans but the existence of Czechoslovakia and the necessity to set bounds once and for all to the limitless expansionism of Hitler. But only half-measures were taken. Henderson was recalled and received instructions to give the Fuehrer a serious warning but at the same time to say that Chamberlain was ready to make a personal visit to him. The warning was dropped when Henderson objected, and when the Chancellor (Sir John Simon) delivered a public speech (at the same time as Churchill did) and with Cabinet approval in which he repeated what Chamberlain had said on March 24th, Halifax hastened to weaken its effect in Prague and Berlin.

Why this shilly-shallying? First because the dynamic of the Hitler revolution and the personality of the super-militarist was unfamiliar and not understood just as earlier conservative governments had failed to understand the arch-militarist Napoleon. There was also the long-standing conviction of the deficiencies of the Czech rule, the recognition of the force of the Sudeten Germans and there was not the slightest inclination to accept the dangers of another war for the maintenance of the most artificial of the creations of Versailles. Nor was hope abandoned that a peaceful settlement could be got; the fear was of strengthening the Czech attitude by taking stern measures

<sup>1</sup> *BDFP*, iii, 2, nos. 658 and 692.

and so inciting Hitler to violent action. The anxiety was increased by serious doubts of British ability to wage a war and especially by the dread in both London and Paris of German air superiority; the prospect of a terrible air bombardment of capitals virtually entirely bereft of protection increased anxiety almost to panic.<sup>1</sup> Worse still, there was no confidence in French preparedness and ability to intervene effectively. It was the passive acceptance with which the French left the conduct of affairs to the British that most astonished observers, for it was a French rather than a British task to be true to treaties and save Czechoslovakia from destruction. Only Daladier seems to have realized what was at stake for France and for Europe; he had spoken out clearly and emphatically in July. But these were only words; French public opinion was outspokenly hostile to war; the political ambition, the will to maintain the hegemony which with the help of others had been won in 1918, had entirely disappeared. Bonnet was very representative of this combination of resignation and cynicism. Convinced of the military worthlessness for France of the Czech military alliance he had done much to prevent courageous decisions in Paris. There, as in London, hardly anything had been done to secure the constantly offered military help of Russia, partly because since the Tutachevski trials there was no confidence in the capabilities of the Red Army, partly because Poland and Rumania refused to allow that Army passage, even objected to Russian aircraft flying over their territories. Fear of Bolshevism certainly influenced Polish policy but still more did blind nationalism and a desire to share in the Czech booty.

It was quite clear to everyone in the first week of September that 'the Sudeten question' was for Hitler a mere pretext. When Benes on September 4th yielded to the diplomatic pressure of the Western Powers and agreed to satisfy all the Sudeten demands for autonomy, the answer was the sudden breaking-off of negotiations by the Sudeten party, the flight of its leaders to Germany and the call from there to open rebellion. Surely this was the moment when a final breach between Hitler and the Western Powers must come. The approach of the Nazi Party Day raised the general tension to its height. The German Opposition expected there a Fuehrer declaration which would make war inevitable.

The Opposition had now got to the stage of a formal plot. The central figure in it who set the whole business on foot seems to have been Hans Oster, head of the central section of the Counter-Intelligence at Army headquarters. He was universally held to be a vigorous

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain greatly exaggerated the effect of our attack v. *DBFP*, iii, 3, No. 325.

and brave, even reckless, soldier, ready for action and quick to take decisions. To some the soldier's language which he liked to use made him seem a cynic, but he was a man of deep religious conviction and was filled with boundless moral indignation at National Socialism. His passionate rejection of it went back to the days before 1933 and never weakened. Until he was removed from his post in April 1943 he was the soul of the military opposition, tirelessly alert and crafty and, thanks to his position in the Counter-Intelligence practically unassailable by the secret police as long as his chief, Admiral Canaris, protected him. Beck had recommended him to his successor Halder who from the day he became Chief of the General Staff appeared determined to carry on the campaign against war of his predecessor, and was quite frank on this point to his chief Brauchitsch when he took over. Halder is constantly and unjustly described as a weak, emotional creature without strength of decision and is therefore presented as a complete contrast to the resolute Beck. Beck judged him very differently, and not only his outstanding services as Chief of Staff but his political activity reveal Halder as a man of high character. During service in Munich (1923) he had seen how successful was Hitler's boastful and lying propaganda with the younger Reichswehr officers and it aroused his anxiety and opposition. Since the mass-murders of 1934 and still more since the 'Fritsch Crisis' he genuinely hated this 'criminal' and 'bloodsucker' and among his intimates expressed that hatred in good coarse Bavarian. It did not arise simply from the anger of the military expert against the meddling of a dilettante such as is seen in Beck's memoranda, but also from genuine moral indignation. But he was no blind thruster. As his appearance indicated he was a correct *bourgeois* who liked orderliness above all, who thought out things carefully beforehand and had no use for a 'putsch' unless it had clear aims and a tidy plan of operations. Such a man was sorely tried by the rift between his duty as a soldier and his patriotic and moral convictions. He thought of the 'compulsion to resistance as a terrible and painful experience' and saw clearly enough that colleagues whom he most respected like Beck and Fritsch had completely failed to respond to 'the will to revolution' and that it was a hopeless enterprise to fight the demon Hitler whom Fritsch after his resignation had described as 'Germany's destiny'. But that did not prevent him through tormented years doing all he could, despite his lack of independent command, to prevent the disaster becoming too terrible; that he failed was not his fault.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have to thank Halder's friend and collaborator, Col. J. Rohowsky for a letter from the General answering a series of questions I put to him. Also v. Wheeler-Bennett, p. 409, Gisevius, ii, p. 30.

Compared to Fritsch and Beck, Halder was without doubt not the weaker but the stronger man of action. Convinced since June 30, 1934 that the Hitler régime would have to be eliminated, he strove in vain in 1937 and 1938 to induce his two predecessors to more drastic action against the Dictator. When he took over, Beck advised him to get in touch with Goerdeler. For the moment that was not possible for Goerdeler was still abroad and did not get back to Germany until December. Instead Halder, in conjunction with Oster who had been his subordinate in Muenster, worked out plans of his own. They aimed at preventing the outbreak of a second world war, even if it was necessary to carry out a military *coup d'état*.

The first thing to be done was to ascertain the attitude of the British Government about which Kleist had brought back no clear indication. Halder, therefore, got into touch with the Foreign Office especially with the Secretary of State Weizsaecker.<sup>1</sup> Here there had long existed a small opposition group of older and younger diplomats tolerated, even encouraged, by Weizsaecker which was concerned to maintain the tradition of the Foreign Office, that is, its heritage of experience and knowledge, against the dilettantism of the new minister, that devotee of Hitler, Ribbentrop, and, so far as it could, work to avert the damage that the entry of fanatic nationalists into the domain of foreign policy could cause; many of the group later risked and lost their lives in the struggle against National Socialism. To this group belonged the brothers Erich and Theodor Kordt, the first a Counsellor of Legation in Ribbentrop's office, the other Counsellor of Embassy in London. Through Oster, Erich Kordt was initiated into the plans of the Opposition with the double purpose, first, of convincing Brauchitsch through a diplomatic expert that the danger of a new and hopeless world war really threatened Germany if the attack planned in Prague were carried out and that Hitler, wrongly advised by Ribbentrop, was blind to this danger. The other aim was to try to convince the British Government that a resolute opposition group really did exist in the Army; that it was hoped that a convincing demonstration that, if it came to the worst, its strength was such as to prevent by force the outbreak of war, would encourage that government to plain and menacing speech. Erich Kordt to whom the first task fell carried the impression that he had convinced Brauchitsch, but it was doubtful if the Commander-in-Chief would himself move against Hitler. The message concerning Britain, which was urgent because of the approach of the Nazi Party Day, Kordt got to his brother verbally through a trustworthy woman

<sup>1</sup> V. Halder's evidence at Weizsaecker's trial (January 28, 1948) Weizsaecker, p. 174.



courier, their cousin Susanne Simonis; it was to be conveyed to the Foreign Office. This was done in very secret talks with Chamberlain's trusted adviser Horace Wilson and with the Foreign Minister himself (September 6th and 7th). Theo Kordt was heard patiently and 'with deep concern' and got a promise from Halifax that what he had said would be passed on to the Prime Minister and one or two of his Cabinet colleagues; it would all be most carefully examined. What Halifax did not say to Kordt was that a week ago Chamberlain had determined to fly to Berchtesgaden and try in direct conversation to arrive at a compromise; Henderson was now making preparations for the visit. Halifax seems to utter a plain warning in Berlin had reached London through other channels.<sup>1</sup> Weizsaecker himself had had a hand in it and had blamed his own minister for deceiving Hitler by drawing reassuring pictures of the British attitude; Burckhardt, the League of Nations Commissioner in Danzig who reported it all to London, said that in Berlin he had not spoken to a single minister or general, and that included both Goering and Keitel, who had not declared himself against any warlike enterprise.

The fate of Germany and the world depended on one man alone. Should he not be removed from the world as soon as possible to avert the catastrophe of another world war? It is characteristic of the deeply unrevolutionary nature of the civilian and military opposition that none of them thought in terms of assassination. Halder's idea was for a military 'putsch' to take Hitler by surprise, to arrest him and unmask him to the German people as a frivolous adventurer. Brauchitsch would carry out the 'putsch', create a military dictatorship and then seek the formation of a new government. Halder had not discussed this plan directly with Brauchitsch so as not to compromise him if the plot were discovered, but he had no doubt that the Commander-in-Chief would play his part when the moment came. He also knew that getting rid of the National Socialist system could not be secured by a 'military putsch', and that, in order to succeed, there must be a broad measure of national participation in his plans. He was therefore decisively against the undertaking of a *coup d'état* until it was clear to all the world that Hitler either had carried, or was about to carry Germany, into the catastrophe of another war. Refusal of obedience was permissible only in case of a recognized criminal. As soon as it was universally seen that Hitler was one, that the fanatical devotion to him was waning and the people were turning against him, action was possible, for the chiefs of the Wehrmacht must appear to the nation not as saboteurs or traitors but as saviours.

<sup>1</sup> *V. BDFP*, iii, 2, no. 775.

He was here in opposition to many members of the civilian opposition with which he got in touch through Oster immediately after he took over from Beck. Many of these who were impatiently awaiting this hour were inclined to overestimate the political possibilities of the Wehrmacht and prefer to put in hand their 'putsch'-without reference to the course of international events. Gisevius who came from the Secret Police, tried to win Halder over to his pet idea which he had developed during the 'Fritsch Crisis' with Goerdeler's approval, of seizing Police Headquarters; the Army would then demand that Hitler dismiss Himmler and Heydrich; if the Fuehrer refused, a military detachment from Potsdam would occupy the Ministry of the Interior, arrest the two police chiefs and their chief subordinates and confront Hitler with a *fait accompli*. Gisevius promised to supply enough material from the police files to open the eyes of the German people to the scandalous doings of their ruler.

It is easy to understand that Halder would have none of any such adventure. He was disappointed, too, to find that the other civilians whom Oster introduced to him loudly demanded that he get rid of Hitler but offered no clear plan how to do it. As Goerdeler was unavailable, recourse was had to Schacht who, as both a minister and Hitler's opponent, seemed eminently suited to be the leader of the political opposition and who now co-operated zealously. Halder wanted to know what was to happen when Hitler was eliminated and the danger of civil war loomed up. So in all haste for there was only a short time — at best three to four weeks — left to them, a plan of rebellion was drawn up to this effect: as soon as Hitler gave the order to invade Czechoslovakia — Halder thought he could be sure of a 48-hour delay — the Chief of Staff would inform the conspirators. The declaration of war by the Western Powers was now expected with certainty and the result of it would be panic in Germany. That moment Brauchitsch would use to start a counter-action by issuing orders for large detachments of trained troops under regular officers under the command of General von Brockdorff-Ahlefeld, commander of the Potsdam garrison, to march on Berlin. The commanding general of the Berlin military district, Witzleben, a stout soldier, would take over general command of the enterprise. Witzleben who had the 23rd Division at his disposal was very popular with the troops and thus was seen as an important factor for the success of the attempt. There were also plans for the occupation of strategic points in the capital — the ministries, the Information Office, the various fortified police stations of the S.S. and the Gestapo — all drawn up on General Staff principles. On the police sector Gisevius co-operated with Witzleben who had let him secretly work in his

office; he brought his friends, the Berlin Chief of Police Helldorf and the Gestapo official Nebe into the conspiracy.<sup>1</sup>

The most difficult thing was, of course, to seize the person of Hitler right away. Witzleben was ready personally to take on this task on condition that he got from Brauchitsch as Commander-in-Chief formal orders to occupy 'the Government quarter'; if necessary the gates of the Chancellery would be blown up by artillery and Hitler taken prisoner. To prevent the intervention of the S.S., especially of the Leibstandarte Division stationed in Munich, an armoured division commanded by General Hoepner and then in Thuringia would be ready to move. It was left obscure what was to be done with Hitler when he had been removed from the Chancellery. Some wanted a regular trial which would end with his condemnation. For this purpose there had been collected by the young Dohnanyi, an official in the Ministry of Justice, a whole bundle of documents on the scandalous acts of the régime which would serve as material for the prosecution. As early as 1936 Oster had got ready a sort of political ABC which, intended for the masses, would state the case against National Socialism.<sup>2</sup> Others favoured putting Hitler away as a lunatic with the help of the Berlin psychiatrist Bonhoeffer whose two sons were deeply involved in the plot. The military dictatorship headed by Brauchitsch would be replaced as soon as possible by a civil government. Halder had thought of Neurath or Noske or Gessler, all survivors of a past epoch, as the men for the transition period; their task would be to summon a National Assembly and set in hand the formation of a parliamentary government.

Nothing illustrates better the desperate situation of a liberal opposition under a totalitarian régime than these hastily improvised schemes.<sup>3</sup> It is very easy to criticize their obvious inadequacy; they were a gamble with little chance of success. But how else was it

<sup>1</sup> In his notes Prof. Ritter alluded to the difficulty of reconciling all the different accounts of this episode. He says that this alone is certain: (1) that Oster brought Schacht and Halder together; (2) that Halder wanted the advice of experts like Schacht and Weizsaecker; (3) that from the moment Gisevius appeared Halder distrusted him; and (4) that Schacht did not play an important part. Halder to whom Prof. Ritter was indebted for much information told him that in a conversation he had with Witzleben 'they had pledged themselves to resign immediately after the "putsch" had succeeded because they both felt that the military way of life was endangered by meddling in revolutionary action'. A very valuable conversation Prof. Ritter adds, for the understanding of the military opposition!—TRANS.

<sup>2</sup> K. Abshagen, *Canaris*, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> When in the morning of September 28th Halder asked Witzleben for details on the state of the preparations, what he heard greatly disquieted him. It is impossible to talk of genuine technical preparation.

possible to organize as a genuine popular movement the simmering discontent with the Hitler system and the universal dread of war, how else could it be made effective before the actual outbreak of war made any opposition hopeless? One may criticize, but at the same time cannot but admire the high courage and pure patriotism of the men who took such risks. There was among them no genuine conspirator in the grand manner, no new and outstanding leader. Yet for those who refused to risk this great adventure there was no alternative but total resignation.

There were younger men who took a simpler and stouter view of action against Hitler. Among them, the former Stalhelm leader First Lieut. Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz, once a member of Ehrhardt's Free Corps, seems to have played the principal part. As he himself tells us, he was entrusted by Witzleben in Oster's house with the formation of a storm-troop which was assigned the task of capturing the Chancellery. By about September 22nd he had got a troop together of some thirty young officers, students and workers and had, without Witzleben's knowledge but with Oster's approval, given them the order to provoke an incident as soon as they had taken the Chancellery and shoot Hitler dead. Once that was accomplished, these young officers proposed, without troubling to consider the older generals, at once to proclaim regent their comrade, Prince Wilhelm, the eldest son of the Crown Prince, whom they all respected as 'a very upright, sincere and courageous soldier'. They counted on the support of the 1st Regiment in Königsberg and the 9th in Potsdam. Later the transition would be made by democratic methods from regency to monarchy. Plans had been made in conjunction with the Prince in July or early August at Klein-Obisch where the Prince was residing; they even went into constitutional and legal detail. In the middle of September, Heinz had won over the former trade union leader and minister, Wilhelm Leuschner and his assistant Hermann Maas, a former youth leader. Clearly there was nothing of 'reaction' about their plans; they relied on a new and effective symbol — constitutional monarchy — with the destruction of which the mass of the people thought the agony of Germany had begun.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Based on letters to me sent by F. W. Heinz whose statement was confirmed and supplemented by H.I.H. Princess Wilhelm of Prussia. The decisive discussion, she remembers, took place in Klein-Obisch before the middle of August and lasted a whole day. A draft constitution was drawn up by the Oster-Schulenburg-Heinz group. The aim was a German Kingdom not an Imperial restoration which the Prince rejected. After the outbreak of war the Prince said it was too late for revolutionary plans. In one of his unpublished papers General Thomas said Oster told him that the reason for the failure was that Graf Brockdorff had told Witz-

All these plans depended on what Hitler did now and on the attitude of his Western opponents. The representations of the German Opposition had not been entirely without effect in London. There it was feared and expected that at the Party Day in Nuremberg on September 10th Hitler would deliver a speech which would make war inevitable. The day before, Chamberlain issued a statement to the Press on which he had spoken with Eden and Churchill and the leaders of the Parliamentary Opposition. Passed on to Nuremberg it contained a discreet and guarded, but obvious, warning. Instructions went to Henderson to the same effect. The statement had some influence in Nuremberg but its force was greatly weakened by the publication in the semi-official London *Times* and the Paris *République* (September 6th and September 7th) of notable leading articles in which the proposal, so far hardly mentioned by diplomatists, that the Sudeten district be handed over to Germany was advocated.<sup>1</sup> Nor did Henderson carry out his instructions, in this being supported by Weizsaecker; there was a universal fear that 'the wild man' might be made wilder. The general surprise, therefore, is comprehensible when the dreaded speech indeed promised ready help to the Sudeten Germans but avoided committing Germany to war. And, immediately after the Party Day, Chamberlain flew to Munich and Berchtesgaden. There was no war, but Hitler now had his supreme diplomatic triumph; the Prime Minister of Great Britain visited him in person in his mountain fortress in order — as the world generally interpreted it — to beg of him peace. The conspirators in Berlin saw themselves foiled. The wild beast which they had meant to snare, had escaped the net.<sup>2</sup>

Very quickly however the situation became tense again. From

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leben that 'the younger officers could not be relied upon: they would move against the Gestapo but not against Hitler's person'. When and in what connection this statement was made is uncertain; Thomas's account shows that he was not yet deeply involved. It does not affect Witzleben and his 'storm-troop'. Heinz's account was confirmed to me by Graf Konrad Finckenstein (now Eutin). V. also R. Hildebrandt, *Wir sind die Letzten*, p. 93.

<sup>1</sup> V. Kordt, p. 256; *DBFP*, iii, 2, p. 680 and nos. 815, 823, 825.

<sup>2</sup> It is incomprehensible to me how Wheeler-Bennett (p. 423) can say that it is proved that the conspirators finally gave up the enterprise as early as September 15th on the strength of a British journalist's report. Equally unfair is his assertion (p. 423) that in the last week of August and beginning of September (!) they had opportunity enough to seize Hitler in Berlin had they but had the courage. Wheeler-Bennett knows very well that the plot started only after Halder took over from Beck and that even if Hitler had appeared in Berlin, no action could be taken until the attitude of Britain was known and it was then anything but clear.

Paul Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter, it was learned that the Berchtesgaden meeting had been the reverse of amiable, that Hitler had demanded the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by the surrender of the Sudeten districts and also had blusteringly avowed, that not only did he not shrink from another world war, but actually wished for one while he was still in his prime of life. Did it not seem impossible that the British Government would yield before such brutal threatening?

On September 18th there was a meeting of French and British ministers in London. Daladier said forthrightly that it did not matter what assurances were given that this was Hitler's last demand for territory. The fact was that the rump of Czechoslovakia after the loss of the Sudeten districts was completely indefensible and indeed scarcely viable especially if the 'principle of self-determination' was applied to its Hungarian, Polish and Slovak minorities and at the conqueror's mercy. Basing action on this principle, Hitler could destroy all the work of Versailles, wreck the whole state system of South Eastern Europe and finally make himself master of the Continent. Daladier took his stand against recognizing the 'right of self-determination' of the Sudeten Germans and maintained it even when Halifax said it was now impracticable to give effective military aid to the Czechs who would never be restored to their old frontiers even after another world war. Finally agreement was reached on a miserable compromise; the Benes Government would be left to get new frontiers for their country with the help of an international commission, frontiers which would be just to both sides. At the same time as consolation for Benes there would be a formal guarantee by the great powers, including Britain, of what remained of Czechoslovakia as a 'neutral' state. For France that meant the sacrifice of her Eastern ally which would have been so valuable in war as an air base; it was also an open repudiation of her treaty pledges. For Britain it meant an unwanted and actually useless commitment on the Continent.

Even this sacrifice was not enough to satisfy Hitler's insatiable hunger for power. When he met Chamberlain at Godesberg (September 22nd-24th) the principle of self-determination, Daladier's bogey, was not far-reaching enough for him. He now demanded that, before the final frontier settlement was made, Benes should put his defenceless state at the mercy of the German Army by immediately handing over the Sudeten districts and by stating that, if all was not settled by October 1st, the German Army would march. He thus placed the Western Powers under an intolerable pressure. The result was a sharp reversal of view in London and also in Paris. In both

countries public opinion began to suspect that they were dealing with a demonic will to power against which any attempt at friendly understanding would sooner or later be shattered. France mobilized fourteen divisions and manned the Maginot Line; Daladier got from his Cabinet a unanimous rejection of the Godesberg demands. In Britain Chamberlain who had shown himself weak and irresolute at Godesberg and was steadily pressed by Henderson to agree to everything Hitler asked, was compelled by the majority of his Cabinet (including the 'pacifist' Halifax) to a similar refusal. British and French ministers met again in London on September 23rd. It was a dramatic session. With surprising determination Daladier opposed the obvious desire of Chamberlain to find some sort of compromise which would content Hitler. He made it plain that he was concerned not just with the fate of Czechoslovakia and the honour of France, but with the freedom of Europe and 'the salvation of western civilization'; a limit must be set at which there would be no yielding to the Dictator's orders. He was not dismayed by the unconcealed British distrust of France's ability to intervene in arms. Chamberlain and Simon feared that the French Army would simply go to ground in the Maginot Line. Daladier said that was as stupid a notion as renunciation of the offensive; the 'West Wall' was not completed; of course the French Army would invade Germany and, undismayed by the enemy superiority, the French Air Force would attack the industrial centres of the Rhineland. Besides they counted on the powerful support of Russia's Air Force. He warned his hearers against a too timid Western policy and summoned Gamelin from Paris who was on the whole very optimistic about French military prospects; air forces were only a part of war potential and could not decide a war.<sup>1</sup>

The result of the meeting was a very noticeable stiffening of the Franco-British attitude. Chamberlain with Daladier's agreement, sent a personal letter to Hitler conjuring him not, on a mere question of procedure, to plunge Europe into war and announcing Britain's readiness to guarantee the honest fulfilment of the proposals already accepted in Prague for the separation of the Sudeten districts. But the letter also contained a plain warning about the 'tragic consequences' which a perpetual refusal on Hitler's part would entail. The knowledge that the majority of the German generals rejected a solution by war and that many Germans did not understand why the Fuehrer should wish war when without it all his national demands

<sup>1</sup> *DBFP*, iii, 2, no. 1093 *sq.*: unfortunately the British documents say very little about Gamelin's opinions (*op. cit.*, no. 1143 but *v.* Wheeler-Bennett's report from French sources in *Munich*, p. 144; Gamelin, ii, p. 344).

could be realized, no doubt helped to embolden the Western statesmen.<sup>1</sup>

Tension rose to its height when Wilson in person in the afternoon of the 26th took Chamberlain's message to Hitler and had it savagely rejected. The Fuehrer was then preparing that war-mongering speech in the Sportspalast which is still remembered with terror by all who heard it on the radio, with its unrestrained personal abuse of Benes which made the Sudeten controversy look like a boxing match between professionals in the political ring. No more restrained was his answer to Wilson who, of all the British negotiators, most desired peace. Never before had a British diplomatist been so treated. He was roundly told that London's protest left the Dictator quite indifferent; on October 1st, if the Godesberg ultimatum was not accepted, the attack on Czechoslovakia would begin. If his aim was to terrify he fully realized it. Wilson and Henderson who had accompanied him did not dare deliver to this madman a second and later message which said that, if the Czechs were attacked, the French would support them by 'offensive measures' and that would bring Britain into the war. Simultaneously with this warning which was telephoned to Berlin in the afternoon, Halifax sent a statement to the Press which met all the hopes of the German Opposition. Chamberlain had done all he could to get a peaceful solution; the surrender of the Sudeten districts had been agreed to by Britain, France and Czechoslovakia; if in spite of all this the Germans did attack France was in duty bound to come to their aid 'and certainly Britain and Russia would be at France's side'.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing is more interesting than to trace the effect of this decisive announcement on Hitler. In his speech in the Sportspalast he heaped insults on Benes but he still did not declare war. As Henderson learned from Goering and Bodenschatz he gave the Czechs until September 28th at 2 p.m. to think things over. When about midday on the 27th Wilson came to take leave of him and gave him London's last message which breathed desire for reconciliation and peace, Hitler suddenly condescended to listen. Wilson spoke cautiously not of France's 'offensive measures' as his instructions said, but only of 'actively engaging in hostilities' but Hitler understood him well

<sup>1</sup> The report from a highly questionable French source (B. Lavergne) published in November 1938 that on September 22nd, Generals von Hannecken, Leeb and Bodenschatz went to Hitler to protest against a war and gave him an eighteen-page memorandum on the deplorable state of the Wehrmacht scarcely requires contradiction though it is quoted by Churchill (i, p 245). To anyone who knows the circumstances it is patently false. Leeb who was at that time in retirement told Halder who asked him at my request, it was a silly fairy tale.

<sup>2</sup> *DBFP*, iii, 2, no. 1111.



enough. 'That means then that France attacks us and Britain attacks us. But we have no intention of attacking France.' He was not deceived by Wilson's attempts to tone down the message.<sup>1</sup>

There seems to me to be no doubt, even if it has been overlooked, that this decisive last audience broke the ice. Like a tiger Hitler was already crouched to spring on his helpless victim. But he had a last side-glance at what the Western Powers would do: would they remain quiescent or would they fall on his rear? Till then he had not listened to the warnings of his generals. That they were right in their view when they estimated the Czech defensive lines to be much stronger than he did, he acknowledged later when he saw them for himself.<sup>2</sup> That an attack in force by the whole French Army on the half-finished 'West Wall', then occupied only by five — at the most seven — divisions and these not fully trained and imperfectly equipped, could not be defeated, he cannot, despite all his tirades to the contrary, have doubted for a moment.<sup>3</sup> Now he was told that the French Army would in fact attack. At the same time news came from London of the first steps taken to mobilize the Royal Navy. He must have asked himself now; should he start a second world war in order to shatter Benes' Czechoslovakia at one blow, or first make it defenceless so as one day to make it easier to gather in the rest of the spoils?

There is no written evidence on what he really thought in these critical hours but, on the afternoon of the 27th he signed the draft made by Weizsaecker of a reply to Chamberlain. We can read between the lines of it for the first time a certain readiness to temporize for, as in the Sportspalast speech, he gave assurances that he did not propose to occupy *all* Czechoslovakia and was ready to guarantee that.<sup>4</sup> We can see that from now on the manifold efforts made at the last minute in Paris, London and Rome to find a peaceful way out of the crisis did not fall on utterly deaf ears. In the evening of the 27th there was held that notorious march of motorized troops through the Berlin streets the effect of which on the people so greatly disappointed him, for it aroused not enthusiasm for war but stunned depression. That evening Chamberlain spoke on the radio and his

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, no. 1129.

<sup>2</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> Beck told me in 1943 that the General Staff reckoned that at best a French invasion would be brought to a standstill near Gotha. Churchill (i, 224) speaks of 5 active and 8 reserve divisions on the West Wall, an estimate which according to German sources is certainly too high. The French could have mobilized 100 divisions.

<sup>4</sup> Hitler attached such importance to this letter that he wanted to have it included in the British White Book (Kordt, p. 265 sq on Weizsaecker's authority.)

words in their half threatening, half appealing pathos had the effect of a Cassandra speech just before war broke out. Next morning the French ambassador François-Poncet, in a notably clever and impressive manner, expressed France's desire for a peaceful outcome of the dispute.<sup>1</sup> About midday Hitler proclaimed his agreement with Mussolini's proposal to postpone mobilization for at least twenty-four hours and suggested a four-power conference in Munich; Russia was not invited. Peace was again saved.

No one had foreseen this sudden development and, least of all, the conspirators round Halder and Witzleben who, from their contacts in the Berlin Foreign Office, had heard only of further deterioration in the situation. Since Hitler's wild outbursts, first to Wilson and then in the Sportsplatz, they had no doubt at all that the long-awaited explosion would come on the 28th. Tension rose hourly. Everyone was now waiting for news of the mobilization order to take, at the right moment, the counter-action already prepared.<sup>2</sup> In the morning of the 28th Erich Kordt gave Oster the text of the exchange of letters between Chamberlain and Hitler on the 26th and 27th. Oster passed it on to Witzleben who went at once with it to Halder and provoked from him a new outburst against Hitler; it seems that Brauchitsch was now won over.<sup>3</sup> The Commander-in-Chief however wanted to hear more about the situation and went to the Chancellery. Here there was great excitement and a throng of important people mostly high Party officials who were all expecting the final decision. Witzleben's 'storm-troop' was ready and Erich Kordt who had about eleven o'clock received from his brother in London urgent warning of the immediate danger of war, felt that he could count on his friends in the Chancellery being ready to take advantage of the confusion and 'open the great double door to admit the storm-troop'. He urged Count Fritz von der Schulenburg, deputy police president of Berlin, one of the most enthusiastic of the conspirators, to take action at once. At that moment came the news of the telephone call from Rome heralding Mussolini's intervention. François-Poncet and Henderson arrived for an audience with Hitler. The spectre had been exorcized. Counsellor of Legation Bruecklmeier and Brauchitsch reported from the Chancellery the success of Mussolini's peace action. The plan for a 'putsch' had at a stroke been rendered meaningless.

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> On this Kordt (p. 269) and Gisevius (ii, 74) agree; the latter depicts Brauchitsch as hesitant.

<sup>3</sup> Wheeler-Bennett (p. 421) makes this comment: 'all these gentlemen were in such transports of indignation that none of them could issue an executive order'. Only at a very safe distance can one pass such a judgement.

We have described its development and end in some detail because this attempt was the only one which, had it matured, had a chance of being successful, without fierce civil strife, in shattering the Hitler régime and saving Germany and Europe from a terrible fate. It was only for this once that the whole officers' corps had been successfully united for action — action for peace which could never be represented as treason to Germany. The chances even then were very slight; who can deny that? A thousand mischances could have occurred as always happens when generals make a 'putsch' and Hitler was so carefully guarded that it is hard to see how he could have been taken by surprise. But is it just to reproach men who tried to make possible the seemingly impossible — driven on by boundless devotion to their country — with joining in a gambler's adventure, with failing to be genuine revolutionaries, even with lacking the support of a counter-revolutionary popular movement? Because their movement was confined to a narrow circle and under the rule of terror could not be widened, should they have remained still with folded hands? Was it not an astonishing proof of the glad acceptance of responsibility that the heads of the Army and leading members of the Foreign Service should have placed above their duty as generals and officials their duty to people and country, to humanity itself? The recognition of moral purpose should not be lessened because the plot failed — even in the domain of politics.

The latest British account of the Army opposition makes it its business to defend the British and French Governments from the charge that, through their weak and untimely peace policy, they ruined the chances of success of a plot which was rich in possibilities.<sup>1</sup> There is a desire to stifle at birth a new version of the 'stab-in-the-back' legend. It is true that the foreign policy of the Western Powers could not be based on something so chancy as a generals' plot against Hitler. They had to take very seriously the danger of a new war. But was this danger really so tremendously great as they then thought? Hitler did not think so, nor did the German generals. Certainly it would have been a costly business and the cost not light. But the attempt to save those costs at the expense of Czechoslovakia had later to be paid for with far heavier sacrifices. Not only was their political prestige lowered by the betrayal of the Czechs, but all confidence in Western democracy was shattered — forever. That has its fatal effects even today. We Germans do not reproach the statesmen of the West for not having declared war on Germany in 1938. But there is still the responsibility before history. By the methods London and Paris used in 1938 no real peace could be obtained;

<sup>1</sup> In Wheeler-Bennett's book.

Daladier saw that clearly enough. It was due not to himself, but to his country's dread of war, that he could not act, but had to content himself with the formal success of a European conference to resolve the Czech crisis. Finally the Western statesmen had to exhaust the last possibilities of peace before they could get their peoples to be ready for war. That can be represented as proof to their credit of their freedom from 'militarism'. But those who today read the diplomatic correspondence of Henderson, Halifax and Bonnet at the height of the Czech crisis and who see how, immediately after the courageous stand taken on September 28th, even before Hitler was seen to be yielding, they strove to rob that stand of its meaning, will admit that these men were not equal to their diplomatic task. Perhaps that is true too of the men of the German military opposition. But a just verdict can never be one-sided.

## CHAPTER VI

### *From Munich to the Outbreak of War*

GOERDELER WAS in Switzerland from August to mid-October 1938 and it seems in some fear of trouble with the police and we do not know his views either on the successive phases of the Czech crisis or of the plans for revolt in Berlin. But he stated his opinion of the Munich agreement in a letter to an American friend.<sup>1</sup> It reveals the deep disillusion, almost despair of a patriot at this fresh triumph of Hitler. 'A brilliant opportunity has been lost. The German people did not want a war. The Army would have done anything to avoid one. If Britain had stood firm and said frankly to the German nation that they were ready to concede its just claims, but not under threat of force and only when all the questions had been discussed publicly and with the firm intention of establishing a lasting peace, and getting rid of the dangerous burden of armaments, if Britain and France had only taken on themselves to risk war, Hitler would never have used force. Then *he* would have been blamed and not, as is now the case, the good elements of my people. It would have been the end of Hitler.'

It will be noted that, probably as a precaution, Goerdeler did not even hint at the essence of the Berlin plans, the intention to stage a military 'putsch' immediately after the opening of hostilities and the Western Powers' declaration of war. Or had he not been told of it? His criticism of Anglo-French policy is chiefly for the way in which it yielded to Hitler's threats and the absence of any constructive peace plan of their own; in his notes of 1945 he described it as a 'ghastly failure'. 'Chamberlain', he wrote, 'gave up every position without getting the slightest concession from Hitler: the Munich agreement is nothing else than absolute capitulation by France and Britain to a vainglorious charlatan: France has lost the respect of Europe and the prestige of Britain has fallen badly; the first consequences of that will be seen in the Empire: neither Hitler nor Mussolini now has the slightest regard for either of them'.

'The end of the martyrdom of the German people has now been relegated to a distant future.' There is obvious conflict in the mind of the patriot between patriotic and spiritual feelings. 'For myself

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Krause, pp. 57-64.'

I can say this. The power and dominion of my country constantly increases. As a German I ought to rejoice at this. But I know that these dictators are criminals and that their economic policy leads to Bolshevism. Hitler is poison for the German soul. He is determined to root out Christianity. It will not be justice, reason and decency that will determine the world's future, but brutal force.'

Goerdeler's letter which was written at some distance from things in Germany is not without illusions and exaggerations. He seriously overestimated the practical possibilities of a revolt before Munich and painted all too optimistic a picture how a new 'government of decent men' could have 'in a few weeks' established together with Britain and France 'lasting world peace', done away with Mussolini, solved the Spanish problem and with America obtained a settlement in the Far East. He is on no surer ground when he writes that perhaps Chamberlain 'and his clique of aristocrats' are infected with the Fascist microbe and think to save the 'capitalist party system' from Bolshevism with the help of nationalism.

Prophetic indeed is his final verdict on the Chamberlain policy of appeasement. 'While Mr Chamberlain shrank from a minor danger he made war inevitable. The peoples of Britain and France will have to defend their freedom in arms or be enslaved and in the future they will have to fight under very much more difficult conditions.'

Goerdeler certainly did not very fairly describe the reaction to Munich of the German people when he spoke simply of the 'despair' in nation and army over Hitler's régime of terror and thus over-generalized the feelings in his own narrow circle of friends. From his Swiss retreat he overlooked the deep relief with which the avoidance of war was hailed in Germany and in the world generally. Everyone stood astonished before the achievement of the great adventurer and before the incredible luck he had in the playing of military cards. But not he but Chamberlain was acclaimed as the great peacemaker. The belief in Hitler's political genius was strengthened even heightened, but the fear of his aggressive designs was not at all allayed.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks after Munich his moral credit fell lower than ever before through the horrible persecution of the Jews in November 1938 which roused deep indignation even among many of his adherents. It is not going too far to say that the atrocities of the 'Glass Night' of November 9th and still more its sequel, the systematic plundering and maltreatment of the whole Jewish population, opened the eyes of many good citizens to the fact that their 'legal' authority was now in the hands of criminals. In Church circles there now arose a fundamental

<sup>1</sup> V. Neville Henderson's view in *BDFP*, iii, 3, p. 615.

consciousness that the Christian's duty to obey had limits when authority not only ignored God's moral commandments, but placed itself, like a gang of thugs, above and outside the law; there had been no such phenomenon ever noted before in the history of German Protestantism.<sup>1</sup> The shame and bitterness of the most patriotic went so far as to make them be ashamed before the world of the name German which we loved and of which we were so proud. No one who did not live as a German through these dark November days can really measure the depth of the anger and impotent despair in the hearts of countless Germans. For many who hesitated there was now no possibility of reconciliation with the régime of violence.

These feelings Goerdeler naturally shared with all his German friends. More intensely than others was he driven to political activity. In Germany after Munich there was evident a certain lassitude and bewilderment, and most members of the Opposition saw little hope of progress. But from abroad Goerdeler sought again to weave the cords of the net in which Hitler's policy of conquest would be caught, thin cords, no doubt, as will be seen. It was all fantasticality rather than realism, but it shows his restless energy and his indestructible faith in the triumph of good in the world.

It is difficult, well nigh impossible, to follow in detail the evolution of his political plans between the Czech crisis and the outbreak of war with Poland for we have only fragmentary evidence for them and he was for relatively long periods abroad. His elaborate reports on his journeys are in the main of a political nature, they were not intended just for his friends but were directed also to the leaders of the Nazi Party and even included criticism but in an indirect and very cautious way. Hitler had stopped receiving them in May 1938 and it was to Goering, on whose desire for peace the Opposition right to the outbreak of war set some hope, that they were addressed.

He ended his reports with a general conclusion. He explained the genuine readiness of the British Government to reach an understanding with Germany, particularly because of its need for peace in Europe in order to have its hands freer in the Far East, i.e. the maintenance against Japan of the 'open door'. The Japanese offensive on the Asian Continent was a real danger for the whole European economy but the continuance of tension in Europe, hindered the British from tackling, in conjunction with America, the Far Eastern

<sup>1</sup> V. Chap. 5. Wheeler-Bennett (p. 433) tragically misunderstands the feelings of the Churches when he seeks to make light of the genuine moral indignation of German patriots by saying that it did not arise out of humanitarian sentiment but only out of a *bourgeois* respect for law and order and the security of private property.

problem. Their efforts to reach a lasting understanding with Italy remained unsuccessful, although Mussolini in the interest of his country would do well to give up all ambitious schemes of expansion. The British therefore saw it necessary to speed up their rearmament and France was on the way to overcoming its internal weaknesses. Neither of the Western Powers could permanently tolerate an existence of constant tension and increasing burden of armaments. But 'without the restoration of confidence in pledges and treaties' no understanding was possible with either. Thus the danger of war came ever nearer. It must come to a decision by the end of 1939 at the latest — this was written in April. The determination of the British to maintain their position should not be underestimated. They were peacefully inclined, but in case of necessity they would fight. They could be sure of the support of the U.S. after the conclusion of the Anglo-American trade agreement. Germany today faced a solid front of the world powers; according to the situation Russia would fight either us or Japan. Hence renewed exhortation to reach a peaceful understanding even at the last minute and urgent warnings against the unleashing of war. The economic and financial situation of Germany was already so unfavourable that even 'the ability to maintain the Army was threatened' since neither its supply nor reinforcement could be guaranteed. Nor was the morale of the nation such as to endure great sacrifices in war; Goerdeler constantly returned to this after war broke out 'our only chances for the future depend on a long period of peaceful work . . . then we can in all probability count on gaining the first position in the world provided we can only accustom ourselves not to talk about it and refrain from misusing it'.

When Goerdeler sought to place this picture of the future before Goering, did he really believe it would make any impression? And could he really have wanted the strengthening of the Hitler régime by fresh and peaceful triumphs of foreign policy? That is not easy to answer. The questions themselves reveal the painful, fundamentally insoluble problem of all the Opposition groups at this time. No German patriot could wish war for his fatherland: to prevent war seemed rather his first and most pressing duty quite apart from the fact whether or not the chances of an internal revolution were lessened. But what practical steps could be taken to ensure peace? Good advice to Goering such as Goerdeler gave in his reports was certainly hopeless, yet, up to the last moment before war broke out, that method was still being tried, e.g. by the Hassells. The other method, the military 'putsch' had become as hopeless since Munich, first, because no one now really believed in the readiness for war of



the Western Powers and, second, because, after Munich, Hitler was clever enough to give express orders to the Army that for the next four to five years it was to devote itself entirely to its training and to the completion of its armament and this allayed the generals' fears of new adventures. From the dispute with Poland over Danzig and the Corridor which had begun in 1938 they had for long no expectation that war would come.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the aim of the negotiations with Poland — the return of Danzig and direct connection with East Prussia — was infinitely more popular than ever the claims of the Sudeten Germans had been.

What most troubled Goerdeler after Munich was the uncertain, temporizing attitude of the Western Powers towards the restless ambition of the dictator, the ambition so impressively illustrated by the famous report which François-Poncet made on his visit to the Obersalzberg to take leave of Hitler on October 18th. 'The world watches with painful anxiety the looks and gestures of this man of violence completely ignorant what country will be his next victim, what sinister plans are revolving in his mind.'<sup>2</sup> But no one risked a movement. As early as the late autumn of 1938 it was learned in London that Hitler was planning a new blow against Poland and that in Moscow, as in all Eastern Europe, policies were being revised; no state wished to base policy on an alliance with the West; all sought accommodation with Hitler. Even Russia thought of one with the help perhaps of a Fourth Partition. It was at the same time that the rump state of Czechoslovakia was further dismembered without any military counter-action by the Western Powers who at Munich had taken as genuine the guarantee to it. Halifax was of the opinion that the whole French alliance system in Eastern Europe had proved itself unnatural; a country could not claim hegemony without the military strength to uphold it; the French would be well advised to give up any such claim and concentrate on assuring their position in the West and in their colonial empire.

The French ambassador in Warsaw recommended a cautious loosening of the alliance with Poland. His Foreign Minister Bonnet was, at bottom, of the same opinion. In competitive emulation of Chamberlain he sought to get a declaration of friendship between France and Germany down in black and white but, as soon as it was signed in Paris, the French Government consulted with the British

<sup>1</sup> What Wheeler-Bennett (p. 434) relying on Gisevius (ii, 86: cf. *IMT*, xii, 243) says about alleged new 'putsch' plans seems to me extremely dubious. The March action took the conspirators by surprise. They had no hint of it except in what Hitler had said to the Generals on December 17th.

<sup>2</sup> In *LJF*, no. 17. *V. BDFP*, passim, and the books by Coulondre and Noël.

how by increased rearmament they could defend the West against an attack by Hitler and came to the shattering conclusion that for the present they could not do so especially against air attack. Nor could they further defend the Czechs except by diplomatic efforts to detach Italy from the Hitler alliance — a hopeless attempt as was quickly shown. The British *chargé d'affaires* in Berlin Ogilvie-Forbes from the beginning of December reported rumours that Hitler was now going to realize the great designs in his *Mein Kampf* and seize 'living-space' in the East, possibly in the Ukraine. At the same time he reported rising discontent and even bitterness in Germany against the tyrant. Never since 1933 had the political disagreement been so great and it had increased since the Jewish massacres. None the less Ogilvie-Forbes was alarmed to hear that 'authoritative circles' in London were reckoning on a revolt of the Opposition in Germany if war broke out. He called this a very dangerous illusion; 'if Hitler decides that war with Britain is necessary, the Germans, extremists and moderates alike, will with their characteristic discipline follow him to a man' and anyone who refused would be quickly and finally dealt with by the S.S. Possibly some hope could be placed in Goering's love of peace; he is *the* rallying point for the moderates of the Party. But in the last instance he too is devoted to Hitler; he will never take action against his Fuehrer.

This clever and sober diplomatist could only come to the sad conclusion that the days when Britain played the part of 'the policeman of Europe' were over; the Pax Britannica was no longer esteemed in Central Europe. It remained now only to avoid giving guarantees to East European states which could not be fulfilled and try to maintain good relations — with Goering and the 'moderate Nazis'.

It is against this background of general helplessness and anguished inactivity that one must look at Goerdeler's plans for a European alliance to resist Hitler. He could not abide waiting and doing nothing and his belief in the victory of reason was unshakeable. Untiringly he sought ways out of the dangerous situation — and sometimes hit on plans that were sheer fantasy.

As media for his political advice in Britain and America he had the men who had helped him in 1937-8 — Dr Reinhold Schairer, his American friend Spencer Miller, the British industrialist A. P. Young and a few others. Schairer and Miller were devoted admirers of his, always ready to help but without any political influence and without any practical acquaintance with the business of politics.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Much of the following comes from Schairer's letters (October–November 1938) which I have read and from oral communications from Schairer and Gisevius to whom I express my thanks.

Goerdeler may sometimes have felt that with such helpers he had not much chance of achieving anything of real value. At any rate he had for some time been playing with the idea of emigrating with his family, preferably to America. To help him to do so, British friends with the help of Bosch collected a handsome sum. It would be his role to be political counsellor and warner abroad. There was also a plan for the creation of a German 'government in exile' from the emigrants under his leadership. He must long have had the feeling that he was called to form a new and better German Government. But that it could not be done in this way he soon realized; on October 20th after a long telephone conversation from Switzerland he wrote Schairer to say that he would try all *other* ways.

The first way was to work on foreign politicians through memoranda sent to Britain and to the United States. As always he wrote impatiently. One sent on October 19th he calls 'the last effort at European co-operation with British friends'. If Britain does not make up her mind 'by the end of the year' to make a move, there will be nothing for a German patriot to do but to 'desert the latent forces of good in his own country'. . . . 'France can be written off.' He himself must 'leap on the bridge and try to influence the course to be taken'. What did he mean here? According to the recollections of his friends of that time nothing else than the reckless design with the help, perhaps, of Goering or Schacht to get into some official position (possibly that of Commissioner of Exchange) and there 'working in the Talleyrand manner', that is, help to secure the peace of Europe by systematic sabotage of Hitler's war plans.<sup>1</sup>

This can have been nothing more than a momentary fantasy: certainly no one was less fitted than Goerdeler for following in Talleyrand's footsteps, for he had no subtlety in him. But it shows the feverish energy with which he sought any chance of action. To be taken more seriously is the great 'peace programme' which he sent to his American friends in the winter of 1938-9 and whose main planks crop up again in many of his writings during the war.

Only part of his memoranda of that time seems to have survived. The first which went to America<sup>2</sup> develops his old liberal economic ideas, and the resultant bases of his social policy which he built not on the idea of freedom so much as on the differences in human capacity, a policy favouring equally town and country and finally the conception of a constitutional state tolerant and respectful of the individual. On such foundations the community of nations should be based but not as in the League of Nations on the principle that all

<sup>1</sup> Krause, p. 62 (letter of October 11th).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p. 47 sq.

nations should be members without distinction but those only who agreed to maintain a liberal society and institution. 'Between gentlemen and gangsters collaboration is simply impossible.' A reasonable world order needed 'in this age the protection of the sword against the strength of disorder and wickedness'. Where could such a sword be found? How could 'the minds and souls all over the world be set clear aims and tasks'. The world, and particularly its younger generations, sought solution in Bolshevisms, Marxisms and Fascisms of all kinds. It wanted justice, peace and purposeful creative work. Could it but be rallied and led, then it would at trifling cost succeed in creating a new and enduring system of peace. If it failed, then the world was condemned to endless rearmament and 'with clear moral purpose' suffer a future in which the over tension of nerves would lead in every land, even the Anglo-Saxon ones, to internal revolution; the British Empire would collapse and the dominance of the white races be in mortal danger.

Here is, in fact, a sort of crusade against totalitarianism — but not proclaimed as such. His argument concerns only the extension of the peace system which should have been established at Munich, which could not be extended by what today is called 'cold war'. At a 'pre-conference' of the Powers it should be ascertained what nations were prepared to adhere to the programme, establish within their own bounds constitutional rule, balance their public finances, respect 'the generally accepted moral order' in dealings with other nations and accept a limit to and order a reduction in armaments. Only a nation accepting all this could think in terms of 'just solutions of existing quarrels and differences', i.e. on further revision of frontiers. Whoever rejects the idea of co-operation on these bases desires war and is a murderer of peace. On the result of this pre-conference war and peace depend.

In his draft Goerdeler goes on: 'All this must be done in full sight of the peoples — published notes, radio, press, parliaments'. His own conception is clear; to all the world, but especially to the German people, it should be made crystal clear who wanted peace and order and who was destroying both. The 'peace powers' as he often called them, should oppose to the programme of expansion by force of arms such as the Fascist states proclaimed, a noble programme — a lasting peace of justice, the welfare of all, assured freedom for the individual and a freer economy. It should seek to win for it youth all over the world, including German youth, instead of obstinately remaining on a timid defensive. The plans for a rising in Berlin had been based on the popular fear of war and had failed. Now Goerdeler planned by other means to unmask the 'admired Fuehrer' as a

tyrant and wrecker of peace. It should be made clear to the German people that the free world of the West did not oppose Hitler out of blind hostility to or hatred of Germany, but for nobler reasons and ends, for the ideal of freedom which no less brutally than by Bolshevism was oppressed by Fascism. Can anyone read this without seeing that in this idea there was something of magnificent promise for the future? And have not some at least of the sad prophecies Goerdeler made of the evil that would befall us if these plans were not carried out, come true?

Goerdeler's hope was to be able to brand Hitler publicly as the great war-monger. He thought in terms of a sort of ultimatum: either give up the policy of aggression and establish internally a constitutional state or be shown up as the peace-breaker. At one moment the great Jewish persecution of November 1938 seemed a suitable occasion; later it was the rape of Prague which might shock the West into action. What he failed to see was the inadequacy of the Western military forces and especially the decline in France's fighting capacities and will to power; here he may have been misled by his military advisers, particularly Beck. On the other hand he over-estimated the significance of the economic difficulties and the lack of resistance potential in Germany for Hitler's war-plans. Thus he made the false prophecy of 'a short war'. But it must be admitted that he hoped to make it short by internal revolts. And as a patriot he, like all politicians, wanted to be able to go before his people not with empty hands but with plans for a great future.

Hitler's brutal invasion of the 'rump' of Czechoslovakia (March 15-16, 1939) and the occupation of Prague created a completely new atmosphere for planning for the future. The incalculable significance of that event could not be missed by any politician of insight: it had on many the effect of a signal of inevitable war. It is possible that the great mass of the undiscerning were again full of gaping amazement at this new and easy triumph of the Fuehrer with whom everything went well, without any more apparent effect on other nations than the production of paper protests. But those who lived through these events remember that many of those who applauded uneasily felt that there was not only excess of good luck but of recklessness and mendacity. The September speech in the Sportspalast — 'I do not want a single Czech' — and the fervent assurance that the last territorial aim had now been realized still echoed clearly in their ears. No propaganda could obscure the fact that on March 15th President Hacha had been under brutal pressure, and so there could no longer be any doubt that abroad the very last shred of confidence in the word

of the Fuehrer had been destroyed. The true nature of the Hitler way of life was exposed in all its nakedness as a demonic force of insensate will to power and conquest.

The shock to the Western cabinets, and especially to British policy, is well known.<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's first feeble attempt to exculpate his failure to act by referring to the 'dissolution of the Czech state as its own act' provoked a storm of protest in Britain. Even for the Munich appeasers there could be no doubt that at whatever cost the course must be completely altered. Now this evil man of violence should be allowed to take no further step to the enslavement of Europe; the German Opposition need no longer give advice to 'stand firm'.

That naturally was not at first obvious to its leaders who after last year's experience did not trust even now the Anglo-French will to resist. The first of them to be spurred to action by the events of Prague was once again Carl Goerdeler. At once he redoubled his feverish efforts to get Paris, London, if possible Washington and even Rome to listen to his plans for Europe. He developed these in another series of memoranda.

Their content was the plans of October–November 1938 of which we already know. But now they were urged with tremendous feeling 'To free the world from its present paralysis the spell of Hitler must be broken by the weight of stronger forces': 'What millions today lack is a great ideal for which they can live and work': 'Enthusiasm, that inner life-force, comes only from the determination to go along with the millions in other lands for such an ideal and devote all one's powers to its realization'. The aim is to create a new European community founded by free consent and later incorporated in a world community of a reformed League of Nations. France and Britain had since 1936 made great sacrifices to preserve the peace of Europe, not, as Hitler thought, out of weakness but from a desire for an understanding with Germany. The German people ought to be told that in 1937 the French thrice and the British once had made 'comprehensive official peace proposals and even offered the return of the colonies if Hitler would pledge himself to peace. He never once gave them an answer.' He must now be branded as the great destroyer of peace and the German people asked 'to decide between him and the peaceful Powers'. Hitler was incapable of understanding the meaning of the new league of peoples. Mussolini, too, by breaking treaties had shown himself unworthy of trust. 'In future Britain and France should not appeal for peace to other powers but themselves demand it': 'If the dictators tip the scales in favour of the use of

<sup>1</sup> V. Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich*, p. 352, for a full account of the effects of Prague.

force then the Powers in the peace front should hit them at their weakest point, the Mediterranean. Once the Axis is broken the German people will quickly rid themselves of their tyrant.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that at this juncture Goerdeler was in no position to think in terms of an internal rising. He could only hope that, as a result of Western intervention, the perniciousness of the Hitler régime would become visible to the German people especially if Fascism in Italy was overthrown. He hoped to further such a development. One of the most notable products of his restless pen is a short memorandum dated March 23rd directed to the Pope. It claimed that the fall of Hitler and Mussolini, the pillars of totalitarianism, was in the pressing interest of the Christian Churches. He therefore proposed that under Papal leadership, the Churches should proclaim that 'the world can have a truly just, happy and permanent peace' if they can get rid of these despots. For this the export to them of all raw materials which could be misused for military purposes should be banned — a measure which could only be carried out if such materials were bought from the present purveyors and kept under bond until peace was assured. Mussolini should now get no concessions of any kind from the 'Peace Powers' and the King of Italy and the Crown Prince should be told that all that was 'necessary for life' would be delivered to them if they parted company with the Duce. Should this actually happen then, 'in this year even, the world would reap the harvest of a true peace. Then, too, the otherwise unavoidable method of pressure, the appeal to Russia for help, would be unnecessary.'

Was this memorandum, so notably reinforced by the deeply religious language in which it was cast, ever sent and did it reach the quarters to which it was addressed? In it Pius XII was described as a 'son of the Italian people' which shows how wrongly the author judged the political position of the Papacy. But in it we are not dealing with matter-of-fact considerations of 'Realpolitik' but with the desperate efforts of a man consumed with intolerable longing to find anywhere a helping hand which at the last moment would save his country and the world from the horrors of another war. At such a time men clutch at any blade of straw.

Goerdeler did not press his proposals only on the Pope. Another memorandum addressed to British and French readers was more concrete.<sup>2</sup> It recommended that all relations with Hitler should be broken off and that the British and French ambassadors in Berlin

<sup>1</sup> From a twenty-one page typescript headed: 'The Next Practical Steps'.

<sup>2</sup> Three-page typescript without date or title: a date in April is likely if the reference to Mussolini was inspired by the Fascist attack on Albania (April 7, 1939).

should not return to their posts until a state of peace had been achieved. There should be no congratulations to the Fuehrer on his 50th birthday (April 20th). Above all the plan of cutting off supplies of raw materials, if possible, from South America and the United States should be carried out to convince business circles in Germany of the nature of the abyss into which Hitler was plunging them. The boycott should be carried through calmly and without the noise of propaganda in contrast to the 'sanction' against Italy at the time of the Ethiopian war which had failed so dismally. It would be useless to seek any sort of understanding with Mussolini; no trust could be placed on him and the nature of the Fascist system compelled him to imperialist adventures. If, however, a rift between him and his people could be made, he would be in no position to make war but would have to content himself with threatening violence.

If he tried a 'desperate blow' against the West then it was probable, almost certain, that the responsible elements in Germany would prevent Hitler standing by him in so senseless a war. It would need only a relatively simple and short operation to 'free the Mediterranean from Mussolini's piracy'. 'Properly conducted policy based on these proposals would so far as human judgement could tell, free the world this year from its intolerable sense of insecurity and give it a true peace.'

It would seem that he expected a quick change in the situation and so was earnestly considering what the foreign policy of a new German Government should be. He took considerable pains to work out a programme<sup>1</sup> designed to inspire confidence in London, Paris and Washington in a government composed of men of the Opposition with himself at the head of it.

He proposed first to build up a close co-operation between Britain, France and Germany as the keystone of a new league of European states and to conclude treaties which should provide as follows:

1. In order to remove the last tension resulting from the Versailles settlement, the question of the Polish Corridor should be solved by a peaceful compromise between German and Polish interests. Germany should receive as 'great and potentially capable of development colonial domain overseas as was possible' and 'as soon as possible'. There should be provision for German emigration to British and French colonies.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Five-page typescript without title or date: there is added a draft for an introduction in his own handwriting and many corrections, also an English translation.

<sup>2</sup> A proposal was added that the three powers should prevent the 'de-Germanizing' of South Tirol.



2. To confirm the restoration of the rule of law in Europe, Czechoslovakia within the frontiers agreed upon at Munich, should be restored as an independent state, but should be neutralized and its new status internationally guaranteed. Germany would declare that she had no intention of establishing a political hegemony in South East Europe. The independence of the states of Europe would be guaranteed except in so far as it was considered reasonable to impose certain limitations on their sovereignty. Conditions of trade would be the same for all nations though that would not exclude the conclusion of trade or tariff treaties between states and groups of states. 'Because of its history Germany must always have special interest in the approaches to her eastern frontiers. This must be expressed in terms of a reasonable balance of power.' (By this is meant recognition of the right to independent defence against Polish and Russian aggression.) Germany would guarantee the present legal frontiers in the Mediterranean and for ten years make the guarantee a military one.

3. The offer here of German military help to the Western powers would be extended by a German declaration of her readiness to co-operate 'by all appropriate means' to restore fully the economic position of the West in the Far East. Military help would be given provided that the Corridor question had been cleared up and the financing of such an enterprise was assured.

4. Germany would receive a loan of four to six milliards in gold for the protection of her currency without interest but with a two per cent repayment obligation. All the member states would be pledged to balance their budgets so that the currency system remained undisturbed. A standstill in armaments would serve the same purpose. A disarmament convention providing for international control would be at once prepared. If the attitude of other powers, Italy, for instance, or Japan, justified rearmament, an agreement of the allied governments would have to be obtained before embarking on it.

This triple alliance would be extended by the adhesion of other states to a European 'league of nations' and then to a 'working partnership of all peoples' on condition that every new member should undertake certain obligations in the spirit of the new peace order. 'The European league of nations should make war impossible through co-operation on a voluntary basis.' This 'working community' would supersede the present League of Nations. Without any provisions for compulsion it should act as a court for the settlement of political and economic cases and could, if the parties desired, exercise powers of arbitration and decision and in special cases of need give help. Among the fundamental principles of liberalism political and economic, which the members should guard and nourish,

is that of the confinement of the activity of the state to the purely political domain with complete freedom for the spiritual and intellectual life.

This is notable as the first attempt emanating from the German Opposition to develop its own comprehensive programme for German foreign policy. It has of late<sup>1</sup> been made a reproach to the Opposition that, in the spring and summer of 1939, they showed themselves to be typical German nationalists and pursued only a single aim, the downfall of Hitler, but desired to retain for Germany his heritage, that is, the gains his policy had won. The reader must judge for himself if, or how far, this is true of Goerdeler. That he was a German patriot who desired the best for Germany and not her humiliation seems as clear to me as that he thought of the Reich of the future not as the eternal plague and tyrant of Europe but as a genuine peace Power embedded in a European community of a co-operative character.

It is not certain how he got his programme to London and Paris. Gisevius speaks of a meeting with Schairer in Ouchy shortly after the events of Prague at which Schacht was present. The latter had been dismissed as President of the Reichsbank and was then staying in Switzerland;<sup>2</sup> his dismissal had finally cured him of the illusion that the Hitler Government could be influenced and its course changed. It was a memorandum warning the government of the limitless rise in expenditure on armaments which had led to his fall and he believed now that a speedy devaluation of Germany currency was unavoidable. Friends urged him, as he himself told me, to use the foreign travel which Hitler had authorized to try to stiffen the British Government's attitude and to tell the world what was the true situation in Germany. Schairer had great expectations of an open propaganda campaign against the Hitler régime which after their emigration both Goerdeler and Schacht should launch from Britain. Schacht received these plans coldly and was very critical of Goerdeler's illusions and his London go-betweens and said that the next item on his own programme was a voyage to India. Goerdeler's opinion that neither the German economy nor the Army could undertake great military enterprises and that, if war came, the Nazi rule would quickly collapse, he did not share. Particularly he did not wish such opinions to be conveyed to London and Paris, but, on the contrary, thought it necessary to warn them of the rapidly increasing strength of the German forces. Western diplomacy should be told

<sup>1</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, p. 442.

<sup>2</sup> V. Schacht, *Abrechnung mit Hitler*, p. 20; Gisevius, ii, 98 sq: the latter and Schairer supplied me with further details.

what danger it ran by waiting longer. They did not reach agreement on this point but did agree that other countries should be warned of the boundless ambition and will to conquest of the Dictator.

Schairer returned to London with this mission.<sup>1</sup> According to what Gisevius said in the witness box in Nuremberg, his principal bit of information to the Western powers was that 'the Danzig conflict would begin in autumn at the very latest' and that Hitler really cared nothing for Danzig, but aimed at all Poland and then the Ukraine. The West, therefore, should not enter into negotiations on

<sup>1</sup> According to a letter he sent me, Schairer was also entrusted with preparing the way for an eventual German 'emigration'. Gisevius (ii, 100: cf. *IMT*, xii, 244) says that the 'go-between', i.e. Schairer, had conveyed abroad Goerdeler's pessimistic 'prognoses' and that he saw Daladier. Schairer assures me (1) that he always protested against Goerdeler's inclination to paint abroad a dark picture of the weakness of the Hitler Reich and (2) that he never saw Daladier. The document found in 1940 among Daladier's papers by the German Intelligence to which Gisevius alludes is probably of Dutch origin.

It may be that a document in English found among Goerdeler's papers (six-page typescript undated and without title) is an echo of the Ouchy talks. It is a collection of news items dealing with Germany's unpreparedness for war which is grossly exaggerated. The armaments industry, it is said, is now terribly overburdened, the railways on the verge of collapse, food supplies dwindling and the lack of fuel for (the allegedly over motorized) Army and Air Force is catastrophic. There are tales of sabotage in the Air Force, of intentions to start passive resistance in certain Army units and of the existence of active opposition groups among the younger officers. A high ranking officer had spoken very pessimistically to Hitler about the prospects of a war; the 'highest military authority' had been extremely critical of Italy's armed forces. 'Four weeks ago' Hitler had addressed 500 young officers and had told them his intention of striking a blow at Britain very soon and so creating a German world-empire in his own lifetime. On the other hand, on January 24th he gave the Finance Minister Schwerin-Krosigk who after Schacht's departure had offered his resignation, his word of honour that there would be no war in the next five years. 'The Army' was convinced Hitler would yield and would not risk 'a greater war'. The generals had been completely surprised at the events of March. Up to now they had no belief that the Western powers would intervene. Now they waited anxiously to see if the eyes of Western statesmen were opened at last. Should they show it by action — recall of ambassadors, breaking off all personal contacts and using plain and aggressive language, such a proof of Hitler's 'failure' would have 'decisive consequences'. What consequences is not explained. There is no suggestion of Western action against Italy but it is said that Mussolini has lost all influence in Berlin.

No definite political prospect is opened in this document and no definite political demand is made. Although some of the items may well derive from Goerdeler (e.g. about Schwerin's audience with Hitler which is similarly described in his memoirs) the document is not in Goerdeler's manner which is invariably definite. I cannot believe he ever wanted to pass on to anybody abroad such a mass of un-sifted material. There is in it nothing about Hitler's designs on Poland and the Ukraine; instead there is only vague allusion to his desire for Hungarian wheat and Rumanian oil. It cannot be the document which Gisevius says got to Daladier.

Danzig but postpone a solution of the Corridor question to a more favourable future. Schacht spoke in a similar vein to Montagu Norman whom he met in Bâle.

It hardly makes this report credible when one finds in Goerdeler's memoranda at this time not a word of Hitler's designs on Poland, and one gets the impression that their author had not discovered the Dictator's next concrete objective. It may be that we have here a case of faulty memory. Goerdeler, I am certain however, was convinced of the necessity of something happening to arouse British policy and he was right in thinking that the military defeatism in London and Paris was a danger to Europe; it is clear from what we know today that Hitler's military strength was as grossly overestimated as was the will to war of the German General Staff and the ability of France to wage a war, in spite of a widespread and efficient espionage service and of the many reports of the military attachés, which were the work of experts. Odd information from private persons which could not be checked especially when in it there was detected political bias, could not alter this situation. And finally it was seen that Chamberlain was no longer prevented by anxiety over the military position from doing all he could do at the moment, i.e. without sufficient military strength, to check Hitler's policy of conquest. He did not do as Goerdeler suggested, break off diplomatic relations with either Rome and Berlin or confront them with a threat of war amounting almost to an ultimatum. But he did offer help to the threatened nations in Eastern Europe, help that was far beyond Britain's means to give; he speeded up rearmament and with greater success than the French especially in the air.

What most surprised people was his declaration on March 31st to the House of Commons formally offering the Poles the support of the West should they find it necessary to defend themselves against aggression. It was thus that — and in British experience this was something unheard of — the decision whether Britain should or should not be involved in a war on the Continent was placed in the hands of a Continental state and one that was anything but strong. For this decision which appreciably stiffened Poland's attitude on the Corridor question, joint responsibility has been ascribed to the German Opposition. Through their counsels, through their references to a generals' opposition, their revelation of the German military deficiencies and the straits in which the German economy now was, they gave the hesitating British Prime Minister courage to take this fateful decision; as a result the negotiations which Ribbentrop on Hitler's instructions had begun with the Poles and which aimed at a peaceful solution of the Corridor question failed and so a further

dispute between two neighbours became a world conflict entailing all the misery of a second world war.

Is this correct? First it should be stated that the British Government at no time tried to prevent a peaceful solution through a Polish-German compromise; on the contrary, up to the last minute, it strove by diplomatic means to get such a compromise. If it did not show that firmness which was necessary to put a brake on Polish folly, that may be ascribed to remembrance of the sad results of bringing hard pressure to bear on Benes. It could not urge the Poles to make themselves Hitler's vassals, especially as it was known to it that, in his proposals for a settlement, Ribbentrop had let it be seen that Hitler wanted a German-Polish alliance for a joint campaign against Bolshevik Russia with the conquest of the Ukraine as its aim. Halifax and Chamberlain, in agreement with France, constantly urged in Warsaw that the dispute be settled peacefully. Was however, Chamberlain's declaration of March 31st the cause of Polish stubbornness? One might believe so if at any moment in the negotiations which began in October 1938, one could see the slightest sign of any readiness on the part of the Polish Government seriously to reach agreement with Germany. Long before the events of Prague it had maintained its attitude of cool refusal, blindly miscalculating the real relative strength of the two nations and as blindly ignoring the real position that Danzig had for long been in the power of National Socialism and for Poland was now only a source of danger. It showed the same pigheadedness after Prague. A renewed offer by Ribbentrop towards an understanding on March 21st was promptly rejected. This was the same blindness which, during the Czech crisis, had driven the French statesmen to despair; instead of combining with France to prevent the German advance into Bohemia, the Poles had no intention of playing anything but 'the jackal's part' and sharing in the plundering of the defenceless victim.

It was not concern about Poland or about the Corridor that drove British policy to its new action, but its fear of the limitless expansion of Hitler's Reich into the East — especially into the Balkans. The day after the rape of Prague, a cry of help from the Rumanian minister in London gave the impetus to action; he asserted that Germany was using pressure to compel Rumania to give her the monopoly of oil exports.<sup>1</sup> This news at once raised the spectre of a German attack on the Balkans with hegemony over all South Eastern Europe as the objective, a prospect intolerable to the Power that ruled the Mediterranean. Halifax who had been very active since the events of Prague, on March 20th proposed that France, Russia and Poland

<sup>1</sup> The desired treaty was signed on March 23rd.

together with Britain should declare that they were determined in conjunction to resist any threat to the independence of any European states; two days later he had France's agreement. At a joint meeting of ministers in London on March 22nd, it emerged that Bonnet had had an alarm call from Russian diplomacy, that he had taken soundings in Washington and had asked for diplomatic support; further, that both powers were determined not to remain passive in the event of a German aggression in Europe either against Poland or Jugoslavia or Rumania or against Switzerland or Holland. Negotiations must begin at once to encourage to resistance the states Hitler threatened. Britain, it was stated, had been able to get active Turkish support for her policy. Halifax feared that it was no longer a question of discussing whether they were in a position to give effective help to Poland or Rumania, but simply whether there was prospect of waging an ultimately successful war with Germany, that is, whether Britain and France could in the long run so damage Germany that a halt once and for all would be made to her policy of conquest. There was little hope of saving Europe if the Nazis remained in power. But there were indications that, if Hitler involved Germany in war, there would at once be internal difficulties which would be dangerous to the régime. The same held good for Mussolini and Italy.<sup>1</sup>

Can we conclude from this that information from the German Opposition had influenced British policy? Hitler's bitterest enemies were not now counting on a military 'putsch' and were even ceasing to see any prospect of one. The Ouchy conversation must have taken place roughly at the same time as Halifax talked with Bonnet. No fresh information was needed to tell Halifax that no one in Germany, Hitler excepted and possibly his most intimate associates, wanted a war of adventure, and that, if he provoked a war which put Germany in difficulties, his régime would be in danger. This view, or rather this hope, has been awakened by every tyrant in the minds of his enemies. What had inspired in London this passionate will to resist was certainly not the German Opposition; it was nothing and no one but Hitler himself.

Britain's offer of aid to Poland was not due to German inspiration direct or indirect. The plan of March 21st for a four-power declaration fell through, although Russia was ready to join in making it. But both Bonnet and Litvinov made Poland's agreement an essential condition and Poland refused. To appear arm-in-arm on the diplomatic stage with the Bolshevists who were also feared as allies seemed likely to draw down Hitler's attack. Col. Beck sought a secret alliance with Britain to complement the alliance with France. The Western

<sup>1</sup> *DBFP*, iii, 4, nos. 389 and 438.

Powers were not disposed to go so far; instead they agreed on a public offer of aid to Poland and Rumania but on the strict condition that Germany preferred to use force rather than reach a compromise agreement. On March 27th, the offer was formally made by London to Warsaw; the British Government declared its readiness to come with France to Poland's help if Germany threatened Poland's independence either by a military attack or, as in the Czech case, by sabotage. Poland gave a similar promise should Hitler attack Rumania or the Western states. Only Bonnet's agreement was awaited and this came on the 29th; on that day the bargain was sealed and Chamberlain revealed the contents of the agreement to the House of Commons which approved it, on the 31st.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that German advice played no part in this diplomatic action, nor did information from Germany on Hitler's intentions shortly to attack Poland which, through a British foreign correspondent, Ian Colvin, filtered through to Chamberlain on the 29th or 30th.<sup>2</sup> Of such a plan the Opposition group cannot have known, for it was not yet made.<sup>3</sup> Nor did the correspondent reach London before the Halifax policy had been accepted.

But during the summer a series of messages from the Opposition arrived in London. Goerdeler too who had in April been in France and Algeria, arrived there in May<sup>4</sup> and was received by Churchill. One of those present told me what was said then. Goerdeler had much to say about the Opposition groups, especially about those in the services, but omitted to make demands on British policy in event of a revolution, which is the more extraordinary when we remember his detailed programme for European peace. No practical result emerged from this meeting except evidence that Churchill was more interested in the existence of a German Opposition than were other British politicians. In the previous year he had received Kleist and now received his friend Fabian von Schlabrendorff and listened to his report on conditions in Germany. He also discussed things with Bruening who had returned from the United States to London in April. Two young diplomats — Adam von Trott zu Solz and Count Helmut von Moltke also came to Britain. Both had intimate British friends, the first as a former Rhodes scholar at Oxford, the other as

<sup>1</sup> *BDFP*, iii, 4 nos. 465, 479, 485, 529, 538, 558, 564.

<sup>2</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, p. 437, based on Colvin's account; the latter tells us nothing of this in his life of Canaris. Beck, Oster and Kleist are named as the Germans behind Colvin. Colvin spoke with Cadogan, Halifax and Chamberlain.

<sup>3</sup> In his conversation with Brauchitsch on March 25th, Hitler expressly said that he was not thinking of a solution by force of the Danzig question for that would drive Poland into Britain's arms (cf. *IMT*, 38, Doc. R.100).

<sup>4</sup> And not in June and July as Wheeler-Bennett thinks (p. 441).

half-English by birth and as a former member of the English Bar. They did their best to make their visits fruitful in the Opposition sense.<sup>1</sup>

They had nothing to say other than what had been said the year before. Now there was no army movement ready for action such as had then only awaited the outbreak of war to free Germany of her tyrant. Schlabrendorff was asked by Churchill if he could guarantee the success of Opposition action and had to say that he could not. Chamberlain's statement on March 31st had thrown Hitler into paroxysms of rage and from now on he thought only of making the British pay for trying to cross his will. Canaris told how he beat his fists on the table and cried, 'Now I'll make for them a devil's brew'.<sup>2</sup> He had in fact already ordered military preparations for 'a final reckoning' with Poland to be completed by September 1st.<sup>3</sup> For the moment he thought in terms of 'an isolated war'. Since May he had been hesitating whether to embark on it before or after a reckoning with the West. Of a 'repetition of the Czech business' that is, of a Western failure to act if he conquered East European territory, he was no longer certain as he explained to the heads of the services in the notorious address of May 23rd. But he added the very characteristic remark that it was not policy that had to be adjusted to circumstances, but circumstances to policy. He now regarded Britain as an enemy with whom he would one day have 'to come to grips for life or death'. The only question now was how to avoid a war on two fronts — by first overthrowing Poland, and then the West or vice versa. He delayed all summer before he struck simply to try to solve that problem. His busy manoeuvres<sup>4</sup> aimed at isolating Poland by concluding non-aggression pacts with as many of her neighbours as he could, at strengthening his own striking power by concluding the 'pact of steel' with Italy, at lessening British vigilance by all sorts of offers of friendship, at trying to separate Britain and France and finally at befooling the Western states by making a pact with Stalin; he would thus scare them from intervening and make Polish resistance hopeless. The objective of expansion eastwards was set plainly before the generals on May 23rd but as his address that day concluded with the order to postpone the completion of the rearmament programme to 1943, what he said appeared to his hearers — as Brauchitsch said in Nuremberg — to be rhetoric rather than the announcement of action in the immediate future. The anxiety which Halder and in the end

<sup>1</sup> Schlabrendorff, p. 52; Pechel, p. 153; Wheeler-Bennett, p. 442.

<sup>2</sup> Gisevius, ii, 124.

<sup>3</sup> *IMT*, Doc. 120C.

<sup>4</sup> *V.* the excellent account in Alan Bullock, *Hitler*, p. 472 sq.



Brauchitsch had felt in 1938 about the possibility of a disastrous war on two fronts, he sought now to disperse finally. 'Our success in isolating Poland is complete; there is now no possibility of simultaneous war with the West.'

In such circumstances there was no possibilities for a 'putsch'. On the contrary, the new British policy of promising help to every state likely to be threatened by Hitler and its attempt to get a war-alliance with Poland made it easy for Hitler's propaganda to talk of 'British attempts at encirclement'. The result was a feeling of hostility to Britain in Germany which politically reduced the chances of an internal revolution. What advice could members of the Opposition give to Britain now?

It appears that they did utter warnings that the giving of a sort of 'blank cheque' would over-encourage the Poles and strengthen their objections to making concessions in the Corridor dispute.<sup>1</sup> It was to the Foreign Office group especially, which had close relations with its head, Weizsaecker, that the new activity of British diplomacy caused concern; it would, the State Secretary feared, drive Hitler to violent action particularly as it accompanied its diplomatic steps by a violent anti-German press campaign instead of working quietly and confidentially. With Weizsaecker's approval, both the Kordts had talks with Vansittart who, because he was no longer in his old position in the Foreign Office, was more accessible to Opposition visitors. Their criticisms of British diplomacy were not welcomed. During the Nuremberg trial, Vansittart reproached them with favouring a German eastward expansion. The suspicion he had once before expressed to Goerdeler that 'these Opposition people' were just as imperialist as their Nazi enemies was no doubt confirmed. It is possible that the manner in which they criticized could occasion such suppositions; they may have gone beyond Weizsaecker's reproach that the guarantee to Poland was for Hitler a provocation to aggression and spoken of German claims to a revision of the eastern frontier in the somewhat enigmatic way in which Weizsaecker's subordinates liked to speak, as representatives apparently on the one hand of German claims and on the other less apparently as oppositionists. But at this moment could they have desired anything but a peace settlement? The year before the hope had been that threatening gestures from the West would have compelled Hitler to accept a peaceful settlement of the Sudeten question; if they failed to do so,

<sup>1</sup> Trott and Moltke spoke in this sense (Wheeler-Bennett, p. 442); for the sequel v. Kordt, pp. 313 *sq.*, 336. Kordt unfortunately gives no date for his talk with Vansittart; v. Vansittart's Nuremberg statement, no. G3786 and 7586A; Halifax's declaration and Weizsaecker's defence, Doc. 496/7.

he could have been branded as the irresponsible author of a second world war. Today those with inside knowledge were aware that he would not be shaken by threats of war nor shrink from a struggle with the West. He might even be able to represent the planned war of conquest as an undertaking to defend what was popularly regarded as 'a vital national interest'. The value which Hitler himself attached to have at the last minute before war a good case to prove to the nation his desire for a reasonable compromise, was seen by the fact that only on the night of August 30th-31st did he allow Ribbentrop to present a 16-point agreement and at the same time declared it to be out of date and, by setting so short a time limit, made it virtually unacceptable. If British policy had not waited till this last moment to press Warsaw with the utmost energy to be ready to negotiate, and if the Poles had shown less intractability, Hitler would have found it difficult to make the inevitability of war credible. But the German Opposition could take no other line even if they, like everyone else, knew that Hitler would use a concession as the prelude to further extortion. At the best, they could only hope to delay war by negotiation.

Now everything turned on whether the strongest trump could be dashed from the hand of this daring gambler — the alliance with Russia. The German Opposition had early warned London of a Russo-German *rapprochement*. In May<sup>1</sup> Goerdeler had given a warning based on information supplied him by his military friends; later Erich Kordt had repeated it in talks with Vansittart and in August his brother Theodor had done the same; Schlabrendorff had later in the month given it again in a talk with Lloyd. The news can hardly have taken the Foreign Office by surprise for like Paris it was well-informed; the first hints of a coming 'Fourth Partition' of Poland had come from Moscow in the autumn of 1938 and the warning had been several times repeated.<sup>2</sup> Yet in London that August it was still hoped that it was the West which would reach agreement with Stalin and the German warnings were treated with great reserve. 'Keep calm' said Vansittart to Erich Kordt, 'it is *we* who will sign an agreement with Russia'. He may have really believed that. Litvinov, the Russian Foreign Minister, showed readiness to accept the British proposals for the preservation of Eastern Europe; even his successor Molotov, up to the middle of August, sought to calm the fears of the West that their negotiations might fail. Finally it seemed almost incredible that the deadly enmity so loudly proclaimed between National Socialism and Bolshevism should disappear, as it were, overnight.

<sup>1</sup> On the 6th, v. *BDFP*, iii, 5, no. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Bonnet, p. 214.

It was a wrong judgement. Criticism of the Western Powers is valid that, after so many evidences of their own military and political weakness, they took so long to make their belated and hasty proposals for the creation of a protective barrier against Hitler. In Russia in the end the government reckoned in divisions and Britain had only two available and neither motorized. The Russians were also attracted by Hitler's offer of a share in the Polish booty and the Baltic 'sphere of interest'; neither could be got through alliance with the West. From the moment that Hitler declared himself ready to drop temporarily, if not bury, the 'deadly enmity' and offered to share the body of Poland with Stalin, Western diplomacy had no chance at all in Moscow. What attraction for Russia had a bloody encounter for the capitalist West's sake with the strongest military power on the Continent, for the sake of those *bourgeois* governments who had so often shown their despite of the Red Army and the Soviet system, in order to save Poland with which she had old scores to pay off and which was so violently opposed to any alliance with Bolshevism. The reason for the British failure was lack of the material strength with which to compete in Moscow with the German Army.

The Russo-German Pact of August 23rd killed at once any hope of a generals' 'putsch'. Not because, as is today thought in Britain, that most of them were allured, as in Seeckt's time, by the prospect of close alliance with the Red Army, but simply because, not in figures indeed, but in active fighting strength the German Army was the superior. Had the French Army been as ready for and capable of a swift offensive as was the German, France would have had great chances of success while the German Army was involved in its eastern campaign.<sup>1</sup> But no one believed in its offensive spirit and the threat to the Rhine was so diminished that it could no longer be described as a mortal danger to Germany.

There was thus now no conviction in the warnings which the General Staff could utter on the perils of a war on two fronts. Hitler could answer that they had warned him before, but he had always been right. None the less Halder considered the possibility of a military action such as had been planned the year before. But the delay between the political determination to go to war and the actual commencement of hostilities on which he had counted to launch his counteraction had been cut from six days to five and finally shortened to twelve hours. The actual hour of attack was uncertain up to the last moment even in the Chancellery. But above all there was no determined soldier at hand to take action. Witzleben had been moved to Frankfurt; his successor could not be considered. Brockdorff

<sup>1</sup> V. Jodl's evidence at Nuremberg, *IMT*, xv, p. 385.

with whom Halder discussed the matter could not count, popular though he was, of carrying his troops with him. Fromm, commander of the Army of the Interior after a day thinking it over, said he was unable to co-operate. Helldorf, the police president, was immovable despite the efforts of Canaris and Oster.<sup>1</sup>

For his part Goerdeler who had been much abroad seems not to have been very well informed about what was happening inside Germany. A memorandum<sup>2</sup> entitled 'The Situation at the end of July 1939' which he wrote possibly in Turkey disbelieves in the nearness of war and thinks that the world should be warned against peace propaganda on a gigantic scale, starting with the 'Party Day of Peace' announced for September. The non-aggression pacts, too, which the Fuehrer was then busy signing with a number of the smaller states helped him to reach this conclusion; Hitler's aim, as he saw it, was through alluring offers to the individual states to break the united front of his opponents. Goerdeler's main purpose is however to give a detailed account of the cruelties of the Nazi régime especially in the concentration camps in whose horrors the average German refused to believe. For them, Hitler was personally responsible. It was incredible that people abroad could think it possible to come to an understanding with such an inhuman monster. Instead of smoothing his way to power, they should oppose him through a great constructive plan for a new order in Europe. The strong moral forces of the better Germany and of the better Italy, at present too discouraged and defeated by Hitler's foreign political successes, would then rise against the Fascist tyranny. 'With all the resources they have' he wrote, 'the Western statesmen so far have not fought him . . . they have again and again "sanctioned" his deeds'. But even that could not shake Goerdeler's optimism. In the long run he was sure that 'the moral law does not let itself be subdued by tyrants; it will always break out again in amazing strength thanks to the natural feelings and sense of decency of the working masses and individual intellectual and spiritual leaders'. 'Hitler is himself creating the conditions which will bring about his downfall.' Once a breach was made, the world would see with astonishment what powerful forces would emerge to restore law and order in the world.

These were the convictions which carried Goerdeler through the terrible experiences and disillusionments of the war years that were to come. He had no more influence on the events which led to the outbreak of war than any of his friends — Thomas who at the last

<sup>1</sup> V. Halder's statement before the 10th Appeal Court in Munich September 15-21, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Twenty-four-page typescript.

hour sought in vain through a solid memorandum on the economic position to shake Keitel's complete submissiveness to Hitler, or Schacht, who, Gisevius says, intended immediately after the declaration of war to get Halder to ask the High Command to refuse obedience on the ground that a declaration of war without the consent of the Reichstag was unconstitutional.<sup>1</sup> This quite hopeless step was forestalled by the unexpected cancellation of the deployment orders on August 25th. That Oster, prematurely optimistic, thought was a sign that Hitler was not going to risk war as the formal conclusion of the Anglo-Polish Assistance Treaty that day had shown him that the Western powers were ready to fight. Actually it was only his last attempt through offers of friendship to force Britain into neutrality and to deceive the German public on his true intentions by a specious offer to Poland of a peaceful settlement of the Corridor question. On August 31st Weizsaecker was still hoping to start serious negotiations on this sham offer of the '16 points'.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas's notes of 1945, Gisevius, ii, p. 132. I cannot agree with Gisevius's criticism of Brauchitsch and Halder for contesting Schacht's reasoning. So formal a juridical procedure was in this situation and considering the composition of the Reichstag not a basis for a mutiny unprecedented in history. Wheeler-Bennett (pp. 439 *sq.* and 448) not only agrees with Gisevius but reproaches the German generals for having listened without protest at the conference of August 22nd to what Hitler said about the merciless extermination of the whole Polish nation 'man, woman and child'. He does not say that the value of the report (L3) on which he relies seemed so questionable that the Nuremberg tribunal rejected it (*IMT*, ii, p. 320) and did not print it in their collection of documents. Halder who was present and still has his notes says quite definitely that the report is untrue. After the conference with the generals which ended with a lunch, a crowd of Party 'bosses' and S.S. leaders arrived while lunch was in progress. It is most probably that Hitler spoke of his plans and in very much more excited vein and then used such language. According to Halder's diary the Army High Command heard nothing of a 'clean up' on Poland until the end of September.

Document L3 comes from L. P. Lochner's book *What about Germany*, 1942. He has written to me that he had the story from Beck via Hermann Maas and that Beck got it from an unnamed officer. The heading speaks of a speech 'before soldiers'. Who wrote the heading? It could be an error. I would like to suggest that the 'officer' (was it Weidemann or one of Canaris's representatives?) was able to take part in the conference with Party and S.S. leaders. Two conferences with the commanders-in-chief did not take place on August 22nd. On the morning conference there exists documents PS798 (probably Schmundt's transcript) and Raeder 27 (Boehm's copy); neither mention anything about orders to murder. Nor does Doc. PS1014 which is described as the report of 'a second speech of Hitler' to the commanders-in-chief. It does however, speak of 'hearts steeled against pity' and 'brutal measures' which might be a watering down of L3. It seems to me most likely that we have to do here with a toned down account of the *afternoon* meeting. The account in Schlabrendorff, p. 58, of Beck's report of what happened on August 22nd seems of dubious value as a source. Is there not some confusion with the speech of March 17, 1941?

What part Goerdeler played during these last days is not clear. He met Hassell in Berlin on August 14th resolved to do what could yet be done to prevent war. The postponement of the deployment order on the 25th he utilized to fly to Sweden — apparently on business for the Bosch firm.<sup>1</sup> He tried in vain to get into touch with a leading member of the German emigration in Stockholm in order, it seems, to get a permanent connection with Britain even if war broke out.

From its first day he had no doubt that the war was not Germany's, but the personal war for power of a mad adventurer and would-be world conqueror.

<sup>1</sup> Information supplied by his partner. According to his statement to the Gestapo investigation (confirmed to me in Stockholm) Goerdeler had gone to try to save property belonging to the Bosch firm from seizure as enemy property. A second journey with the same purpose was made at the end of October (Hassell, p. 95).

## CHAPTER VII

### *Last Efforts to Avoid the World War*

NO GERMAN who lived through the August days will ever forget the feeling of deep depression which came over the nation when Hitler announced in the Reichstag on September 1st that Germany was at war. What a contrast between the enthusiasm of the volunteers of an earlier day who streamed, by the hundred thousands, to the barracks ready to sacrifice themselves for their threatened Fatherland, and the dull obedience of the masses disciplined by terror into blind mechanical loyalty and also bewildered and bewitched by a militant propaganda, who followed Hitler's flags in 1939. 'This is the end of Fuehrer's order to march. And so thought numberless people throughout the country who since 1936 had followed with rising anxiety the foreign policy of the adventurer whose pact with Stalin had destroyed the last doubt of the frank machiavellianism of his striving after power; now their sons — the cruellest of all political demands — would have to give their lives in an accursed cause. Admittedly it was only later that it was plainly seen that the war was not for Danzig and the Corridor, but for the dreams of conquest of a madman — when the Baltic Germans with their old aristocratic-*bourgeois* culture were driven from their homes and made the victims of a 'resettlement' which Hitler had the insolence to call a 'brilliant solution of the nationalities problem in Eastern Europe', when there came the first rumours from conquered Poland of the shameless maltreatment of the Polish people, of the extermination of the intellectuals, of Polish Jewry and of the priesthood, reports which made the blood of every decent German boil with impotent anger and shame. But the dull feeling that this war of conquest was a senseless gamble with the fate of Germany was widespread from the beginning; nor was there any trace of the so-called 'war enthusiasm'.

Anyone, who like the author lived these first war weeks in the West close behind the 'West Wall', cannot but remember how everyone expected that soon fire would rain from Heaven and the sound of the guns coming nearer would herald the advance of the Anglo-French armies over the Rhine, for that the few indifferently trained

and equipped reserve divisions could hold out against a great enemy offensive appeared, even to their leaders of all grades, highly improbable.<sup>1</sup>

But the miracle happened. All remained still as death on the Western front. No troops stirred to fall on the rear of the armies fighting in Poland; the French Army buried itself in the dugouts of the Maginot Line. No enemy aircraft ventured over Germany, and the effect on those Germans who risked listening to the enemy wireless with its fictitious victories and appeals to the German people, was to amuse or to bore. As everyone had expected, the new Army had gloriously gone through its baptism of fire thanks to the new technique of supporting mass attacks of armour with aircraft. This rapid and brilliant success greatly embarrassed the Opposition. Was there now any possibility of summoning the German people to rise against this man whose optimism had triumphed over all doubters, and who had now added to internal successes a military victory on foreign soil?

It is plain from Hassell's diaries<sup>2</sup> — since the outbreak of war he had been much in contact with Beck, Goerdeler and their friends — how great their perplexity was. In their view the victories in Poland did not alter the fact that Germany was involved in the long run in a hopeless war with the West. The 'advance of Bolshevism on the whole front and right up to our borders' was felt as a threat to European civilization; the uprooting of the Baltic Germans and 'the bestialities of the S.S. in Poland' as a national disgrace. In Goerdeler's case, there was added the fear of slipping into the abyss of a socialist or half-socialist war economy, and he was already making dismal prophecies of a rapid breakdown of the food supply and of the delivery of raw materials, weapons and munitions of war. Within six months, he declared, the pressure would be very great and it would not be possible to hold out for longer than eighteen months. But how to convince the people of the imminence of the danger and of the necessity of a revolution?

To do so was all the more difficult as, after his Eastern victories, the Fuehrer seemed to want to call a halt to conquest and to seek an understanding with the West. His Reichstag speech of October 6th contained indeed no concrete offer of peace, but was simply an appeal

<sup>1</sup> Jodl at Nuremberg *IMT*, xv, p. 285, said that only 23 German divisions faced an Allied superiority of 110. According to Tippleskirch, *Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, 1951, p. 7, says that in 1939 (autumn) Germany had only 52 divisions in the West (on a front of just over 400 m.), 8 active: 23 partly not yet mobilized reserve and territorial divisions. The West Wall was unfinished and in no way impregnable. There were no tanks in the West.

<sup>2</sup> p. 87 sq.



to the West to bring peace by unconditionally recognizing his present gains; this was in effect an invitation to capitulation. But the master demagogue knew how to choose his words so cleverly that the majority of Germans were convinced that it was only the malicious envy and lust of power of Western diplomacy which prevented the conclusion of a lasting peace with disarmament and the final settlement of all the old quarrels between France and Germany. That impression was strengthened by a great press and radio propaganda for peace. Only a very few Germans realized that the Fuehrer had completely exhausted his foreign political credit and that another Munich was impossible, but they did not realize that his innermost feelings were really, jubilation at the inactivity of the French Army which he rightly interpreted as a proof of weakness and at the certainty that he had now his rear covered and could safely launch a great offensive in the West such as he so greatly desired. His one anxiety was lest this situation change and the unnatural alliance with Bolshevism come to an end; and in the background, not yet formulated but never abandoned, there was the farther objective of winning territory for Germany in Russia whenever the Western enemy had been defeated and rendered harmless. This line of thought he had expounded before his Reichstag speech to the Italian Foreign Minister Ciano and, even before Daladier and Chamberlain had time to answer his peace offer, he had laid before his generals (October 9th) the draft of a comprehensive plan of campaign for 'the final finishing off of the West'.<sup>1</sup>

Could anything be done to weaken the effect of Hitler's propaganda? Goerdeler fell back on his old ideas: the West should do something to wrest the peace initiative from Hitler, that is, they should offer Germany the satisfaction of her Eastern claims and free entry to the world economy provided the German Government were prepared to restore Poland 'minus its German districts' and Czechoslovakia within the frontiers agreed to at Munich, to create a constitutional state in Germany and participate in a general disarmament under effective international control, particularly as regards submarines and aircraft. If Hitler agreed, then 'the later development would bring him and us together'. If he refused then 'away with him'. In this connection he did not think in terms of a

<sup>1</sup> *IMT*, xxxvii, p. 466, Doc. L52. Hitler thought an immediate attack on the West necessary before British rearmament was in full swing and while Russia was still a 'spectator' but had no objection to ending the war if all German gains were secured. He read the document to the heads of the Wehrmacht on October 10th (Halder's diary quoted by Wheeler-Bennett, p. 464) and repeated his readiness to make peace in his Sportpalast speech.

military revolt but of a Goering cabinet for the 'transition period', an idea with which Hassell and the Prussian Finance Minister Popitz who had in these weeks for the first time sought contact with the Opposition, agreed. Both of them banked on Goering's well-known inclination to peace and thought a 'putsch' a senseless proceeding.<sup>1</sup>

Goerdeler soon realized that these 'wild plans' were utopian, even impossible. That the corrupt Reichsmarshal could not be relied upon to go against his Fuehrer or that he could not be trusted as head of a 'transition government' had no need of demonstration; Beck had been strongly opposed to any dealings with him. There were weightier considerations. The re-creation of a constitutional state 'must be the work of the Germans themselves'; Goerdeler's tendency to try to mobilize the foreigner for it was in war doubly mistaken. Any intervention from outside would revive fatal memories of Wilson's demand in 1918 for the elimination of the Kaiser. He was, of course, right in hoping that the Anglo-French answer to Hitler's speech would on the one hand make demands so 'moderate' as to appear reasonable to the German people and on the other, make no concessions to a government so unworthy of confidence before the establishment of a new and better order. But how could the Western powers expect to detach any of his gains from Hitler so long as the French sat on the Maginot Line leisurely waiting for him to attack? The only thing Chamberlain could do to encourage the German Opposition he had done. In his answer to Hitler of October 12th, he declared: 'We have no intention of depriving of her rightful place in Europe, a Germany which will live in friendship and confidence with other nations. On the other hand, we believe that there can be no real remedy for the woes of the world if cognizance is not taken of the just claims and needs of all nations.' The British Government looked forward to solutions 'through negotiation and agreement when the time for that came'. 'We did not enter this war from revengeful motives, but only to defend freedom. We seek no material advantage for ourselves. We desire nothing from the German people which would wound their self-respect.' 'I am sure that the peoples of Europe, including the German people, long for peace, for a peace which will enable them to live their lives without fear.' The Prime Minister could hardly have spoken more plainly to make clear his readiness to come to an agreement with a government which represented the will to peace of the majority of the German people.<sup>2</sup>

Hitler's peace appeal was rejected by Daladier and Chamberlain

<sup>1</sup> Hassell, p. 89 (October 11th): for Hassell's efforts to keep in close touch with Goering v. F. R. Emessen, *Aus Goerings Schreibisch*, Berlin 1947, pp. 32 and 71.

<sup>2</sup> Kordt, p. 367; v. also L. B. Namier, *In the Nazi Era*, 1952, p. 84 sq.

(October 10–12). Yet Beck and his friends still believed a diplomatic way could be found of preventing, or at least delaying, the world war. Goerdeler had the fantastic idea of offering himself to the Fuehrer (through Goering) as a go-between to persuade Britain to offer reasonable terms; he was thinking of 'Talleyrand methods'; the British terms should be such as to make Hitler's rejection of them certain; it would then be easier to compass his destruction<sup>1</sup> Schacht whom Gisevius was prodding, was much less 'sanguine'. He wrote on October 16th a letter to his American friend, Frazer, formerly President of the Bank of International Payments, in which he urged that Roosevelt should intervene if necessary privately; it was not answered. At the beginning of November Schacht offered to go himself to America; he hoped to be invited to lecture which would serve as a cloak for his real object in going. The American chargé d'affaires, Kirk, who passed this on to Washington, had ever since the Hitler speech been bombarded with suggestions that Roosevelt should play the part of intermediary; some of these came from the circle closest to Hitler, possibly also from Goering and were clearly a propaganda manoeuvre to demonstrate to neutrals Hitler's desire for peace. In Washington it was conjectured that Schacht was being used for the same purpose just because he was regarded abroad as a member of the Opposition. No objection was raised to his coming to America but any political connection with him was refused. For years the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, had opposed Roosevelt's tendency to play the useless part of mediator between the European powers; with good reason he held a new attempt to be meaningless and even dangerous if it served to lessen the Western haste to rearm.<sup>2</sup>

All plans for peace negotiations were ended by Hitler's decision, communicated to his generals on October 27th, not to wait any longer but to launch the great offensive in the West on November 12th. That decision altered the whole shape of things for the Opposition. The higher officers, not only of the Army but of the Navy and the Air Force including Goering, were unanimous in their opinion that at this November season with the unfavourable weather and ground conditions an offensive through Holland and Belgium was practically out of the question. Over the generals there always hung the spectre of an offensive running itself out in another Marne battle, leading to

<sup>1</sup> The German ambassador in Brussels was told by Goerdeler that Weizsaecker suggested he should try to get Belgian co-operation in a peace effort. V. Weizsaecker, Nuremberg trial Doc. 1727 NG and also Kosthorst, *Die deutsche Opposition gegen Hitler zwischen Polen- und Frankreich-Feldzug*, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, 1948, i, p. 710 sq; v. also pp. 237 and 546, and Hassell, p. 93.

other Verduns, Sommes and Paaschendaeles with their enormous losses. Added to that was the anxiety of the tank experts because of the mud in winter, of the Air Force because of the restricted field of observation in cloudy weather and finally there was overall need in the Army for rest, reorganization, further training, supply and reinforcement of units and replacement of the machines and munitions worn out and consumed in Poland.

There was need too of replenishment of munition stocks, of increase in war production and of re-equipping the infantry with weapons and clothing after the revelations of deficiencies in Czechoslovakia and Poland. The number of divisions ready for action was in the autumn of 1939 relatively low — 52 in all. The strength of the fleet was totally inadequate — only 27 ocean going U-boats; there was need for highly specialized preparation, — reconnaissance of river crossings, airfields, barrier fortresses and flooding systems — which an invasion of the Low Countries demanded, for the training and exercising of storm troops disguised in enemy uniforms, and for the discovery and testing of new methods to deal with strong modern fortifications, and for the calculation of times and places for the landing of paratroops and gliders; all these things were necessary to the success of a lightning break-through of the neutral zone. Add to that the fact that up to October 10th no plan of campaign for the West had been drawn up and one can understand the feelings amounting almost to despair with which the German High Command received Hitler's orders to start the great offensive in two weeks' time. From the technical standpoint these orders were sheer lunacy.

Yet there were deeper anxieties behind the purely military ones. There was the fear that the Army was being drawn into an undertaking which would sooner or later become a world war whose end no one could foresee. Finally there was the moral objection to the brutal violation of the neutrality of small states who had been formally assured that their frontiers would be respected, frontiers which now without even a night's warning were to be overrun. Both Brauchitsch and Halder did their utmost against this compulsion to a course of action which, far more than in 1914, would fix on Germany the guilt of a breaker of world peace. They strove to convince Hitler that he would win the war more quickly and more easily if he awaited a Western offensive. Only through Belgium could the French attack in the direction of the Ruhr, and, just as in 1914, nothing could be more advantageous to Germany. The moment the French left the protection of the Maginot Line and adventured into Flanders, they would be easy prey for a great counterstroke. But every plea was in vain.

It was the moral and political aspects that most concerned the

Opposition group around Beck. These, however, also deeply concerned Brauchitsch and Halder whose military anxiety was increased by the consciousness of a heavy moral responsibility for the lives of their men which would be staked in an enterprise as unnecessary as it was perilous, and perhaps fatal.

The plans for a *coup d'état* made the year before were revised and from the end of October the Berlin Opposition groups worked feverishly to set them on foot again; in this activity Goerdeler was one of the most prominent figures. Two days after Hitler had given his generals the order in which he fixed the date of the offensive they began to prepare a counterstroke. As he had to go to Sweden for a couple of days on the Bosch firm's business, Goerdeler asked Hassell to come to Berlin. He told him they would have to act as soon as Hitler ordered the offensive to start; he favoured a refusal to obey by the soldiers and a *coup d'état*. If that was not possible then, it would be after the first reverses which would imperil any prospect of a 'decent peace'. Goerdeler had not much confidence in Brauchitsch; he had more in Halder; together they might perhaps get the Commander-in-Chief to allow his Chief of Staff 'to handle the business' by issuing a counter-order to the Army commands not to begin the offensive. From that moment, he said optimistically, there would be a sufficient number of resolute generals to carry through the *coup d'état*. A military political memorandum should be drafted and sent to Brauchitsch.<sup>1</sup>

There was indeed a profusion of memoranda. Beck had drafted some; they were very comprehensive and documented and were later (1944) found by the Gestapo among the papers at the Army headquarters at Zossen.<sup>2</sup> Another was the work of the deputy Chief of Staff Karl Heinrich von Stuelpnagel who played a considerable part in the plans for a 'putsch' in 1938 and was one of the strongest personalities in the military opposition. All who knew him speak with the deepest respect of the nobility of his character, and of his breadth of view and culture.<sup>3</sup> His memorandum warning against a great offensive in the West was one of several. Particularly impressive was one from Ritter von Leeb, Commander-in-Chief of Army Group C, dated October 11th, which presented both the military and political case and in which were very plainly seen the moral and religious roots of his opposition. Leeb stated his objections more emphatically still in a letter to Brauchitsch on October 31st and on November 10th

<sup>1</sup> Hassell, p. 95 sq, 98 sq.

<sup>2</sup> V. report of Huppenkothen trial, February 1951.

<sup>3</sup> V. E. Weniger (one of Stuelpnagel's staff officers) in *Die Sammlung*, 4th Year, p. 475 sq.

endeavoured in vain to get the three commanders-in-chief on the Western front to submit jointly their resignations.<sup>1</sup>

The question for the Opposition was whether they could go farther than written and oral representations. Most of them differed from Goerdeler in taking a pessimistic view of the chances.<sup>2</sup> About the end of October news came from Army headquarters in Zossen that Halder was again seriously thinking in terms of a *coup d'état*. The opposition group in the Foreign Office seems to have heard this through Counsellor of Legation (and Captain) Hasso von Etdorf, their contact man at Zossen who had close connection with Witzleben, Hammerstein and other commanders.<sup>3</sup> When he went to Zossen in October, Etdorf was astounded to find how frankly Halder spoke to him about Hitler. He said the Fuehrer was amoral, with no conception of truth, and he called the war a crime against Germany and Europe; its extension to the West must be prevented at all costs, by force if need be. A small group on the staff with Lt. Col. Grosscurth, one of Oster's contact men, as leader was very active. Stuelpnagel, Quartermaster-General Wagner and other younger officers were in the plot.<sup>4</sup> By the end of October, they were fearing a stroke by Hitler against the General Staff, a sort of 1944 in reverse; he had been warned by Goering through a young Air Force officer of the 'defeatism' at Zossen. Preparations were pushed on, as they had to be if things were to be ready by November 10th. Proclamations and immediate measures to be used when the revolution came had to be drawn up as simply as possible to place before the people, and above all the generals, the danger with which Hitler threatened them.

A memorandum for this purpose prepared by the action group in the Foreign Office prophesied a quick stalemate in the West, the outbreak of a world war and incalculable economic misery for Germany; it demanded that Hitler's bloody tyranny be ended and sought to remove the soldiers' scruples about 'mutiny'. The 'relative unpopularity' of a military *coup*, it went on, 'must be met with the necessary civic courage'; the nations' eyes would be opened when it learned what was in store for it under a madman. The oath of

<sup>1</sup> V. Kosterthorst and the documents he cites of the OKW trial. Both Bock and Rundstedt raised objections to a Western offensive. Leeb later abandoned active opposition as without prospect of success.

<sup>2</sup> Gisevius, ii, p. 154; Hassell, p. 99. Preparations in the General Staff for a coup were evidently independent of the Beck-Oster-Gisevius group. Goerdeler knew something about them before October 29th.

<sup>3</sup> Kordt, p. 340.

<sup>4</sup> Etdorf's evidence at Weizsaecker's trial (April 5, 1948). V. Kordt, p. 356; Wheeler-Bennett, p. 458.

allegiance to Hitler had lost its meaning since he was ready to sacrifice Germany to his mad designs. Rather it was 'the supreme national duty to be true to the Fatherland against this criminal'. The memory of Yorck and von der Marwitz was conjured up. Now was the time to act. Only so long as there was no disaster and the Army was still intact, could Germany hope for an honourable peace which meant the restoration of Poland and of Czechoslovakia within the frontiers agreed at Munich, the creation of a land connection with East Prussia, the recovery of the industrial region of Eastern Upper Silesia (excluding Polish districts). Moderation in success is the greatest political virtue. Such a peace would be approved by the Western powers.<sup>1</sup>

The circle round Oster had meantime got busy and sought (from November 2nd on) to influence Headquarters. They produced a memorandum which was the work of Oster, Gisevius and Thomas, with the collaboration of the young and highly-gifted judge Hans von Dohnanyi.<sup>2</sup> At the outbreak of war, Oster had got him into the Counter-Intelligence along with other Opposition members and he had since worked with great, sometimes excessive, energy at the political plans of the conspirators.<sup>3</sup>

Another recruit to the Counter-Intelligence was the Munich lawyer Josef Mueller. Almost as soon as he had reported for duty Oster had bluntly told him just for what purpose he had been appointed, mainly to seek contacts abroad through the Vatican with which he had some personal connections, and try to find out whether a new German government would be welcomed to the Western capitals and could tolerable conditions of peace be obtained. The first reports Mueller sent back in October were favourable and Oster utilized them in his memorandum.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas, it seems, was the intermediary through which all this got to Zossen and he was astonished at the readiness with which the proposals were received. He himself would not hear of plans for assassination. To an orthodox soldier brought up in the Imperial tradition, the thought of political murder was abhorrent though he hated Hitler the 'bloodsucker'; he also feared that, if an attempt succeeded, Hitler would be hailed as a martyr by the masses. Like

<sup>1</sup> Kordt, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> Gisevius, ii, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> According to witnesses in the Huppenkothen trial it was he who was responsible for the failure to destroy the secret papers of the group which sealed their fate when the Gestapo seized them on September 22, 1944. After his arrest Dohnanyi (according to his widow) pressed for their destruction but Beck insisted on preserving them.

<sup>4</sup> Gisevius, ii, p. 154, and Kosthorst.

Beck and the circle round Oster he urged a 'legal' *coup d'état*, by which he meant an Army revolt unchained by an order in due form from the High Command for Hitler's arrest; this had best be issued by Brauchitsch or, in an emergency, by his Chief of Staff. Hitler would then be brought before a legal court and sentenced by it. At the same time, a full statement should be issued describing the atrocities of the régime. For this Dohnanyi had the material which had been considerably increased by reports, received with great indignation by the conspirators, of the S.S. atrocities in Poland to which General von Blaskowitz had vainly tried to put a stop.<sup>1</sup> The unmasking of the dictator could not be but successful.

The Chief of the General Staff fully agreed to the main conceptions of the plan. His deputy chief, Stuelpnagel had, if Gisevius is right, put himself in direct touch with Oster and had told him the details of what the General Staff proposed to do,<sup>2</sup> including the occupation

<sup>1</sup> Written protests sent to Halder and Brauchitsch by Goerdeler, Mackensen and Beck (Goerdeler's notes). Halder got a report (October 18th) from Wagner on Hitler's intention to exterminate the Polish intellectuals and had Keitel's instructions on that subject (*IMT*, xxvi, p. 377).

<sup>2</sup> Details of these plans were found at Zossen by the Gestapo on July 22, 1944. Huppenkothen who was charged with their examination quoted them at his trial on February 2, 1951. He quoted it seems from notes, some made from memory, insufficiently dated and their relation to the actual papers left unclear. Besides Hitler, Goering, Himmler, Ribbentrop and Heydrich were all to be eliminated. Hitler was to be declared of unsound mind. A proclamation would be issued saying that a criminal gang of Nazi leaders had planned a coup but had been foiled by the Wehrmacht at the last minute, that documents had been seized showing, e.g. that Goering had embezzled millions of public money; the Government quarter of Berlin was to be surrounded 'at grey dawn' (9th Potsdam Regiment, Sagan's Tank Regiment, 3rd Artillery Regiment from Frankfurt-on-Oder); all key points (post and telegraph offices, the broadcasting station, airfields and police stations) were to be seized. Beck was to be the head of a 'directory' and take command of the Army; arrest of all party leaders down to local ones, military courts, hastening of elections for a new Reichstag, negotiations for an armistice as preliminary to a negotiated peace. The co-operation of Witzleben, Olbricht and Hoepner was assured, that of Reichenau, Falkenhausen and Geyr von Schwepenburg possible; also Liedig (Navy) and Heinz; there is no mention of Schacht. It is odd that Goering's elimination is thus stressed for it is clear from Hassell's diaries that not only Popitz but Goerdeler and Hassell had not given up hope of winning him over; Dohnanyi (according to Hassell) sought a 'Kerenski solution' with the help of Goering and Reichenau.

I imagine that the preparation of such plans in 1939 was taken over by people on the Staff because they had been so greatly disappointed with Witzleben's plans in 1938. According to Halder (in Kosthorst's book) two tank divisions east of the Elbe were held back to be available (v. p. 104 note). Sven Hedin, *Ohne Auftrag in Berlin*, 1950, p. 68, says he had a three-hour talk with Goerdeler in Stockholm which showed that Goerdeler like Popitz still had great hopes of Goering and his 'love of peace' though he must have known of the Zossen plans.



of the centre of Berlin by a Panzer division and surveillance of all the exits of the Chancellery. Beck and Goerdeler — the latter had just got back from Stockholm — were now told to be ready for anything from November 5th, i.e. to be ready to form a new government. Halder sent his Quartermaster-General Wagner to Schacht on a similar errand. November 5th was fixed as the date, for Brauchitsch wanted to make a last attempt to change Hitler's resolve and get him to give up or postpone the offensive in the West. Unless he was allowed to do so, they would never get the Commander-in-Chief to agree to a revolt. If Hitler was deaf to all pleading, then the moment had clearly come to explode the mine, then it would be possible, after his downfall, to convince the nation of the criminal folly with which the admired Fuehrer had sought to plunge it into the abyss of so hopeless an adventure. Everything would come to a head on November 5th.<sup>1</sup>

But the meeting so tensely awaited between Brauchitsch and Hitler had a most unfortunate ending. Driven into a corner by the Commander-in-Chief and the representations of all the military experts, Hitler sought refuge in an outburst of wild rage. The remarks of the general about the lack of offensive spirit and the bad discipline of the troops gave him his opportunity. He was clever enough to hit Brauchitsch at his most sensitive point — his soldier's honour. He thundered against the cowardice and defeatism which ruled at Headquarters, gave free vent to his hatred, long pent-up, of the Staff officers and ended the audience by suddenly flinging himself out of the room in a fury.<sup>2</sup> Pale and trembling with anger at the treatment he had received, Brauchitsch went back to Zossen. The conspirators on his staff even feared that he had betrayed them and Halder ordered — alas, not completely successfully — that all compromising papers should be destroyed.

Not that that meant the abandonment of his plans for a revolt. In his anger, Brauchitsch had said that he himself would do nothing, but would not interfere if others acted. But how could they if the head of the Army was not with them? Was not the thought of a 'legal' *coup d'état* just plain fantasy when, as Thomas estimated, seventy-five per cent of the population and nearly all the younger officers still supported Hitler? Was it not necessary to begin the

<sup>1</sup> Brauchitsch and Halder visited Army Groups A and B in the west. They were looking for material for Brauchitsch's interview and ascertained that none of the leaders in either saw prospects of success for a western offensive. According to Gisevius (ii, p. 164) Brauchitsch told Witzleben that he feared the Gestapo would be on his track.

<sup>2</sup> V. Wheeler-Bennett's full account (p. 471) based on Brauchitsch's and Halder's testimony at Nuremberg.

revolt with an assassination? If the tyrant were once physically eliminated, then it was conceivable that the Army could seize power on the ground that, if it did not, there would be chaos. Otherwise, there was the danger of a new Kapp 'putsch'<sup>1</sup> and nothing made the generals more dislike plans for a revolt than fear of a recurrence of that unhappy venture; in the discussions which Halder had with Brauchitsch that fear had always been prominent. But the Chief of the General Staff still shrank from political assassination;<sup>2</sup> like Thomas he feared to dishonour the Army and said that 'the General Staff could not be involved in foul murder'. The attempt could not be the work of the heads of the Army; their moral and political authority would be destroyed.

But what if it was made without the knowledge of the Army Command? It was this thought that made Oster in these critical weeks look for an 'assassin' in order to set the great action going. He found one easily enough. On November 1st, Erich Kordt had come to him and offered to make a bomb attempt on Hitler the next time he visited the Chancellery.<sup>3</sup> As a member of the Foreign Office he had access to the Fuehrer's ante-room and hoped soon to be able to find his opportunity. It was a bold resolve reached after hard internal struggle and it certainly meant sacrificing his own life. But like so many later, this resolve had no result thanks to the mysterious fate which guarded the tyrant from such an end. Oster could not get the materials for a bomb until November 11th and on November 7th Hitler went off to Munich and ordered the offensive to be postponed for three days whether because of a last shrinking from the risks which everyone was pointing out, or under the influence of the peace appeal which on that day the King of the Belgians and the Queen of the Netherlands had made, we do not know; it may well be that he shrank from answering their appeal by an invasion of their countries. Two days later came the notorious attempt in the Buergerbraukeller. That it was engineered by Himmler as a propaganda trick can now hardly be doubted. At any rate the desired result was attained; a wave of sympathy for the Fuehrer went over the whole country, coupled with outbursts of anger against the alleged British

<sup>1</sup> Hammerstein also was against it (Hassell, p. 299). In September 1939 Hammerstein had planned to seize Hitler at his headquarters in Cologne and put him under arrest; v. Schlabrendorff, p. 56, and Wheeler-Bennett, p. 458. But wouldn't that have verily been a 'Kapp-Putsch'?

<sup>2</sup> Halder assured that he regarded assassination as an undesirable very last resort. When Groscurth pressed on him the Oster group's proposals he burst out angrily: 'if the Admiral wants to have an assassination let him do it himself'. (Gisevius, ii, 159.) Canaris himself disapproved of assassination.

<sup>3</sup> Kordt, p. 370.

instigators. From now on every future 'assassin' would be suspected of being in the pay of the British Secret Service. Deliveries of explosive material were now so carefully watched that even Oster and Canaris could not evade the precautions and the chances of success of a revolver shot amid the throng of aides and guards in the ante-room were very slender.

None the less the conspirators round Beck and Oster were as zealous as ever to promote a *coup d'état*. Every possible plan was canvassed. Once again Gisevius brought up his idea of eliminating the Gestapo under the pretext that the S.S. were planning a 'putsch'. When Halder complained of the lack of a determined daredevil who could be trusted to carry out the 'putsch', Oster and Gisevius went to Kreuznach where Witzleben had his headquarters and asked him to come to Berlin. But what could he, without his troops, do in the capital?<sup>1</sup> Besides, he too was convinced that his officers, especially the junior ones would have nothing to do with a 'putsch'. Finally the whole business was imperilled by a gross piece of carelessness of which Oster was guilty. It made Canaris forbid any further activity and Halder was so annoyed at his journey to the front in company with a suspect civilian that he would not receive any further communication from Gisevius and warned Oster against further indiscretions.

Halder, however, went on with his own plans. As he himself had no direct command over troops, everything depended on his winning over the Commander-in-Chief. To convince him of the hopelessness of another world war economic experts like Hugo Stinnes were called in. Thomas long ago had gathered round him some Rhine-land industrialists who were as pessimistic as he was about the economic consequences of a long war. All that made a strong impression on Brauchitsch, but he always refused to draw the political deductions from what he was told.

It has become a commonplace to endorse the severe judgement on him which was passed by the conspirators under Beck on his refusal. But it would be unjust not to recognize the great difference between a man who is in a responsible and conspicuous position and himself makes the last decision, and a man without any such responsibility who stands among the critics, observers, purveyors of advice and

<sup>1</sup> At the end of December, Goerdeler and Oster had worked out fantastic plans. Witzleben with a few divisions should be stopped in Berlin 'on his way to the East', carry out a 'legal' *coup d'état* and eliminate the S.S. It was soon seen to be impossible; troop movements of such a kind were not practical; the two tank divisions east of the Elbe had gone at the end of the month to the Western front, v. Hassell, pp. 113, 119, and Kosthorst.

inciters to action. Compare Beck's attitude during his period of office in 1933-8 especially during the Roehm affair of 1934 and the 'Fritsch Crisis' of 1938 with his activity after his dismissal and it must be admitted that the difference is striking. That Walther von Brauchitsch was from conviction an opponent of Hitler and his party there can be no doubt. That is the verdict of those nearest him. The man who once had been page to the Kaiserin came from a political and intellectual world which was entirely alien to what went on in the entourage of the tribune of the people and so he felt himself insecure and in a sense defenceless in this new environment so foreign, indeed so sinister, to him. All those who worked with him agree that from the time he became Commander-in-Chief, he waged a dogged, nerve-racking guerilla war in order to save what could be saved, in matters of personnel, in the struggle for the care of the soldier's soul (to which as a sincere Protestant he felt committed), against the encroachments of the Party organizations especially the S.S., against the Propaganda Ministry and all the rest and to preserve the old traditions of the Army. He was neither an unprincipled romantic like Blomberg nor a wretched lackey like Keitel nor a fanatic follower of Hitler like Jodl. But political instinct was not one of the possessions of this intelligent and distinguished soldier. Nor had he iron in his blood. Even as a soldier, as his most intimate associates say, strength to take decisions was not one of his virtues. He was in no single way built to be a political revolutionary.

Thomas said in 1945 that the elimination of the Hitler régime could have been carried through in the winter of 1939-40 'without great difficulty'. The government and the Fuehrer's headquarters were shut up in Berlin; the public regard for the Army after the Polish victories was at its height; the S.S. were in numbers still a very small force; the power and ability of the Gauleiters as commissioners of defence was untried. The lies connected with preparation for war, the plan to attack neutral countries, the true story of the Buergerbraukeller outrage, the S.S. atrocities in Poland, all would have been revealed and turned to propaganda account. Finally, an understanding with the Chamberlain Government was still possible and the mass of the nation would have welcomed a peace government if the real aims of Hitler and the rashness of his plans had been revealed. All that is certainly true, but only on condition that the first enterprise — the elimination by force — succeeded. But was anything of the kind conceivable if Hitler was left alive? If it came to civil war, would the officers' corps unconditionally follow the generals? And among the conspirators was there a political figure whose popularity, demagogic powers of persuasion, revolutionary will power and

demonic subtleness and assurance were great enough to carry the masses with him?

Halder was wont to say that the German Army was not like a Balkan army, accustomed to civil strife and officers' plots. He could have added that a soldier exercises military command but has no political power. If he can get such power and wants to use it as a weapon against his superiors, he must be certain that his juniors will follow him as a political leader. No general can appeal to discipline and obedience if he himself calls to mutiny and high treason. Under Hitler there was no possibility at all of educating his troops to that. His political followers could be no more than a tiny group of conspirators and these in high positions in the Army. His power of command over the troops was good for nothing more than a sudden stroke and for that only for as long as the bulk of the Army knew nothing about it. The Army was no longer the solid body which the Reichswehr had formed in the Weimar Republic. Now it was an entirely national army and at war, and recruited from the Hitler youth. Nor in the officers' corps were the old strong ties that unite professional soldiers visible; there was hardly even a 'regimental tradition'. Besides, it was virtually impossible during the war to move without Hitler's knowledge any troops from the front and march them against his headquarters. The full co-operation of the Army of the Interior and its commander Fromm would be needed and, as Halder knew, Fromm refused to take part in any *coup de main*. The co-operation of other parts of the armed forces was ruled out; the Air Force certainly would have considered it a matter of honour to crush an Army mutiny.

Under such circumstances had a military 'putsch' any chance of success? Only, one thinks, if it took place at the moment of complete confusion that would follow after Hitler's sudden assassination. In any event it would need a strong hand and a sure will to carry it through to political success. There was no such hand and will and not only among the soldiers; the political forces round Goerdeler and Beck were not even agreed whether or not an assassination was morally permissible and politically expedient.

Is it fair to make that a reproach to them? On the other hand who can deny the possibility that, if the attempt was successful and all the barriers broken down, a leader would appear during the struggle of political talent enough to master the situation and make the nation follow him? One thing at least is certain, that revolutions of this kind are not to be carried through by the counsels of wise and able men who are without a strong will to power and who shrink from violence. Goerdeler assuredly did not lack either self-confidence

or belief on a mission, but he did lack the demonic ambition of the born revolutionary. His sense of mission was moral rather than political in its nature; his position as leader was not of the kind to ensure him a personal following even in the narrow circle of the conspirators. Beck's position was incomparably better for it had become ever more evident in the winter of 1939-40 that he not only had the confidence of the Army chiefs but had a devoted personal following among the generals and General Staff officers. But was he really of true revolutionary calibre, the man of swift, bold, yet considered decision? No one who wants facts from history and not legendary hero-worship can say so.

Besides at the moment it was not he but Brauchitsch who had the power of decision. On the latter, hesitant and at bottom unsure of himself, Hitler's speech on November 23rd with which he sought to embolden and inspire his generals must have made a deep impression. In it for the first time, the war of conquest was proclaimed as the real aim of the Hitler régime, and hegemony over all Europe — the final objective of the war now raging, a war of life and death which could only be carried through in the heroic spirit of Frederick the Great. It might have been clear to a cool hearer of it that its author, carried away by his earlier successes, was now on the verge of madness. But the strength of an appeal to the fundamental quality of the soldier, courage, was bound to be effective, the more so as it was obviously directed against the 'defeatism' of the Zossen headquarters: 'I shall shrink from nothing and I shall destroy whoever is against me'. This open threat indicated very clearly that the General Staff was in danger not merely of rousing political distrust in the Dictator but of destroying his confidence in its military competence with the result that the professional soldier would lose what influence he had on the future conduct of the war.<sup>1</sup>

If Brauchitsch had any doubt of that, Hitler took pains to remove it. Immediately after the speech, the Commander-in-Chief was summoned to the Fuehrer who once again so reproached him with the 'spirit of Zossen' that he asked to be relieved of his command but in vain. The effort Halder made to persuade his chief to revolt was equally in vain;<sup>2</sup> Brauchitsch declined to make another 'Kapp-Putsch'. 'What of the German worker?' he asked 'what follows on a *coup d'état*? What and who is behind the Beck-Oster-Canaris group?'; to the last question even Beck could hardly have given a reassuring answer. The efforts so strongly supported by Stuelpnagel, Canaris and Oster to win over some of the Army commanders, met the same ob-

<sup>1</sup> *IMT*, xxvi, p. 327 sq, Doc. 789PS.

<sup>2</sup> Halder's evidence at Munich; cf. Bor, p. 125 sq.

jections. 'The sword which we unsheath' said one of them 'will break in our hands'. 'We could give orders' said another, 'but we have no idea whether they would be carried out'. Only Witzleben and Leeb were ready to act. Stuelpnagel's proposal to Halder that he should, if necessary, put Brauchitsch under arrest and act alone, was described as dishonourable by the Chief of Staff, but was rejected mainly because no Army Commander would have taken orders from the Chief of Staff alone. All that would happen would be the disruption of the Army. After a week's stay at the Headquarters of the armies,<sup>1</sup> Stuelpnagel must have recognized that Halder was right when he said he would not be obeyed.

Under such circumstances, no result could follow Thomas's two hours' conversation with Halder as emissary of the conspirators in the Counter-Intelligence at the end of November<sup>2</sup> or Beck's personal intervention, or the exhortations — in writing or in conversation — from Goerdeler. All were agreed on the objective; there was no agreement on the chances of success. But as the date for the attack was constantly put off there was no end to counsels and negotiations. Unfavourable weather in the first instance caused Hitler to make several short-term postponements, probably at Goering's wishes who feared for his Luftwaffe. Then came the necessity of revising the whole plan of campaign as this, owing to the mistaken landing of a military courier in Belgium, had fallen into the enemy's hands. The tension in the High Command which Brauchitsch had increased by his resistance to the conspirators' plans for a 'putsch' was thus lessened and on all sides pleas were made to use this long suspension of active operations to avert the catastrophe by diplomatic efforts.

Mussolini, torn as usual between jealousy of his German rival and fear of his overwhelming strength and now anxious about a triumph of Bolshevism, tried hard to wean the Fuehrer from his plan of an offensive in the West; he gave his Foreign Minister Ciano to understand that he wished a German defeat and commissioned him to

<sup>1</sup> Halder at the Munich trial spoke of a 'week-long visit by Stuelpnagel apparently after November 23rd'. Kosthorst speaks of one visit which ended on October 29th. I am doubtful if these had any connection with plans for a *coup d'état*. According to Halder and Roehricht, Fromm was asked at the beginning of November to co-operate and again refused. Beck's offer to Brauchitsch to take over the command of Bock, Leeb and Rundstedt agreed (Hassell, p. 107; Gisevius, ii, p. 163) was quite impractical.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas's note. Beck's visit was on January 16, 1940 (Schlabrendorff, p. 61). The date according to Halder is uncertain but it was in the middle of the month. The two men talked while walking about in the open air in freezing cold. It ended in nearly an open breach.

warn Holland and Belgium of the danger.<sup>1</sup> From America Roosevelt, to the great displeasure of his Secretary of State Cordell Hull, made the hopeless attempt through his special emissary to the European capitals, Sumner Welles, to discover some possibility of obtaining a negotiated settlement; Mussolini who thought of himself as mediator, was expected to co-operate. Welles's mission disquieted the conspirators for it could result in another Munich. Hassell, therefore, tried to convince Kirk, the American chargé d'affaires, of the uselessness of any peace negotiation with Hitler;<sup>2</sup> that however was unnecessary as Welles was soon himself convinced of this by his talks with Hitler and Ribbentrop. Brauchitsch, on the contrary, seems to have thought hopefully of Welles's mission from certain overtures made to Britain via Switzerland on behalf of certain economic interests and allegedly Goering; he seems to have hoped that thereby the heavy decision for or against Hitler would be spared him. He more than once expressed his fear that, if Britain rejected both peace offers from Hitler and the mediation of the United States, that would be taken as a sign that the enemy wanted to destroy the German people and not just the Hitler régime.

In this situation it was highly important to convince the generals that Western policy, while refusing to compromise with the Hitler régime, none the less could differentiate between Hitler and Germany and had no intention of taking advantage of the internal strife and consequent weakness which a generals' revolt would cause, to launch a great offensive, but would, on the contrary, be ready to negotiate with a new and trustworthy German Government an honourable peace which would settle all justified national claims and bring healing to Europe. To get from London, and if possible from Paris too, agreement to this in definite form was now the aim of the conspirators.

As a sort of preparation, there was the visit of Adam von Trott zu Solz to the United States in the autumn of 1939 in acceptance of an invitation to attend the conference at Virginia Beach of the American

<sup>1</sup> Entries in Ciano's diary under date November 20th and December 26th. Mussolini's letter to Hitler of January 3, 1940.

<sup>2</sup> Halder's diary entry for December 2nd; Hassell, pp. 113, 132 sq; Goerdeler told Popitz that Goering had put out peace feelers through Prince Paul of Yugoslavia (December 29th). Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision*, pp. 93-172 is silent on many points, especially on his talk with Schacht. But it is worth noting that he heard from the Italian and Belgian ambassadors that there was no longer any real resistance on the part of the generals and that Goering had evolved a peace plan not unlike that of the conspirators and that he had said to Schacht that the U.S. did not want to see a collapse of the German economy. Hassell, p. 135; Schacht had his instructions from Hitler and was evidently pleased at being brought back to politics. On Hull's attitude, v. his *Memoirs*, i, p. 737.



Institute of Pacific Relations. He went with the support of the German Foreign Office. One of the most active members of the conspiracy, highly gifted and full of enthusiasm, Trott had used his connection with academic circles in Britain and the United States to maintain contact with foreign nations. He used his stay in Virginia to inform American politicians in private conversations of the Opposition's aims and to press for such public declarations of Western aims in the sense of Chamberlain's latest speech as would hearten the Resistance. His proposals were viewed both in the British Embassy and the State Department with great mistrust. Some members of the German 'emigration' accused him of being a Gestapo agent; others, however, including a former secretary of Bethmann-Hollweg, Kurt Riezler, and the Social Democrat Hans Simon were prepared to draft a memorandum in this sense which went to the White House and was ready for Sumner Welles to read before he left for Europe. It included a demand that the U.S. should put the whole weight of its influence on the side of a programme for a peace of moderation and so take the wind from the sails of Hitler's propaganda which sought to rouse the German people by the assertion that Britain's aim was the total destruction of German power and prosperity. In addition they sought American financial support for the new Germany. These representations had no visible result.

We do not know how Goerdeler mobilized his own contacts abroad. It is probable that from Stockholm which he visited at least thrice this autumn<sup>1</sup> he sent to Vansittart certain peace conditions drawn up by the Opposition among which was the restoration of the 1914 eastern frontier of Germany; the answer to that was that such conditions would now be difficult to accept. Otherwise all that is known is that he had a talk with Sumner Welles in Berlin and another in early March 1940 with the King of the Belgians who assured him that there were still 'useful possibilities' for peace but not with Hitler, and promised him his support. It is not certain whether through an American in Switzerland he ever got in touch with an agent of Daladier.

A good many threads ran from Switzerland to the West and the Chamberlain Government was greatly interested not merely in maintaining them, but in increasing them. So far as it was concerned nothing could be more desirable than a revolution in Germany which would save it and the West from unforeseeable peril. It therefore sought to encourage the Opposition. One of the Beck-Goerdeler group's contacts in Switzerland was the well-known sociologist, Prof. Siegmund-Schultze, whose home in Zurich was a port of call for

<sup>1</sup> On August 26th, November 1st and December 6th.

many emigrants and a post office for Opposition messages; he was kept regularly informed of the situation in Germany by representatives of the Bosch firm. He himself told me that Chamberlain wanted him to fly to London for personal conversations. Another contact was the former Chancellor, Josef Wirth, who had emigrated to Switzerland and had offered to act as intermediary. In a document which Dr Schairer took to London he called Chamberlain's attention to the existence of an important Opposition group: it would much help this group if it could be told that an internal revolution would not be used to damage Germany militarily. In mid-February two Foreign Office representatives, friends of Vansittart, met Wirth at Ouchy and another man well known in London who had, since war broke out, lived in Lucerne and from there had kept up his connections with friends in Britain. The two Englishmen brought a tentative offer in writing, the five points of which were explained in conversation. The document was not itself handed over but a translation was prepared for Wirth which is still in existence.<sup>1</sup> As proof of its bonafides they gave Wirth several copies of a speech which Chamberlain intended to make on February 24th and actually did make.

The translated text of this document is as follows:

'1. Assurance will be given that the British Government will not by attacking in the West use to Germany's military disadvantage any passing crisis which may be connected with action taken by the German Opposition.

2. The British Government declares itself ready to work with a new German government which has its confidence to get a lasting peace and will give Germany the necessary financial aid.

3. Further assurances it cannot give without previous agreement with the French Government. If France's confidence is obtained then further assurances are possible.

4. In the case of French participation in the negotiations it would be desirable that the approximate date for the carrying out of this action inside Germany be communicated.

5. If the German Opposition should wish their action made easier through a diversion by the Western Powers, the British Government is ready within the bounds of possibility to meet that wish.'

In conversation it was stated that London would treat this document as binding up to April 30th. Naturally only the British Government was bound but there was little doubt that France would agree with the first point. A new German Government would be considered worthy of trust only if its members were resolved finally to abandon

<sup>1</sup> Wirth still has a draft of his letter to Chamberlain. Dulles (p. 59) wrongly dates all this April.

the present sense of expansion, to eliminate 'the Prussian spirit' (in the sense of 'militarism') and to take the necessary measures thereto especially as regards the armed forces. No member of the present German Government, Goering included, was to be a member of the new one.

Chamberlain's speech ended with the words: 'We do not wish the destruction of any nation. . . . What concrete peace aims must be attained? First the independence of Poland and Czechoslovakia must be secured. Then we must have convincing evidence that the pledges and promises made to us will be kept. With the present German Government there is no security for the future. . . . It keeps its word neither to foreign nations nor to its own people. It is therefore for the Germans themselves to take the next step and prove to us that once for all they have abandoned the doctrine that might is right. . . . Germany more than any other power can contribute to the restoration of that confidence which more than any other nation she has helped to destroy. If Germany is ready to give convincing proof of her goodwill, she will find no lack of goodwill in other nations to aid her to overcome her economic difficulties which must arise during the transition from war to peace. What I have defined as our war aim involves neither the humiliation nor oppression of any other nation and we on our part will on that basis be ready to seek an understanding with any nation which subscribes to such aim and gives proof of its sincerity.'

Here was a strong and unmistakeable appeal to the Opposition to proceed to action.

The British disclosures were a day or two later communicated<sup>1</sup> by Wirth to the former Defence Minister Gessler to be sent to Beck and Goerdeler but, it seems, never got to them. Had they been, the results of the parallel negotiation conducted by Dr Josef Mueller at the Vatican should not have caused surprise. From Theo Kordt, now in Bern, it was learned that London was becoming restless at the constant postponement of the *coup d'état*; from that the suspicion arose there that the steady Opposition pressure for favourable peace terms was but another Nationalist attempt to extort concessions, a suspicion which was rife in 1938. Vansittart stood firmly for the immediate evacuation and restoration of Poland after the *coup d'état* as a proof that there was a new will to peace in Germany and that without reference to the danger which was always presented to him, of an advance of Bolshevism. To relieve his mind of fears Theo

<sup>1</sup> Several witnesses assure me of this. Gessler wrote me to say that he knew nothing at all of it. I am unable to resolve these contradictions; v. also Hassell, pp. 141, 145.

Kordt wrote him a letter<sup>1</sup> on February 16th, that is, at the time of the Ouchy negotiations of which he obviously had no knowledge.

The desire of the Opposition however went far beyond a 'draft armistice agreement'. They still did not have a written document from Britain with clearly outlined peace conditions. To get this Ulrich von Hassell shortly after Wirth's interview went to Switzerland. The impetus thereto came this time from the British side and in an odd way. A British traveller and amateur diplomatist, Lonsdale Bryans,<sup>2</sup> without the knowledge, even against the wishes, of the British Foreign Office had been on the watch in Rome since October for a chance to make himself useful as intermediary between the belligerents. In November he happened to make the acquaintance in a beerhouse of Hassell's son-in-law, Detalmo Pirzio-Biroli, who interested him as a half-American with German relatives. At a second meeting he learned of the existence of an Opposition group in Germany and offered to bring it in contact with Halifax whom he described as 'an acquaintance'. Under the condition that his father-in-law's name should be revealed to no one but Halifax, Pirzio-Biroli agreed to hand him a written memorandum for the Foreign Secretary in which emphasis was heavily laid on the need for assurance that a revolution in Germany would not be used for a Western offensive. Bryans succeeded in getting an interview with Halifax who agreed to his trying to meet Hassell in Switzerland but strictly as 'a private individual'. 'It cannot do any harm' said the Foreign Secretary, 'and it might even be useful'.

Arranged by Pirzio-Biroli the Bryans-Hassell meeting took place on February 22nd at Arosa where the German diplomatist was visiting his son in a sanatorium; we have a full account of it from both sides. Hassell began very cautiously but once convinced that Bryans was politically 'safe' made use of him to get a considered statement through to Halifax. What is interesting in it is that there is no question, as there was in the Ouchy conversations, of a simple 'armistice'; the German Opposition laid down plainly proposals for a swift and regular peace. Austria and the Sudeten lands would remain in the Reich; there would be no frontier changes in the West but a permanent renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine; in the east, frontiers should roughly be as they were in 1914 and Poland and Czechoslovakia restored as independent states. In expounding these Hassell laid special stress on the necessity that from the British side peace terms should not be linked with a demand for a *coup d'état*, for he

<sup>1</sup> Kordt, p. 381. On the Bern talks v. also the evidence and speeches at the Weizsaecker trial.

<sup>2</sup> V. his book, *Blind Victory*, 1951; Hassell, pp. 126 sq and 141, 146.

feared that anything of that nature would rouse in Germany unfortunate recollections of the Wilson demands in 1918; a *coup d'état* should be regarded purely as a matter for the Germans themselves. That was a right attitude and characteristic of the true patriot that Hassell was. None the less, it was an entirely academic one since both sides recognized that there could be no talk of peace negotiations until Hitler was overthrown. Besides, Hassell put peace on a basis entirely unacceptable to the Fuehrer when, in agreement with Goerdeler, he declared that for the Opposition Europe 'meant neither a battlefield nor a power position' but 'had the nature of a fatherland within which a sane and strong Germany was, with reference especially to Bolshevist Russia, an indispensable factor'. Goerdeler's general principles appeared again — international co-operation in the economic sphere, general reduction of armaments, recognition of certain basic conditions by all European states, e.g. the principles of the Christian ethic, justice and legality as the basis of public life, social welfare as the leading motive, effective control by the people of state power, freedom of thought, conscience and religious work. Each of these conditions demanded as a condition of realization the fall of Hitler.

Hassell was wise enough to be quite indefinite about the *coup d'état*. Before active operations began in the West he said there was little chance of one and none at all without 'an authoritative British statement', i.e. a firm pledge that for the future Germany would not have to fear a repetition of the experiences of 1918 after the fall of the Kaiser.

It was soon evident that Bryans was not the person to induce Britain to accept any such arrangement. After his return to Britain Halifax, through Cadogan the Permanent Under-Secretary, thanked him shortly and courteously but did not himself receive him. An answer in writing was refused as one had been sent a week before — an obvious reference to the Wirth discussions. Bryans had great difficulty in getting a visa for a second visit to Switzerland so as, at least, to end formally the mission he had taken upon himself. He achieved this only on April 15th by which date the German attack on Norway had completely altered the situation. He told Hassell that Halifax had sent the statement to the Prime Minister and was in agreement with the principles laid down in it, a statement which, according to his own account, he had no authority to make.

Thus failed this effort. But there was still a way, and a better one to obtain diplomatic contact, by negotiations via the Vatican. Dr Josef Mueller had been sent in autumn 1939 to Rome under cover of a Counter-Intelligence mission as a sort of plenipotentiary of the

Opposition. Dohnanyi was involved in this and involved others like his brother-in-law Dietrich Bonhoeffer now too a member of the Counter-Intelligence. The negotiations went on from October 1939 to the beginning of February 1940. Pius XII, whose secretary Father Leber was a close friend of Mueller, showed surprising understanding and lent all his authority to convince the British Government of the genuineness of the Opposition approach. More, he offered to act as mediator and so put the whole business on an official, or at least semi-official, diplomatic footing. Halifax and the British Minister to the Vatican Osborne agreed to a formal statement but naturally enough not a written one.

A full account of the course and result of these negotiations was sent by Dohnanyi to Brauchitsch and Halder; it fell into the hands of the Gestapo on September 22, 1944 and has not been seen since. The statements of witnesses about its contents do not altogether agree. It is clear, however, that Britain not only promised not to take military advantage of an internal political crisis in Germany, but also gave definite assurances on a peace treaty with the new government. Further, no objection was raised to the retention in the Reich of Austria and the Sudeten districts or to a revision, according to the principle of nationalities, of the Eastern frontiers; Germany's economic position in Europe would be reconsidered. All this is on the lines of the demands made by Hassell who had then no knowledge of the Rome negotiations.

Halder who studied Dohnanyi's report twice — the second time while he was under arrest in 1944 — remembers that there was mention of a restoration of the 1914 frontiers. That had greatly astonished him and made him doubt the authenticity of the document he was studying. He attached, as a soldier, no special value to such a condition which would have made any peace treaty with France impossible. Today he believes there was question here of a rather stupid attempt to attract himself and Brauchitsch by the prospect of a brilliant peace. But who was it who made this rather stupid and even suspect attempt? Dohnanyi himself? None of the reports make any allusion to Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>1</sup> But they do mention that the British wanted a plebiscite in Austria and a 'decentralization' of the new Germany, but did not make this an absolute condition of an agreement. There is also mention of details regarding the preliminaries to a peace and armistice agreement. These should not be negotiated directly, but through the Holy See. The fall of Hitler and the formation of a completely new government was of course a pre-condition. as was also full agreement on the part of the French Government.

Letter to me from General Bogatsch.

According to Thomas's recollection all this had validity only so long as there was no German offensive in the West.<sup>1</sup>

None the less despite all reservations and the absence of a written document this was as far-reaching a realization of the Opposition's political desires as they could hope for under the existing circumstances. It is only legend which asserts that from the outset Britain left the German Opposition in the lurch; that is not true of the 'phoney war' period, nor of the Chamberlain Government. The reverse perhaps is truer. On the German side, there was far too much confidence in the Opposition's success in forcing the Army Command to undertake a *coup d'état* and that confidence in turn raised expectations in London which then remained unsatisfied and so later were discredited.<sup>2</sup>

Halder was told of the news from Rome only later. In Oster's circle they were so well aware of the dangers — what was in it had already been officially held to be highly treasonable — that there was considerable doubt of the wisdom of risking communicating it to him. In mid-March Hassell was told about it and asked to confer with Halder. Hassell declined and eventually Thomas undertook to take advantage of an official report to the Chief of Staff to refer cautiously to the Rome development although he himself disapproved of diplomatic action as 'unsoldierly'.<sup>3</sup> He made his report to Halder at the beginning of April.<sup>4</sup> The result was excellent; Halder took Dohnanyi's long report and studied it carefully. He doubted its reliability but none the less promised that next evening he would put it before Brauchitsch and ask him to read it at his leisure. The morning after he had a stormy reception: 'You should not have brought that to me. It is simply high treason. Under no circumstances

<sup>1</sup> V. Mueller's evidence at the two Huppenkothen trials (February 2, 1951 and October 14, 1952); also G. Weisenborn, *Der lautlose Aufstand* (pp. 241–2); Kosthorst; and Thomas's notes: Halder's evidence at Munich and Kaltenbrunner's reports to Bormann November 29, 1944. Thomas's statement that Goering was considered possible for the new cabinet seems to me unlikely to be correct in light of the Ouchy conversations. The original of the report known as the Kiesel report published in *Norddeutschen Heft*, 1947, parts 1 and 2, seems now to be lost and Huppenkothen's statements are a relatively good substitute.

<sup>2</sup> Kosthorst says that Rome expected a *coup d'état* about the beginning of February.

<sup>3</sup> V. Thomas's note headed 'The Opposition'. He felt that it would correspond to betrayal to the enemy of the fact that the military leaders could do nothing to increase a readiness to make peace. He forgets that Britain had no intention of making peace with Hitler.

<sup>4</sup> Hassell, p. 145, confirmed by Halder's diary. What Wheeler-Bennett (p. 492) says on the strength of a John memorandum about the giving of the 'X-report' by Thomas to Brauchitsch is clearly wrong.

can I share in such doings. In war no contact with a foreign power is permissible to a soldier.' He was furiously angry and demanded that whoever brought the report should be at once arrested; the report itself he would send through official channels to the 'proper quarter'. Halder's answer was characteristic of a man whose courage equalled his sense of responsibility. 'If you're bent on arresting somebody, you had better arrest me.' Brauchitsch recovered from his burst of temper but at the first stage the action prepared with so much difficulty had failed.

This correct product of the old Prussian tradition was mentally and spiritually unable to take the leap into illegality. He went very far when he burdened himself with the guilt of remaining silent when it was a matter of treason. When he argued with Halder later that getting rid of Hitler would accomplish nothing of practical use for the war was one of ideologies which had to be fought out, he seems to be repeating parrotwise the clichés he had learned and so concealing his own political uncertainty and irresolution. The impossibility of making a revolution with his help was clear.

Halder from all reports<sup>1</sup> seems to have been faced with a crisis of conscience. He felt mistrustful of Dohnanyi's document; on Alsace-Lorraine its suggestions were clearly impossible; there was no signature. How far was the British Cabinet bound by it? Was it really a firm basis for a great political action? He wrote a letter to Goerdeler in which he said: 'The Army will do its patriotic duty even against Hitler, if circumstances make that necessary'.<sup>2</sup> Only in an extremity could action against the government be justified. But 'for the present' such action was not possible — the decisive campaign in the West must first be carried through.

That did not mean that victory was certain. As before, Halder reckoned with reverses in the field which would make a *coup d'état* easier. But he now saw the situation as rather different from what he had thought at the beginning of winter that it would be. Since then work had gone unceasingly to strengthen and improve German armament, on the plan of deployment, on the thousand and one details of a break-through operation; the General Staff was also striving to get for the West a better occupation régime than had been the case in Poland. Photographs, taken from the air with the latest devices, had shown that the French line of defence was technically far less complete than had been thought and that the French Army had done virtually nothing in the way of reinforcement and ex-

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Goerdeler's, v. Hassell, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Schlabrendorff, p. 62; Hassell, p. 143. The letter fell into the hands of the Gestapo and Halder was confronted with it in 1944.



pansion. The generals commanding armoured formations, Hoepner and Reichenau, who had originally been extremely sceptical of success, now were much more optimistic about the chances of a break-through than they had been when Goerdeler questioned them.<sup>1</sup> The High Command knew that reliable information about the objectives of a German offensive had reached the enemy. Since the unfortunate landing of the German plane in January it was to be expected that vigorous counter-measures would be taken for the defence of Belgium and Holland. But there were no signs that they were being taken. Clearly the Anglo-French war leaders were not risking entering neutral territory until the Germans attacked.<sup>2</sup>

It was natural that such changes in the situation should influence Halder's political attitude. In a long talk with Beck in January he had argued against the latter's excessive pessimism about the coming offensive in the West. At the same time he had refused to make the Army a sort of 'domestic servant' to the civilian resistance groups, to do the cleaning up without reflection on the political consequences. With those who thought like him he was ready as before to act as a 'storm troop', but there was no sense in storm troop action if there was not a solid front behind it. Such a front could only be created by a genuine political movement extending from Left to Right and there was not even a trace of such a thing. The task of the civilian resistance was not to give 'counsel' to the Army, but to create that movement. No more than Brauchitsch would he undertake a second 'Kapp-Putsch'.<sup>3</sup>

Their talk had ended in disagreement and up to April Halder's attitude had not altered. There was no hope now of extending the Resistance movement more widely; the Army was feeling much more confident, thus lessening the chances of a generals' 'putsch'. While Halder was wrestling with his conscience after having received the Rome report, there came the shock of Hitler's resolve, against the advice and without the co-operation of the General Staff, to launch the adventurous attack on Denmark and Norway. The Army Command had pronounced against it because it was an expedition contrary to all military principles, half-dependent on luck and involving a needless division of the German forces and also because so brutal an assault on peaceful neighbours whose territory was far away from the actual zone of operations and who thought themselves safeguarded by treaties signed by Hitler himself, must inevitably and justly confirm Germany's evil reputation as an aggressor. The un-

<sup>1</sup> Gisevius, ii, 238.

<sup>2</sup> Bor., p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to me from Halder.

precedented brutality of it was visibly a great shock to Germany; what the official propaganda said, that it was undertaken to forestall a British invasion was not believed — though today we know it was true. Thus the Opposition group in the General Staff for a time could well believe that the adventure would miscarry and in the reaction, favourable conditions would be created for a *coup d'état*.

That this opinion was mistaken was soon clear. The expedition was successful beyond expectation<sup>1</sup> even if it cost the Navy losses that could not be replaced. Hitler's triumph, too, was over the objections of his generals and respect for the military leadership and political wisdom of the West sank to zero — and not only in Germany. Today no one but admits that Halder was right in his warnings against hasty preventive action, and that such action, viewing the war as a whole, would have been politically and militarily a disaster rather than a gain. At the moment the situation was such that, if Halder or Brauchitsch, presuming they found the courage to do so, had appealed for resistance to Hitler's leadership in war, they would have raised against themselves a storm of rage in the country and in the Army. No one save the narrowest circles of the conspiracy would have understood such action. Thus any attempt to induce commanders of Army Groups to protest to Brauchitsch or to get the attack delayed such as had been made as late as the beginning of April, was hopeless. Thomas who hitherto had been the most active of all in advocating it, now advised against it. He was in complete agreement with Olbricht, the Chief of Staff of the Army of the Interior, who belonged to the Opposition, that now other methods of getting rid of Hitler would have to be found.<sup>2</sup> Now the great offensive in the West, the prelude to a world war, could not be stopped.

The fact that the military opposition could do nothing to prevent either the aggression on Denmark and Norway or that on Belgium and Holland made its position extremely painful. The Rome conversations had laid it down that inactivity on the Western front should continue so as to give the Opposition opportunity for its *coup d'état*. How could the British partners to them fail to get the impression that they had been ensnared by a group of disguised Hitler agents, just as, in the notorious Venlo incident of November 9, 1939, British secret agents had fallen into the hands of Gestapo men when, be-

<sup>1</sup> V. the excellent account based on first-class sources in W. Hubatsch, *Die deutsche Besetzung von Daenemark und Norwegen*, Goettingen 1952.

<sup>2</sup> V. his note headed 'The Opposition'. Thomas visited Witzleben at his headquarters in Frankfurt and begged him to influence the Western commanders against a Western offensive. Canaris sometimes with Dohnanyi pressed them (including Reichenau and Kluge) in the same sense (v. Huppenkothen's quotations from the Zossen papers at his trial May 1, 1951); cf. also Hassell, pp. 145, 156.

lieving these were representatives of the German Opposition, they had gone to the Dutch-German frontier? To say the least there would be suspicion that it was all a dirty double game of German nationalists who had no intention of making a *coup d'état*.

Appreciation of this appears to have been one of the motives<sup>1</sup> for an action by Oster which, as no other action of the Opposition did, broke all bounds of patriotic restraint, which, when it became known, provoked endless angry criticism and which even today threatens to cloud the memory of his moral heroism — even in the minds of well-wishers. Oster since November had been taking advantage of his old friendship with the Dutch military attaché Col. Sas not just to warn him in general terms of Hitler's intentions with regard to Holland — there were already plenty of reports of these — but actually to mention dates. In the same way news of the approaching aggression in Scandinavia had reached the northern capitals as early as April 4th,<sup>2</sup> and now, late in the evening of May 9th, Sas was able to telephone — in veiled terms — to his Government that the attack would come at dawn next day. It can be conjectured that an indirect warning from Rome without a date which reached the Hague at the beginning of May came from the same source — allegedly via Dr Mueller — and that Oster was again the inspirer of the warning given to Belgrade in April 1941.<sup>3</sup>

In each case it was obviously a question of betrayal of military secrets to the enemy done in full consciousness of their formal illegality as 'high treason' and not just a game played 'by military counter-intelligence' for the 'deception of the enemy' as many have tried to represent it. Admittedly we can only speculate on Oster's motive but his friends have no doubt that it was his deeply-felt hate of Hitler and his aggressive plans, a hate which could be called fanatical had it not been born of a genuine moral indignation, the indignation of a straightforward and gallant soldier at the barefaced crime of aggression against friendly neighbours which had not the slightest to do with military necessity and could not be justified — as in 1914 — by reasons of self-preservation or as caused by technical military requirements. This desire to come so far as they could to the aid of innocent folk unjustly attacked sets him and his friends very far apart from the 'bloodsuckers' and 'tyrants'. It was simply that inner moral compulsion which made him reject all formal restrictions of

<sup>1</sup> So Gisevius tells me.

<sup>2</sup> V. Hubatsch, p. 137. Wheeler-Bennett's story of a warning to Leopold III from Oster via Count Albrecht Bernstorff and his subsequent conference with Queen Wilhelmina is not in Eelko van Kleffens, *The Invasion of the Netherlands*.

<sup>3</sup> Absagen, p. 203.

legality, a rejection which in official eyes made him a traitor for whom death was the punishment. To understand the depth of the repulsion which Hitler's methods of making war roused in him, one must remember that as a member of the Counter-Intelligence he had personal experience at close quarters of the preparations for the campaign in Holland — the creation of fifth columns and bomb squads, the provision of Belgian and Dutch uniforms for paratroops and spies, organization of murderous attacks from ambush on the guards at bridges and a thousand other devilries in which Hitler's madness revelled while to an honourable soldier they seemed a profanation of his calling.

The question does of course remain open whether the method was justifiable which Oster used to counter such illegal acts of violence. In the notorious Brunswick case against Remer, it was laid down that high treason arose from the wicked intention of doing hurt to one's country. That Oster's intention was not to hurt his country but to help it goes without saying. But did he not hurt the Army when he exposed it to great danger? Did not his duty to his people and his own comrades take precedence over any duty to the foreigner? That such duty was paramount was the conviction of all members of the Resistance movement except the Communists. They were against military sabotage and did their best to secure military success, though they knew that every victory in the field and in the air meant a fresh increase of strength to the power and authority of the Dictator. What Oster did was severely judged by many of them when they heard of it. Yet it cannot be compared with the treason of the Communist 'Rote Capelle'. Oster never strove for the defeat of Germany and her delivery to foreign domination; all he wanted was to see the failure of aggression against other countries. His endeavours might well cost the Army heavy losses. Yet if the Norwegian enterprise had failed in the first stages and the attack on Holland and Belgium had been held up at the frontier defences, then, as he reckoned, might have arisen, the situation which Hitler's opponents needed for revolution, for the spell of his invincibility would have been broken and the safety of millions would have been bought with the blood of a few thousands.

As we have learned, the national unity is not the highest consideration. It may be one's duty to destroy it. What is formally treason can become a moral duty but only when there is clear prospect of thereby saving one's country. It is here that to me Oster's action deserves criticism. He must as a soldier have known that betrayal of the dates of aggression could not really affect the issue. Neither Danes nor Norwegians, Dutch nor Belgians could thereby have derived any real advantage. They could not in any case reckon with timely

British or French aid. They did not risk asking it on the strength of the warnings from Berlin. In Scandinavia they did not take them seriously and virtually up to the last minute regarded them as a propaganda trick. Plenty of warnings had reached the Dutch which, after the invasion of Norway, had built road blocks, prepared for the demolition of bridges and dykes and taken such precautions as did not seem contrary to their positions as neutrals. Up to dawn on May 10th they took no other step so as to give Hitler not even the shadow of ground for his breach of neutrality. The night before the invasion, a couple of minor bridges in the south were blown up, a few machine-gun posts set up and a thousand or so Germans in the capital taken into protective custody — that was all the results which Oster's 'treason' had; it was, as it turned out, virtually superfluous.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Plans for the Future of Germany and of Europe*

THE UNPARALLELED victories of the German Army in Holland, Belgium and France made the position of the Opposition entirely hopeless. All the doubting by professional soldiers and able politicians was at a stroke made absurd. More brilliantly than ever had the furious will to power of the great adventurer triumphed over the caution of his military and political advisers. It was useless to deny that better than any of them had he estimated the inner weaknesses of the Western democracies and the technical superiority of German armaments to the out-of-date weapons of the French. It would have been wrong to contest that his vehement advocacy of swift, bold attacks in the rear of the enemy and exploiting every technical possibility which the new weapons offered, had contributed in great measure to give the German offensive that tremendous and unexpected impetus which produced so swift and so overwhelming a victory, even if at a critical moment, just as in the Norwegian campaign, the 'supreme war lord' faltered and by amateur interference with his generals' plans prevented the complete annihilation of the British Expeditionary Force. By and large the unbounded pride with which in the Reichstag on July 17th he surveyed his conduct of the campaign was not unjustified. How perilous would the effect of this one victory be when his excessive self-confidence became megalomania was seen only by a few whose opposition to him came from the moral depths of their being and who could not be misled by any appearance of success.

It says much for the genuineness of the convictions which sustained the Opposition that on nearly all of them the victory had a shattering effect, making them see the future with despair rather than hope. 'National Socialism, as it now is, has no soul. Force is its religion and what will come is godlessness, a soulless, cultureless Germany and perhaps a Europe without conscience and without culture.' That was their general fear and it shows how very far these men were divorced from nationalist ambition and imperialist dreams of power.

The most impressive proof of that is a memorandum<sup>1</sup> by Goerdeler

<sup>1</sup> Dated July 1, 1940; undated: seven-page typescript.

which at the high tide of the Hitler victory on July 1, 1940 was written for the Army officers. The brilliant Army leadership receives its due meed of praise. But their victory 'gives the Army great power and still greater responsibility'. War is never an end in itself; its aim can be nothing but a happy and lasting peace. 'From such a peace we are farther away than ever — this war serves the ends, not of constructive design, but of fantastic scheming such as once before we saw in the Napoleonic era.' We could have had such a peace without war. The wild propaganda of hate now being carried on against the British 'nation of shopkeepers' is simply libellous abuse. 'It will not be possible before history to throw the responsibility for this war on others: it was the present German government which knowingly willed it': 'Had Britain and France remained neutral they would by 1940 or 1941 have been in deadly peril.' The Hitler régime needed war because, as a result of its financial and economic policy, it was at its wits' end. And what of the future? There would be no gain even if Britain was overwhelmed and America did not intervene, even if the West capitulated and Bolshevism was pressed back or destroyed, even if Germany was in military occupation of all the area from the North Cape to the Cape of Good Hope, from the Atlantic to the Dnieper or the Urals. Why not? Because Hitler is quite incapable of ruling that vast area in such a way as to preserve the honour and freedom of the nations living in it and that is the indispensable condition of achievement. 'The system which lives in Germany by financial idiocy, economic oppression, political terror, injustice and a morality which corrupts the young and persecutes the Christian, does not think in terms of creative work under German leadership.' Where such a system is in power 'then must sooner or later come the collapse ordained by the laws of God'. A tyrant can never create anything but a tyranny; each fresh success makes him not wise and moderate but always more ambitious, more brutal, more filled with the lust of conquest. Goerdeler painted a horrible picture of Europe's future under Hitler — impoverishment of the masses, destruction of every cultural value, extermination of the intellectuals, especially in the East, and an end to the freedom and individuality of all nations, 'a welling up of brutish men, of the rag tag and bobtail of the inexperienced and the ignorant'. For the next fifteen years Europe could not be fed without imports from America. The effects on Asia of such development in Europe would be inconceivable and universal misery would be the most fertile ground for the spread of Bolshevist ideas.

As conclusion, Goerdeler quoted Stein's famous call to Frederick Wilhelm III on October 12, 1808 for resistance to Napoleon: 'For the

honest man there is no salvation save in the conviction that the wicked are capable of every wickedness. To trust a man of whom it has been so truly said that he has hell in his heart and chaos in his head is more than mere blindness; when there is nothing to expect but misfortune and misery, the more willingly does one take a stand which is right and honourable and which offers compensation and consolation should things turn out badly.'

Never was the moral indignation which inspired the Opposition better or more clearly formulated. That at this hour of Germany's greatest military success they had no hope at all of carrying the Army leaders with them, needs no explanation. It is none the less worth noting that the group round Stueelpnagel on the General Staff did not, even at this high noon of victory in France, lessen their efforts but 'intensified them'.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1941 they tried, but without success, to gain the ear of Brauchitsch or one or other of the generals commanding at the front.<sup>2</sup> Nor did Goerdeler cease to record his views on Germany's future and to clarify his own mind on the positive aims of the Resistance movement. During 1940 he produced a whole series of memoranda which added to criticism of the Hitler régime proposals for reform.<sup>3</sup> They are relatively moderate in tone so that we may conjecture that they — or, at least, some of them — were intended to win over to the Opposition the hesitant and those who were completely outside it, and convince them by practical arguments. They were also intended as material for lectures or debates in more restricted circles. Some recommendations, e.g. those concerned with the economic treatment of occupied countries were clearly addressed to members of the Army and appealed plainly to the soldier's sense of responsibility. 'The many brave and patriotic officers devoted to their profession who have let themselves be dazzled by fine new barracks, new armament, ultra-modern weapons, swift promotion and the like, who now shed their blood and rejoice over victory, will one day together with the entire nation regret and pay for their credulity.'

<sup>1</sup> At a meeting in Stueelpnagel's headquarters in Paris he, Fellgiebel, Wagner, Stauffenberg and Tresckow agreed that it was still possible to make a *coup d'état*. Halder convinced them that at the moment it was not: confirmed in a letter to me from Halder.

<sup>2</sup> Hassell, pp. 174 sq, 215 sq, 224.

<sup>3</sup> There are: (1) no title, dated June 15, 1940, 17 pages (rise in prices and economic policy); (2) State of Education, July 1940, 11 pages; (3) Financial situation, July 1940, 17 pages; (4) Economic and administrative situation, September 1940, 24 pages; (5) Principles of the peace economy, lecture, October 1940, 37 pages; (6) The General Situation, October 1940, 24 pages; (7) The Time, November 1940, 6 pages. There is also a refutation of Ley's fantastic plans for social reform given to foreign press correspondents in September 1940.



Further closing of the eyes, further yielding to any form of egoism would be unsoldierlike in the deepest sense'; the decisive question is put whether we shall remain deluded and self-deceived and so despite all territorial gains, ensure the fall of German power, or whether we 'with wisdom, courage and sacrifice will as responsible men master destiny and reverse its course'.<sup>1</sup>

As is usual with Goerdeler, review of the economic situation is the starting point. The shortage of raw materials, he says, causes much anxiety and prices are steadily rising. Simple compulsion by the State is no remedy and least of all can the problem be solved by looting the occupied countries and deporting their population to be labour-slaves. It is infinitely more to the point to encourage their national production ably and conciliatorily and divert their exports to Germany. Only where law, morality, national freedom and self-government have been restored can results be expected. Instead there are the 'inhuman crimes' in the occupied territory in the East; 'these must and will be a stain on German honour for many a day'. 'The officials there pay no attention to the instructions of the Reich Government; they plead the Fuehrer's special orders.' What exists is a 'satrap economy' and the same is now seen in the West. The military governors in Alsace-Lorraine and Luxemburg have no powers of administration; all power is in the hand of Nazi Party satraps. Nor is it only in the occupied countries that there are crimes. The killing of mental incurables in Germany is a monstrous thing which cries out to Heaven and which ends any confidence in the régime, even among citizens well disposed to it. Everyone asks anguishedly where all this can lead.

Such inhumanities are the outflow of a totally corrupt régime which does not admit freedom, which corrupts administration by indiscriminate appointment of party men and denies the principle of self-government because it refuses to recognize the independent responsibility of the individual. This is particularly emphasized in a paper on the education and the upbringing of youth. Here, besides the demands made long ago by *bourgeois* liberalism, we have a serious warning against the militarization of the whole life of the nation and an education which is in essence a demand for blind obedience. 'For the soldier there is, besides obedience, consciousness of responsibility.' That too is brutally suppressed. Questioning of any kind is considered lack of goodwill and thus 'there develops a situation where there is no check on command, no responsibility in obedience. The individual has been lost in the collectivity.'

Against this oppression by the state and the party terror Goerdeler

<sup>1</sup> In the third of the papers mentioned in preceding note.

sets his own ideals, those of the liberal constitutional state. 'Iron justice' secured by judicial independence, uprightness and honour as the bases of public administration, the ending of denunciations and spying instead of multiplying them — these are the indispensable foundations for the creation of a true national community in which confidence reigns and not mistrust.

But most impressive is the independence of judgement with which he extends to the domain of international relations his system of the free responsibility of the individual; the task of the new Europe will be to reduce to order the competition of national economies and national cultures. He protests passionately against the oppression of foreign peoples and against the war which in the last instance — and certainly in its present proportions — was unnecessary. Always he opposes his own ideas based on the British Commonwealth to the slogan 'Living-room for the Germans', room which must be conquered and held by brute force. 'No people lives alone in this world; God has also created other peoples and sees to their development.' It is only a materialist view of history that can teach that that state fares best which embarks on a course of extreme recklessness and relies on force. 'Eternal war means continuous dissipation of strength; eternal oppression of others is in open conflict with the divine command and offends against that reason which demands recognition of the facts that only free men can reach the heights of accomplishment and that only by co-operation can they maintain and improve their existence.' In war attention must be paid to the lasting peace which should be war's aim to obtain. Therefore not every form of conducting war is permitted the soldier; there is a measure of destruction which makes unrealizable this final aim. Talk of 'total war' is but a counsel of despair if it means the total independence of the military element; Bismarck's statesmanship made that very plain.

Goerdeler did not let himself be imposed upon by Hitler's great foreign victories. He declared in October 1940 that we were still far from a decision. Since the Four-Year plan of 1936 Germany's economic strength had been ever more severely over-strained. 'There is no doubt that by the autumn of 1941 only such rationing will be possible as will mean in practice starvation' and will lead to a serious fall in production. In another passage he mentions August 1941 as the date of collapse, one of those mistaken calculations of his which we often meet. He thought that this dismal situation could not be much altered by further conquests in Spain, Africa and the Balkans, nor even by incorporating Russia into the German 'market area', for Hitler was capable of nothing but brutal, life-destroying looting. Above all, Europe would remain cut off from the resources

of America and Asia which in the long run it could not do without.

But how possibly could the situation be improved? Neither Spain nor the Balkan states nor Finland were of any real use as allies. The incapacity of Italy to wage a great war had long been evident. Her lack of raw materials and need for armaments made her more a burden than a help to her ally. The war was extremely unpopular in Italy and Mussolini must reckon that 'the overwhelming majority of the Italian people will rise against him if he fails to bring the war to a reasonable end in the near future; the Italian soldier has no desire to fight and die'. The Italian people's ability to hold out 'will scarcely last to the winter of 1941-2'. To prevent a revolution Mussolini will try to gain minor successes, in Yugoslavia, possibly, or in Greece. In such diversions Germany has not the slightest interest for they mean nothing but dispersal of strength. In order to keep the Italians turned to the real major aims of the war, there would be no other course than to send German troops to places which the Italian Army should have been able to take.<sup>1</sup> Japan's resources were nearly exhausted. She had burdened herself with the colossal task of conquering China and was of little use to us as an ally. Economically she was a dangerous competitor of all the European states. A reconciliation with France and Britain was beyond the power of the present German Government so long as there existed in these two nations a spark of the will to freedom. That spark still lives in France despite all the appearances of collaboration; Prussia 'collaborated' after Jena without ever in her heart admitting defeat. 'He would not be a Frenchman who from now on does not pursue one single aim — the liberation of all his country. France cannot be kept down forever; we should seek a compromise with her but that is impossible so long as there is no respect for the freedom of other peoples.'

Finally Russia 'after the events of the last seven years cannot for a moment doubt' that she cannot desire, but must only dread, an Axis victory. Had she been stronger internally and not been wasted by Bolshevik 'collectivism' she would long ago have been at the side of the Western powers. No doubt, while she bides her time, she would be pleased to see German troops attacking Egypt and hope that the capitalist powers would tear each other to pieces. In her doctrinal pigheadedness she probably expects world revolution. For the moment Stalin tries to 'navigate between Scylla and Charybdis'. But there must come a time when he will think himself compelled to intervene

<sup>1</sup> The document here analysed was written in November 1940. He anticipates Graziani's advance and its defeat and the need to send German aid as was sent in February 1941.

lest he arrive too late; all that is uncertain is the date.<sup>1</sup> It is surer than ever that America will not leave Britain in the lurch. Already the United States is giving her virtually all the help it would give after it became an ally in war. It does not matter at all whether or not Roosevelt is re-elected. The United States cannot permanently stay out of the war, but it can quite well afford to wait a year before declaring war, so as to appear in the arena with the necessary forces either in the Pacific or the Atlantic.

There is no hope for the future so long as the Hitler régime lasts. The war is thus now without meaning for it cannot possibly lead to a good peace. Why then go on with it? The end will be a terrible awakening and there will be a hunt for those responsible. Noting certain expressions of individual Nazi officials, Goerdeler felt that 'the flight from responsibility has begun'. It would be fatal to wait till the end comes of itself. No political decision is free from risk. Courage must be found to take the risk and also the ability to find the right moment to do so. Why wait? Even a total victory in arms will lead to misery for it will mean the moral break-up of the German people, the ruin of all higher culture and sooner or later the revolt of the conquered peoples. 'German power will collapse with astonishing speed.' Or should we wait till our enemies win? The longer we fight, the greater is their hate of us and the result will be a terrible fate for Germany. If the war ends, as did the Thirty Years' War, through universal exhaustion, the universal misery will not be less. Everything depends on ending the war at the right moment 'particularly as long as the armed forces still mean something and Germany herself, though in distress, can still maintain herself economically'. But if the Army waits until the German war potential through the working of a law of nature becomes exhausted, then it will be definitely too late.

No one can read through this memorandum without realizing how completely Goerdeler had cut loose from the nationalism of the 'German nationalists' and from the pan-German Hugenberg, how high he has risen above the old Prussian 'militarists' worship of power. He certainly remained a very conscious German patriot who refused to let the present stain on the German name rob him of his pride in the great days of German history. We shall later see how he never lost the hope that in the future Germany, a new, a 'renewed' Germany would play a leader's part in Europe. He had not become either pacifist or a blind imitator of foreign models. But his Germanism had widened into a genuine Europeanism; the excess of national-

<sup>1</sup> In November Goerdeler knew nothing about Hitler's preparations to invade Russia.

ism in Hitlerism had opened his eyes and those of like-minded comrades to the dangers of a one-sided policy of force. That so fiery a patriot showed himself always deaf to the appeal of a national victory, that, as before, he refused for moral reasons to bow down before this blatant Baal, is something noteworthy to which in contemporary history it would be hard to find a parallel.

The strong impression they make is hardly lessened by the fact that his memoranda are written in an old-fashioned style, sometimes a little diffuse, but always didactic enough to remind us of a sermon.<sup>1</sup> His views on economics were not free from doctrinaire prejudices; his political thought was strongly influenced by his utopian confidence in the power of reason. But how, had he lacked this confidence, could he have found the strength for his valiant endurance in a virtually hopeless battle against tyranny? Decisive for our judgement of him is the strength of his moral convictions which never let him slacken effort or fall into despairing resignation as did so many of the able men of the Resistance movement, and not least his nominal chief General Beck. His fellow-conspirators often reproached him for over-simplifying problems and not without some justification. But one must set off against this the astonishing conscientiousness of his liberal thought which reduced home and foreign politics to a common denominator, to the concepts of the self-responsibility of the free man and the free nation, of free competition kept in moderation by a reasonable organization of economy and society, of the State and the outside world. For him, the heir of the old liberalism of the Steins and the Humboldts the word freedom still had its full resonance and the idea of freedom its full content.

It seems more profitable to speak of these things rather than to relate in detail the war-time activities, so often narrated already, of the Opposition with all their dramatic episodes. The indefatigable efforts for a *coup d'état* form a tragedy of constant failure, partly because of insurmountable difficulties, partly because of mysterious accidents whose regular occurrence had something of uncanny fatefulness about them. It will suffice to give an outline of them. What is of more importance is to answer the question — how did the men of the Resistance envisage the reconstruction of Germany and Europe after their revolution had been made? Had any new ideas been thought out which might today, even if only partially, be of significance?

Our information on Goerdeler's plans is contained in a long

<sup>1</sup> Which may explain the use of the name 'Pfaff' (parson, priest) in no friendly sense under which Goerdeler appears in Hassell's diary.

ninety-nine page memorandum headed 'The Aim'.<sup>1</sup> It was enlarged by a series of studies from 1942 to 1944; the last of these was written in prison.<sup>2</sup>

When fragments got to the German public in 1946, there was criticism of what was described as a 'reactionary attitude', a reproach which representatives of the Socialist Left in the Opposition had much earlier levied against him. To pass a just verdict on this reproach, it may be well first to ask how Goerdeler viewed the German past; he gave a very full exposition in 1944.<sup>3</sup>

In Imperial Germany he criticized the lack of legal clarity in the constitution on the responsibility of the Chancellor to the Emperor and the Reichstag. After Bismarck's fall, the fact that the Chancellor was too dependent on the arbitrary will of the monarch and had neither Reichstag nor Cabinet behind him worked fatally in the domain of foreign policy. The Reichstag had no clear responsibility to the people since a vote by it of lack of confidence could not bring down the government. The electoral system with its second ballot where no absolute majority had been obtained in the first, was much inferior to the British system of a relative majority for it favoured bargaining between the parties and so the formation of 'Splinter parties'. Fully approved was the system of far-reaching self-government in the federal states, the provinces, the counties and communities. Still more important, the freedom of the individual was unconditionally assured. Law and order prevailed throughout the public life. 'But the government committed the fatal error of com-

<sup>1</sup> It is undated: from internal evidence I conclude it was written at the beginning of 1941. A copy in possession of Capt. H. Kaiser was seized by the Gestapo at the end of July 1944. The first sentences are virtually identical with those of document 6 and on p. 8 there is reference to documents 2, 3 and 4. In style and content 'The Aim' is unmistakably Goerdeler's.

<sup>2</sup> Documents (in continuation of footnote 3 on p.172): (8) The Problem of Unemployment, 7 pages, undated but after December 1, 1940; (9) Money plays no Part, 63 pages, June 1941, a sort of 'economic fable' written for a teacher in a military training school; (10) A historical retrospect, 61 pages, without title and undated, but evidently written in spring 1944; (11) Practical Measures for the Reorganization of Europe, undateable but probably part of a longer piece written in spring 1939; (12) State aid to art after the war, 3 pages sent on August 29, 1943 to theatre-manager Schueler in Leipzig; (13) Thoughts of a Condemned man on Germany's future (written shortly after sentence had been passed on him on September 8, 1944, 42 pages; (14) Our Ideal, November 1944, 40 pages; (15) A document which I have not seen and whose authenticity I doubt, published in extracts in the *Neue Zeitung* of February 1, 1946 (v. my article in *Nordwestdeutsche Hefte* for December 1946, p. 6 sq); it is based on documents 13 and 14.

<sup>3</sup> The main source for this is document 10, which was hidden in a publisher's offices by Goerdeler's private secretary and recovered in a sorry condition after the war.

bating the political and trade union labour movement and so intensified the idea of the class struggle.' The workers were represented as enemies of the state.

That led to a criticism of economic and social policy. Naturally Goerdeler eulogized the liberal economic system of imperial times and the blessings of what was then still a free world-economy. Competition should never get out of hand but be internally controlled by legally establishing the rules of the game and externally by well-planned control of foreign trade. State and communal economic activity was conducted on the whole on sound lines and the notable results of German social policy were as recognized as was the enormous progress in the economic life in general. None the less there were some dark places. 'The great mass of the workers had to work too long, a ten- or a twelve-hour day. Claims for regular holidays were steadily rejected and there was no payment for public holidays.' The wages system was very imperfect. 'Virtually nothing was done to relieve the monotony of toil.' 'The employers treated the workers from the standpoint of a master-class'; in very few cases was there any real personal contact; the worker had no interest in the concern which employed him. The social order had its 'harshnesses and injustices'; it was not such as to permit the broad masses of the workers to enjoy the fruits of the rising standard of living or to allow a sound development of property relations. The workers' trade unions were not recognized as the exclusive negotiator of wage contracts. The State committed the decisive fault of mistaking the significance of the unions and of thinking that it could halt a development which, with the concentration of capital and workers in great businesses, was inevitable. Thus it drove the workers to entrust themselves to political parties which represented their interests and then committed its second fault 'of combating these parties and excluding their members from public office'. The result was tensions in the political life which extended even to philosophy and religion. These were not the unavoidable consequences of the liberal economic system, but of the class-egoism of the *bourgeois* class which refused to recognize 'the full equality and responsibility of the workers in the economy, in the administration and under the constitution'. That these difficulties would have been overcome peacefully was not to be doubted.

With remarkable knowledge and moderation he passed judgement on the foreign policy of Imperial Germany after the fall of Bismarck. Neither France's desire for revenge nor the jealousy of Britain play, in Goerdeler's exposition, the part which they play in patriotic legend. He said simply that German policy failed in its main task which was to avoid being driven into isolation after the abandonment of the

Reinsurance Treaty with Russia and to answer the menacing Franco-Russian alliance by completing in time an *entente* with Britain. The blame for that does not rest on 'the equivocal personality' of Wilhelm II nor on his irresponsible advisers but, in the first instance, on the fact that Bismarck's constitution had defined the responsibilities neither of the Emperor nor of the Chancellor nor of the Foreign Minister. 'A clear policy was not followed; the course was from one risk to another until it ended in "the totalizing of war"', that is, in a dangerous upset of the balance between the military and the political leadership. 'The first world war was not deliberately provoked by Germany. It was not the result of evil intent but, so far as the Germans are concerned, of lack of foresight, lack of resolution and a *naïveté* that amounted to stupidity.' Goerdeler is very far from laying the blame for the outbreak of war entirely on Germany's opponents; rather he strives to assess the relative responsibility of all the powers. In his judgement of British policy he approaches very near to Lichnowsky's view without, however, failing to recognize the known defects of Grey's policy.

He has sharp criticism to make of the German political leadership during the first world war. There was failure to estimate correct relative military strengths as well as in resolution at critical moments and in courage, courage to tell their people, as is 'customary in Britain', the full truth of the seriousness of the situation. So 'political ambition ran wild' and Ludendorff pressed 'into the vacuum of political will'. His attitude and Hindenburg's are criticized as being totally apolitical. It was that attitude that had delayed the timely conclusion of a hopeless war, that then hurriedly wanted to end it and so created political chaos in Germany. Goerdeler refused to make the Left entirely responsible for the revolution of 1918; the Right played its part by making excessive demands for too long. He will hear nothing of 'a stab in the back' of the Army for 'as far as human judgement can tell, the catastrophe was inevitable'. Actually, Noske, Ebert and resolute officers had placed 'order and the interests of the Fatherland above everything when they crushed the Spartacist movement'. Ludendorff had sought to solve political problems by military methods; he only made them insoluble. It was a fatal day for Germany when Bethmann let him snatch control of national policy.

Goerdeler then turned to the defence of the Weimar Republic against the extravagant defamations of Hitler. Its constitution was much clearer on the responsibilities of the chief of state than was its predecessors. The ultra-democratic electoral system had bad results for it led to irresponsible election demagoguery. The power of



ministers was too small, a defect particularly disastrous in financial affairs; it made the exceptional laws inevitable. The administration was, in general, efficient, careful and honest; legality was assured; the citizen's personal freedom was secure and the self-government of states and communal authorities developed steadily with fruitful results in spite of the strong centralism of the constitution. His verdict on its economic and social policies was on the whole favourable; failures were ascribed to the attitude of foreign states, to the excessive reparations burden, to the disappearance of the free world market and to the Ruhr occupation with the consequent inflation of the currency. The restrictions and controls of a war-economy gradually disappeared and free competition had good results admittedly vitiated by the creation of great industrial cartels and price rings. The social position of the worker visibly improved but the unemployment insurance system was faulty, that is, it existed without organic connection with production. Both employers' associations and workers' unions made many mistakes. But, and to the honour of the latter, it must be said that generally their leaders were sensible and their members met the heavy sacrifices asked of them.

The Weimar foreign policy he considered a great improvement on the Imperial policy; its aims were clearer; it was better thought out, tougher and more realistic; it represented a great effort which was not without its successes. We forced Britain to support us; through the Locarno treaty we made possible a lasting currency improvement and surprisingly quickly Germany became a full member of the League of Nations. In the spring of 1932 Germany was freed entirely from occupation and reparations; she had overcome inflation and, with a national debt of ten milliard marks, was better off than any other great power. 'There was no chaos; there was no Bolshevism; we had a real constitutional state. . . . These achievements were not understood by the parties of the Right; their opposition was shortsighted to the point of blindness and became demagoguery.' Admittedly in 1932 there was still much to be done; there were still unsolved frontier problems; there was still the question of colonies; there were still restrictions on sovereignty. But we had the right to expect greater progress still. 'Had the Germans, as they ought to have done out of a sense of patriotic duty, kept their heads, short-sighted and ambitious politicians, in part inspired by purely selfish motives, would not have stabbed the government in the back' and then in the foreign political field we should by peaceful means have reached a more satisfactory position and at home unemployment could have been conquered 'through the sacrifice of all'.

It was against this background that Goerdeler directed his criticism

of the home and foreign policy of the 'Dictator'. Hitler has denied all the good old German traditions, stained the German name by horrid crimes such as have no parallel in history especially the brutal atrocities in Poland and the 'deliberate and bestial extermination of the Jews'. Instead of making possible a sound reorganization of Europe his victory has produced only chaos and made it impossible — this was written in 1944 — to liberate the Russian people from Bolshevism. Other nations have waged wars of conquest, the British, for instance, but the British Commonwealth is an example of how a sound and lasting creation can result from the use of military power. Hitler understands only how to destroy and to rouse universal hate against himself and against Germany. Will the result be a second but a more terrible Versailles? Goerdeler refuses to give up hope that our enemies, as well as our own people, will not draw the lessons from bitter experience and see where slackening of the readiness to make political sacrifices leads, that there is a higher task than conquest in war and that it is not our mission to be a 'Herrenvolk'. If it should be that from the wreckage of war a new and better order is built, the war will not have been in vain.

What form should such a new order take? Goerdeler's plans for constitutional reform are revealed in their most concrete form in a memorandum which he wrote in prison in 1944 after he had been condemned to death.<sup>1</sup> Its details derive from long years of reflection and constant discussion with his friends and also with experts, jurists, theologians, economists, trade union leaders, teachers and soldiers.<sup>2</sup> He was unwearied in his effort to discuss and dissect the problems and, despite the obstinacy with which he clung to principles, was never unwilling to learn. In its fundamentals his plan was laid down in 'The Aim' which dates back to 1941.

If one seeks to understand it, one must be able in imagination to put oneself in the situation in which he and his friends were placed. The first great experience was the radical change from equalitarian democracy to dictatorship. None of the great Weimar parties were able to prevent it, indeed, in differing degree, they all were themselves responsible for the loss of our freedom. All their slogans were exhausted of content: the nationalism of the Right just as much as the Marxism of the Left and the confessionism of the Centre, although in the last case this was disproved in the united and hard struggle against

<sup>1</sup> Document 13.

<sup>2</sup> On economic matters he consulted frequently Prof. C. von Dietze (Freiburg) and through him Walter Eucken and Adolf Lampe (both of Freiburg); on social policy Prof. G. Albrecht (Marburg). Among other advisers were T. Litt (Leipzig) and E. Spranger (Berlin).

Hitler of the national churches. No one in Germany was really ready to lift a finger to restore the old party system. There was thus nothing so simple as a 'return to Weimar'. Naturally for the Opposition there was no question of a return to the old authoritarian state of the Hohenzollerns with its sham parliamentarianism. The dangers of mass-democracy were not removed by creating a state based on the Army and the bureaucracy nor by an artificial fostering of the *bourgeois*-conservative elements as nineteenth century France had tried to do. The ending of the old class division between *bourgeois* and proletarian had been the secret of Hitler's political success domestically. We could not go back, and no one was more convinced than Goerdeler of the necessity to 'give the workers joint responsibility in the state'. But how then could the danger, that mass-instinct would rise again and revolt against reason, be averted?

No question interested Goerdeler and his friends more than this. The central problem of modern mass democracy is in one aspect the creation of a sound *élite*, in the other the erection of as stable a government as possible which will not destroy freedom but preserve it. This double problem is treated with special care in Goerdeler's reform plan. He was not, could not be, content with traditional parliamentary democracy; he did not wish to 'be led astray' by Western precedents. He set forth as pre-condition a political maturity of the electors such as they could not be expected to attain in Hitler's Germany. The naïve belief of many Anglo-Saxon politicians in the infallible wisdom of 'the people' is, if I may say so, a mere superstition which is not exposed as such in countries with a relatively assured international position and a relatively undisturbed internal development in contrast to other countries where, as to some degree in France and Germany, it is flatly contradicted by hard fact. The creation of an *élite* can to some extent be the result of a 'de-massing of the masses', a theme constantly discussed in the Opposition. It plays a great part in Goerdeler's plan. He wanted a far-reaching decentralization of industry and to raise the intelligent worker from the mass by giving him joint responsibility in the works that employed him; he laid great emphasis on political education. But these were only indirect methods, long-term in their effects and not always reliable. They did not really help to solve the problem: How does one get a stratum of active politicians who are really worthy of confidence, really educated up to the problems of public life, really capable of judgement? And then how does one get them into political leadership?

The methods he suggested were derived from his own practical experience of self-government and of the reform plans of the 'twenties.

He considered the rural district councils as 'cells from which the state is formed'. They were small, easily comprehended democratic bodies; the larger municipal councils were equally so if their members came as representatives of the smaller districts of the town where personal acquaintance was possible. The choice of the right people remained difficult, but it was decisive for success. Goerdeler thought that they should be looked for in the representative trade associations and trade unions and put on the voting lists on the ground that such groups knew best what was needed by their communities. The selected should be natives of the districts and from 28 to 30 years of age. This method of selection would apply only to half the representatives; the other half would come from 'political movements' which Goerdeler wished rather to foster than suppress, since they could rise above the particular local interests of their colleagues. In every case, election would be by simple majorities; no list system and no second ballots. Thus would be formed the municipal council which would elect the mayor. It would serve as well as an electoral body for the county council along with other representative bodies and thus the rural districts would have the influence to which they were entitled. The members of the county council should be resident in the county but not necessarily be members of lower organs of government. The next stage is the provincial council for the future state should be divided into provinces which would take the place once occupied by the old 'lands' and the Prussian provinces, a conception familiar in the reform proposals of Weimar days.

The provincial boundaries should so far as possible be the same as those of the historic 'lands' and provinces without any artificial rationalization or schematization such as would merely be destructive.<sup>1</sup> But they would now not be separate states in the sense of the 'lands' of the 1919 constitution. The provincial parliament would be elected from the county councils; their members must have previous training in communal administration. It would elect the provincial government and would act as an electoral college for the Reichstag. The Reichstag of 300 members would be elected, half by the provinces and half by direct election, so that choice is restricted as in the case of the lower councils; in each constituency four candidates would present themselves — two from the 'political movements' and one each from the economic groups and the unions. To become a member of the Reichstag a candidate should not be younger than 35 and have five years' experience in a local government.

<sup>1</sup> Goerdeler rejected in principle all new and artificial divisions such as attracted other members of the Opposition; v. W. Muenchheimer in *Europa-Archiv*, v, 14 (July 20, 1950).

Besides the Reichstag there would be an Upper House, the 'Diet', composed of leaders of professional associations, representatives of the Churches and universities and as many trade unionists as there were representatives of the professional associations; and in addition, up to 50 prominent people of any class of 50 years of age and over who would be appointed by the government.

That the politician in the higher organ of government should from his twenties have training in local administration is the most important basis for the creation of a political *élite*. Goerdeler's proposals resemble Stein's; the development is from bottom to top, from the smallest local organ to the very highest. But for Goerdeler, a man of the twentieth century, there is not, as there was for Stein, emphasis on the prior claims of the noble or the large landowner or the wealthy; the greatest emphasis is placed on political equality of all classes, with reference particularly to workers and employers. He will not hear of 'appointments' or 'patronage' by the government, i.e. the selection by it of representatives from a list which the electorate 'presents'. A centralized bureaucratic system such as Napoleon adopted in order to restrain an unruly democracy, was quite contrary to his liberal views; he was concerned less with increasing the power of the bureaucracy than with diminishing and diluting it. Nor could his plan be worse misinterpreted than by seeing in it a sort of imitation of 'the Christian class state' such as the hard-pressed régime of Dollfuss had created in Austria from the extremists of the Right.

He can be criticized on the ground that by his *élite* principle men with local government experience were called to serve rather than men with political training. He would have answered that Germany had suffered enough from power politicians without expert knowledge and administrative experience; and that for the heavy task of reconstructing Germany from the wreck of the Hitler régime there could never be too many of the expert and the experienced; that the political education of a nation which, thanks to the tyranny, was unaccustomed to freedom or responsibility was an extremely delicate task and that in a society so shattered and so 'levelled' as ours, there could be no other foundation for the creation of an *élite* than dependence on expert knowledge and experience in public affairs; the mere possession of higher education could no longer justify claims to political leadership, and the educated classes had on the whole shown themselves not only helpless before the most elementary political problems but more helpless than any other class.

Goerdeler had no intention of permanently insisting on election by the local organs. From the start he wanted half of all the Reichstag members to be elected as representatives of 'political movements'

— a conception not to the taste of many of his associates since at the moment such representatives could not be discerned. But he thought that the risk should be taken, and was confident that his own government, if it once was in the saddle and had brought about an honourable peace, would of itself create a great popular movement 'on the broader basis' in its support. He did not, of course, think for a moment of a new national party or a one-party state. This new popular movement would merely be inaugurated by the government and later would have its own independent leadership. 'In its opposition groups are included and the "movement" should have regard to them when candidates are chosen. Later, parties can develop therefrom — conservative, liberal, socialist, communist.' The suppression of political opinion should not exist, not even against the extreme Left. Goerdeler was convinced that Marxism was now as played out as was the confessionalism of the Centrum Party; the latter 'can never again become the basis for a party any more than the church can be permitted to conduct a super-party policy'. But he added at once: 'Nothing however can be dogmatically laid down'; rather it was here that was seen 'the political art of the statesman' who must know how by his success to win the masses to support him. The new liberal state would put one single restraint on the creation of parties; it would permit only the three strongest parties to be represented and so put an end to the wretched splitting of parties which disfigured the Weimar Republic. The adoption of the British system of a simple majority without second ballots or proportional representation or residential qualification, served the same end.

Goerdeler was deeply convinced that this new democracy in contrast to the Bismarckian state must be firmly based on the working class. Despite the opposition of many of his friends he was, therefore, determined to recall to life the trade union movement. His own experience gave him great confidence in its political reasonableness. He thought of it as an anti-revolutionary organization, aiming at immediate results, especially in improving the worker's standard of living but also in his intellectual education and training for full citizenship. He drew no false conclusions from the intimate connection of the Free Trade Unions with Social Democracy for the activity of the unions in itself was in the nature of a revolt from revolutionary Marxism.

Here the development of his plans were influenced by the relations he had from 1940-1 with former trade union leaders. He found admirable their guiding principle that labour conflicts could be lessened, perhaps ended, by organizing the unity of all those engaged in creative economic work. He wanted to retain the union trustees as

arbitrators in disputes; strikes and lockouts would be forbidden by law. But he wanted labour to be free from party political influences and its finances brought under public control. Above all the natural conflict between the interests of the employers and the workers should not be artificially smoothed away; they should be organized in separate groups 'by trade and by location', so that they could determine agreements for the factory, the town, the district and for the Reich' without any state intervention; the principle of payment by results rather than payment by time should be established. Later he approved an organization plan which was drawn up 'in broad outline' at the end of 1942 after long discussions between the leaders of the former Christian unions (Kaiser, Letterhaus and others), of the Socialist unions (Leuschner and Maas) and the former Nationalist Shop-assistants Union (Max Habermann). Contact was also maintained with the old Hirsch-Duncker unions through Ernst Lemmer.<sup>1</sup>

The basic conception of the 1942 plan was the foundation of a united German union thus getting rid of the old divisions. Kaiser and Leuschner as early as May 1933 had agreed on it and were prepared to work 'to keep alive the will to a free union organization and to prepare for a new order immediately Hitler fell'. Both had sought to publicize their plan but, in 1940, when Goerdeler asked Leuschner about the attitude of German workers, he was told that the great majority, thanks to high wages and certain social gains, were content with the present conditions and that the number of those who clung to the old union ideas was becoming even smaller. Goerdeler was rather aghast at this development. Leuschner for his part was glad of the chance to get in touch through Goerdeler with a group of senior officers and civil servants whose aim was a *coup d'état*. There was created an alliance between *bourgeois* Liberals and Socialists which was maintained to the bitter end, despite some doubts and jealousies on the Socialist side from which it seems even Leuschner himself was not entirely free.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sources: J. Kaiser's article in *Neue Zeit*, February 2, 1947; conversations with Kaiser and Frau Nebgen-Kaiser; the bill of indictment against Goerdeler, Leuschner, Wirmer and Hassell of September 9, 1944; document 13; proceedings in the trial of Leuschner, Maas and Goerdeler; Leuschner's observation and Goerdeler's combined in a report dated August 29th on the position of the working class; a further report of September 13, 1944 deals with the 'German Union'; the bill of indictment against Leber, Reichwein, Maas, etc. of September 19, 1944. Cf. also a memorial address on Leuschner by Prof. L. Bergstraesser on June 1, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Leuschner's statement to the Gestapo. At the investigation Leber and Maas insisted on the 'unbridgeable' differences between Goerdeler and the Socialists; it is hard to determine how far this is to be taken seriously. It is certain that on several occasions Leuschner defended Goerdeler against his party comrades' criticism.

To the 'German Union' all workers and salaried employees would have to belong from the age of 18, the salaried employees in a separate group. It would be fully self-governing. Its great new function would be to take over the social welfare work and the labour exchanges. All contributions in the future should be compensated for by higher pay, for it was their opinion that there was no other way of making the worker conscious of his own responsibility for the right arrangement of his interests with the help of one of the organizations which he controlled.

The most difficult problem was naturally that of unemployment insurance the burden of which in times of real crisis the worker could not bear alone. Goerdeler's solution in the 1940-1 memoranda was a system of subsidized insurance payments such as he had suggested in 1932 and never abandoned.<sup>1</sup> On that point he failed to reach agreement with the labour leaders except on the principle that 'in this case too, the workers must be financed and organized so as to secure an organic wages policy'. The tasks of the union, however, were not to be confined simply to negotiating wage agreements, working conditions and social welfare work. It should undertake a great educational task and so educate the workers in economics<sup>2</sup> that they would be in a position to accept joint responsibility for, and control of, factory management.<sup>3</sup> The union should put forward double the number of candidates for representation in the works council; their representatives would be on the boards of the great concerns (those with more than 50 million goldmarks capital), on the boards of all societies and on the board of trustees of all commercial undertakings and also in all Chambers of Commerce, and Industry and Agriculture, in the upper house of the Reich parliament and in all popular representative bodies. The union to that end would be organized professionally — ten workers' groups and one of salaried employees were envisaged — but also by provinces. Finally the union would have its own enterprises on condition that they were run on proper economic lines and without state subsidies. Goerdeler saw no advantage for the working class in the 'socialization' of industry. At the same time, as he had done in 1935-7, he held to the principle that the exploitation of mineral resources as well as the great transport and supply concerns, which in a sense best functioned as monopolies, should be managed for the common good and that strict economic administration and free competition should be secured. To protect this system against

<sup>1</sup> A whole section (pp. 66-72) of 'The Aim' is devoted to this question.

<sup>2</sup> A favourite subject with Goerdeler; Leuschner attached great importance to it.

<sup>3</sup> Leuschner at his investigation spoke of 'productive unions'.



the great trusts and cartels<sup>1</sup> he wanted the activities of these to be state-controlled and, if need be, limited. Economic decentralization was still one of his pet ambitions.

Consideration of these plans as a whole shows that great economic and political power was given the trade unions and that there was no trace in them — as some Socialists asserted — of '*bourgeois* patriarchalism'. The state as Goerdeler planned it was a popular, one may even say, a workers' state. His scheme caused great concern among conservatives like Hassell, his friend Popitz, the Prussian finance minister, and their economic adviser Professor Jensen, and among members of the 'Kreisau circle'. The Socialists who were then active did not want the single all-German union as a permanency but would hear only of trade unions. Goerdeler thought, however, that 'many questions of social policy could not be dealt with from the standpoint of separate unions, but only from the standpoint of a professional union embracing the whole Reich'; his 'German union' was the leading feature of his new democracy.

On this basis as permanent a state authority as was possible should be created, a task which Germans should unite to accomplish, since otherwise freedom was not safe. The Weimar Republic had been ruined by the helpless weakness and instability of its parliamentary governments. Could a repetition of this tragedy be avoided? This was the old question which in 1948 so agitated the parliamentary committee in Bonn when it drafted Germany's present federal constitution; the way in which it assured the stability of the government was very much akin to Goerdeler's proposals. The Chancellor is not all powerful, but governs on the basis of the resolutions of his nine-man Cabinet.<sup>2</sup> But that cabinet is not a cabinet loosely formed by a coalition of government parties; it is a cabinet of adherents called upon by the Head of the State to assume office. The ministers do not need the formal 'confidence' of both Houses. The head of the state, however, can dismiss them if the Reichstag by a two-thirds majority

<sup>1</sup> Leuschner went further: 'socialization should be confined to basic and key industries; the "free" sector of the economy should be under the planned control of the independent administrative organs'. A letter from J. Ersing assures me that in Goerdeler's intimate circle the nationalization of the mines was accepted; Kaiser in the summer of 1943 sent Ersing a draft of a law to this effect. Bruening's fall was attributed to the 'mining magnates' and it was desired that they should be made impotent.

<sup>2</sup> Composed of the ministers for foreign affairs, education, reconstruction, economics and labour, finance, justice, agriculture and defence; only in the period immediately succeeding the *coup d'état* was the Chancellor to have the right to command.

or both Houses by a simple majority so demand on the condition that a new government is named simultaneously. The 'state of emergency' law is again in force, but in altered form; it is not an emergency right of the President but a simple legislative provision applying to part of the Reich legislation. Normally a law comes into existence through the unanimous vote of both Houses. The initiative rests both with the Houses and the Government. The government can make a law without the consent of Parliament but is compelled to withdraw it on the demand of a two-thirds majority of both Houses. The Budget, tax and customs regulations, treaties with foreign countries and the declaration of war require the consent of Parliament; the government has in addition a right of veto on any resolutions whose financial effect has not been foreseen in the Budget. It can thus protect itself against any extravagant expenditure.<sup>1</sup>

Goerdeler thus hoped to assure the government strong administrative power, but placed it under public control! The limits of the power of the head of the state are less plain. In the great memorandum of 1941 he has the right to dissolve the Reichstag; besides, 'in extreme cases', the declaration of a state of emergency is foreseen which gives him the right to give emergency measures the force of law. Neither of these provisions appears in the later draft. In it the role of the Head of the State is limited to that of a republican 'Protector of the Constitution'.

What was Goerdeler's conception of the Head of the State? In the 1941 document it is said that there 'had been taken into consideration the hereditary ruler, the elected ruler, the dictator chosen for a period. There is no ideal solution such as would in all cases prove to be the right one.' There was a good deal to be said logically for monarchy, though emotionally there was much to be said against it as a result of the bitter experience of the not so remote past. When one considered the strong antagonisms within the nation and the strong military tradition it would seem, from the purely logical point of view, that a monarchy was desirable and a hereditary monarchy at that, since it alone is superior to any kind of mass propaganda. That there are certain dangers in it is obvious. But these are lessened if the monarch's duties are functional and become political only when Chancellor, Government and Parliament are unable to work together in orderly fashion. But, in general, 'he should keep out of day-to-day

<sup>1</sup> In 'The Aim': bills with financial effect can be introduced only with the Chancellor's consent. If the Budget bill is rejected the Government will carry on with the old Budget. This is a provision only for the 'first years of reform' since the 'task of restoring the finances to order is the most difficult of all'. Later, restrictions may be eased.

politics, even for decades'. It is necessary that, after all the difficulties of the last quarter-century, the German people should enjoy a period of calm and that depends on keeping the Head of the State apart from the influences and conflicts of the hour.'

It was not the loyalty of an old German Nationalist to the monarchist tradition but the political necessity of as stable a régime as possible that made Goerdeler, though with reservations, inclined to restore the monarchy. Above all, they had to prevent or at least make it very difficult for any dangerous demagogue ever again to rise to regal power. It was a necessity apparent in those years to many Germans who asked themselves anxiously how, after the collapse of so exaggeratedly great an authority such as the 'Fuehrer state' possessed, a new symbol could be found powerful enough to prevent chaos.

The Opposition possessed no really popular figure. As a result of this the recall of the monarchical symbol was considered in order to make the *coup d'état* popular. Hopes of this sort took a new lease of life as result of the tremendous impression made on the public by the heroic death in battle on May 26, 1940 of Prince Wilhelm, the eldest son of the Crown Prince. More than 50,000 people attended his funeral in Potsdam — which so terrified Hitler that he forbade any member of any of the old reigning houses to serve in the Army. But a Hohenzollern restoration encountered the difficulty which virtually all attempts at restoration have met; it was well nigh impossible to find a suitable Pretender. Objections were raised on all sides to the former Crown Prince, the strongest by those who knew him best. Popitz who was the most zealous of all in planning a restoration, thought for a time of Prince Oskar, but soon dropped him in favour of the Crown Prince's second son Prince Louis Ferdinand. He was strongly recommended by others, especially by Otto John, head of the legal department of the Lufthansa who knew him as an employee of his firm, and had, as early as 1937, initiated him into the aims of the Opposition. John himself was one of the men of action of the Resistance movement and since 1939 had brought the Prince into touch with those who thought like him, including Hammerstein, Dohnanyi, Dohnanyi's brother-in-law Klaus Boehoeffer, also in Lufthansa, Klaus's brother, the theologian Dietrich Boehoeffer, the merchant Justus Delbrueck, the lawyer Dr Wirmer of the old Centrum Party and now one of the most zealous of the conspirators. Jakob Kaiser also got acquainted with the Prince and Goerdeler himself visited him on his estate of Cadinen. These two were deeply impressed by the cosmopolitan open-mindedness, the realism, the giftedness and culture of this scion of the Hohenzollerns who had so radically cast off the traditions and prejudice of his rank and who in

Ford's factories had known and shared the daily toil of a modern factory worker. There were, of course, some doubts whether the thousand vicissitudes of his life abroad had allowed him to retain that dignity and bearing which is of the nature of monarchy, but these were soon dispelled by consideration of the positive advantages he possessed, including good personal relations with President Roosevelt.<sup>1</sup> Above all, he was ready, if a *coup d'état* took place to put himself at the disposal of the conspirators if only as a 'private citizen' and wrote a memorandum at John's request to that effect. He thus gained the sympathy of many but he never became the 'Pretender' of the Opposition. The obstacles in the way were too great.

It was foreseen that the possibility of a Hohenzollern restoration would meet with strong resistance in Bavaria and Austria even among those who were members of the Opposition.<sup>2</sup> But, even if that was ignored, there remained the difficulty that the prince was reluctant to obstruct the claims of his father and grandfather. Wilhelm II died on June 4, 1941, but the seniority of the Crown Prince could not be passed over, for he alone was recognized by the Army as heir to the succession and a former Army commander. A plan was therefore made whereby the Crown Prince should issue to the nation and the Army a proclamation in which he declared, that he had not renounced the throne 'in order to deliver the Reich into the hands of madmen and criminals'. 'The Fuehrer has by his secret sentences of death broken his oath to the German people.' He, therefore, now stood by the throne of his father, by a throne which did not suffer injustices, and took over the leadership of the Reich, and the command of the armed forces and would do all he could to win an honourable peace acceptable to other nations. Then he would at once abdicate in favour of Louis Ferdinand.

An undated draft of such a proclamation was found among Goerdeler's papers. Who drew it up is not known; it certainly was not Goerdeler. It seems most probable that it dates from the critical winter of 1942-3 when the Stalingrad disaster made the chances of a revolt seem rosier and roused the conspirators to frantic activity. From a report made by the prince which Jakob Kaiser supplemented in a conversation with me, we know that two meetings were held, the first in the house of Professor Boenhoeffer, the father of the two

<sup>1</sup> To ascertain Roosevelt's views, Kaiser in November 1941 called a conference of members of the Opposition with the American journalist Louis Lochner who agreed to sound the White House; on the declaration of war with the U.S. he had to leave Germany. Roosevelt refused to receive him or his information on the Opposition as 'highly embarrassing'; v. Rothfels, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> V. Hassell, pp. 141, 227 and elsewhere.

conspirators, and the second in Klaus Boenhoeffer's house. At both these were present besides the prince, Goerdeler, Jakob Kaiser, Leuschner, Dr Wirmer and that arch enemy of Hitler, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin; Hassell attended the second. The prince was urged to come forward as claimant to the throne and give the signal for a rebellion of the generals. Long ago Kaiser and Leuschner had been asked whether the sections of the nation which they represented would agree to a restoration of the monarchy or would resist it. Both thought the support of the mass of the people was certain since there was no other way of destroying the régime of the tyrant. The prince took the position that his father could not be passed over simply because of his conception of 'the son's duty' (in the sense of the dynastic right of succession) and not at all because he thought that his intervention as claimant was hopeless. He felt he must ask his father; how that father would answer was obvious to all who knew the Crown Prince. He at once refused to risk such a dangerous adventure and urgently warned his son, and successfully, to have nothing to do with conspiracies of such a sort.<sup>1</sup>

That ended the matter for good and all. In his notes of 1944 Goerdeler speaks only of a governor-general whom the government which would be formed would elect for four years, first by a vote of the Upper House and then by both Houses in united session (in the manner of a French presidential election). It appeared to him very doubtful whether the monarchy could be restored although he preferred that it should be. But among those of the Hohenzollerns and Wittelsbachs who were thought 'worthy', Louis Ferdinand is not named.<sup>2</sup> Goerdeler was ready to be content with a governor-general or a president, but either should be at liberty to stand again after his term had expired and after a third election he should be considered elected for life. What interested Goerdeler was the principle of lastingness.

There may well be shaking of heads at the idea of a Hohenzollern restoration. The author himself shook his head when, about January 1943 Goerdeler told him of it. There were younger members of the conspiracy who were dead against it because they wanted to avoid anything like a 'régime of reactionaries and junkers' like the Papen government.<sup>3</sup> But it must not be overlooked that the Opposition had to win

<sup>1</sup> Prince Louis Ferdinand, *Als Kaisererkel durch die Welt*, 1952, pp. 358-68, which reveals the Prince as a man to whom life seems in the main a kind of sport.

<sup>2</sup> The only Hohenzollern named is Prince Friedrich, the Crown Prince's youngest son — a name which so far as I can see is never mentioned again.

<sup>3</sup> Trott's view; v. Hassell, p. 240. Trott had the curiously unadult idea of making Niemoeller Chancellor.

over to a *coup d'état* the sympathy of the older officers who remembered the Empire, and that what they planned was not a mere restoration of the old Empire but a truly constitutional monarchy in which the functions of the monarch were reduced to purely presidial ones rather on the British, Dutch and Scandinavian model. A Hohenzollern prince who had the enormous courage to put himself at the head of the German Resistance movement that had become unendurable at home and had failed in the field of foreign policy, and so risked his life, would have assuredly at one stroke changed the historical position of the monarchy. The painful memories of 1918 would have been wiped out. How it would have worked out politically is less easy to say. Perhaps what the labour leaders said was correct that, under the appalling pressure of a war now robbed of all prospects of success in which our enemies through the air weapon threatened to destroy the whole life of the nation, broad masses of the people would have preferred a monarch who brought peace to the continuance indefinitely of their misery under a 'Fuehrer' whose rule since Stalingrad had become even more detested by the nation. We cannot draw any more definite conclusion than that.

It remains now to discuss certain details of his plans and finally to compare these with the plans of other resistance groups. The most important is the division of competence between the Reich and provinces, districts and communes. It is easy to recognize here the principles underlying the Lohmayer reform projects of 1928 — great development of the lowest-scale organs of self-government, far-reaching limitation of provincial authority, concentration of the most important sovereign rights in the hands of the central authorities whose legislative activity lays down the chief features of provincial authority. In each province a governor-general (up to 1941 still called an 'oberpraesident') superintends the work of the organs of administration not interfering on trifling matters and not with the aid of bureaucrats tied to their desks, but through 'travelling inspectors', though never infringing the 'unity of internal administration'. One could call his system political centralism for the real political decisions are all taken in the capital and the provinces function simply as communal administrations of a highest type. None the less they are to have their special interests considered since half the members of the Reichstag come from their own representative bodies and are all trained in local administrative work. And as the intervention of the 'state party' in administration is ended, another pillar of National Socialism, over-centralization, is demolished.

Goerdeler's proposals for a future financial reform are consonant with his constitutional plans. Income from taxes will be granted only

to the communes and the Reich; all other authorities will be financed by levies and by the income from their own enterprises. He hoped thereby to simplify fundamentally the taxation system. The reform would be carried through only after the new state had been firmly established and its immediate financial necessities relieved especially in the case of war debts, a difficult problem.

The more closely knit the state was internally, the more difficult appeared the problem of its future relations with Austria. To get clarity on that subject Goerdeler and Jakob Kaiser visited Vienna in October 1942. They found a good deal of opposition to tying Austria closer to the Reich, but a readiness on the part of some politicians who inclined to the pan-German view, to stay in the Reich after Hitler's fall; on the whole however, what was wanted was a special position for Austria which no longer was content to be just a 'province'. It was agreed that the specialness of her future position must be emphasized, possibly by including an Austrian as minister without portfolio in the cabinet, by transfer of part of the machinery of government to Vienna and perhaps also by occasional sessions of the Reichstag in the old Imperial capital.<sup>1</sup>

A further and most important question was that of the future relations of Church and State. It hardly need be said that Goerdeler desired to free the Churches from all the constraints with which the Third Reich had afflicted them. Unfettered self-government without intervention by a state Church official would be guaranteed them; their property would be restored to them as it was in 1933. The state would only reserve to itself the right of confirmation in their offices of the 'superiors', leave untouched the right of taxation, but add state subsidies — a proposal the legal and practical significance of which Goerdeler scarcely appreciated. The activities of the Churches in the training of the young, in school education and social welfare would not only not be restricted, but would be encouraged, especially in the sphere of religious teaching. He thought free competition between state and ecclesiastical schools and welfare institutions would be most desirable since it would produce increased effort on both sides. He thought that in the nineteenth century the Protestant Church had become too much a preaching church since the state had deprived it of too many practical duties and had increasingly limited it to the conduct of services and to preaching. The Churches, he thought, should become genuine national churches.

His position was definitely that of a layman and not unlike Stein's.

<sup>1</sup> Communicated to the author by Kaiser; v. Goerdeler's account of his political connections with Seitz and Reither (at G's interrogation by the Gestapo), (*KB*. 6. ix); Weinberger, *Tatsachen, Begegnungen und Gespräche*, Vienna 1948, p. 120 sq.

He even went so far as to wish to apply state compulsion to alter the structure of the churches. By a threat of abolishing the right of taxation he hoped to compel the provincial evangelical churches to unite in one great German church and the Roman Catholic Church to elect a German primate who would appoint the holders of 'the Higher offices'. How little from the churches' point of view that was consonant with the principle of their self-government he appears not to have noticed.

His solution of the Jewish problem was highly original. Needless to say he intended to compensate the German Jews for their losses and sufferings. But he sought also a lasting solution which would enable them to escape from their unseemly status of a more or less unwanted 'guest people' in European countries. He thought it should be the task of the future conference of the Powers to create an independent state for them in which they could freely settle, in Canada, for instance, or South America, for Palestine was too small to suffice. Then they would have their own homeland and their own diplomatic status like any other nation. If they could show a record of army service or appeal to a long family tradition they would not be refused German citizenship.

Finally, let us briefly consider Goerdeler's view on how to root out National Socialism. As a true liberal he would not ban the party nor make party membership a reason for punishment or slight. He did not believe that political insight and personal courage were universal qualities of mankind, a lack of which should entail punishment by the law. With ruthless severity every violation of the law and, especially acts that were inhuman in their beastliness, and equally any sort of corruption should be punished, without respect of persons and by German courts. He attached great importance to the expiation by the Germans themselves of the crimes which had covered with shame the good name of Germany; thus they would proclaim their desire for a general reformation. Only such a self-purification, he held, would have moral results such as no enemy court martial could obtain, for that would but create new bitterness. Therefore, one of the first and most pressing tasks of a new German government must be the prosecution of all who had committed crimes in Hitler's name.<sup>1</sup> He hoped that, after a public declaration of the atrocities for which the National Socialist leadership was responsible, the party itself would break under the burden of accusation and would lose all political significance without a ban upon it being necessary. In

<sup>1</sup> The various degrees of responsibility and the various motives for criminal acts are dealt with in Goerdeler's draft for a government declaration which I published in *Die Gegenwart* of June 24, 1946.



spite of all the crimes committed Goerdeler never doubted that the moral fibre of the nation was still sound; without such a conviction he would have seen no reason in the Resistance movement.

His plans, considered as a whole, appear as an attempt to continue the old historical tradition not in the form of a restoration but of a genuine renewal and reform. What was out of date was to be destroyed or changed and the lessons be learned from past mistakes, a natural thought of one who was trained in the communal self-government of the Weimar epoch and had himself been associated with plans for its reform. His conceptions particularly in the field of economics were founded on *bourgeois*-liberal concepts, but he was courageously prepared to broaden democratically the basis of state and society and not only to recognize the workers as citizens with equal rights but to give them a share in responsibility. He recognized that the possibilities of state planning are limited and distrusted everything in the nature of the total ordering of life by the public powers. His plans are sober, sometimes too simply conceived, but they are bold and clear and, as a whole, of astonishing compactness. Behind them is a moral sense and a patriotism the genuineness of which no one can doubt.

No other resistance group produced so comprehensive and clear a plan for the future. Nearest to it came the drafts for reform by the group around Helmuth von Moltke and Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, called later by the Gestapo 'the Counts' group' or 'the Kreisau circle.' It is worth while making an exact comparison between their views and Goerdeler's for the differences and agreements inside the movement played no inconsiderable part.<sup>1</sup>

What may be called the prehistory of their plans can be traced in the drafts which Peter Yorck von Wartenburg drew up in consultation with a few friends, including Graf Fritz von der Schulenberg, and Graf Berthold Stauffenberg, brother of the hero of the attempt on Hitler's life. Yorck was one of the noblest, bravest and most attractive figures of the Resistance movement. He was a deeply earnest Christian<sup>2</sup> and, as with many Christians in Germany, it was the abominable atrocities against the Jews in November 1938 that

<sup>1</sup> For the Kreisau circle v. T. Steltzer 'Der Kreisauer Kreis' in *Von deutsches Politik*, 1949; E. Zeller, pp. 70-89. I have seen various manuscripts including memorial sketches by Graefin Freya von Moltke and P. von Husen. See also the judgement in the trial of the Kreisau group. W. Wengler in *Die Friedenswarte*, no. 6 (1948), pp. 297-305 deals with Moltke's indirect resistance while a member of the legal section at Wehrmacht Headquarters.

<sup>2</sup> His last letter to his mother and wife shortly before his execution I saw in U.S. War Department's archives in Alexandria, Va; for Moltke's letters, v. H. J. Graf von Moltke, *Letzte Briefe aus dem Gefaengnis* 1953 (4th ed.).

first roused in him political indignation. A copy of a draft constitution which was circulated in his group from the end of 1938 to the spring of 1940 has, it seems, not been preserved. But a report which I possess indicates that it emphasized the decentralization of the Reich and transfer of power to the provinces; stress was laid on communal self-government. The national economy was to be organized on a class basis — all points which come up again in the so-called 'Kreisau Papers'.

The 'Kreisau group' had its origin in Yorck's friendship with Helmuth von Moltke, a grand-nephew of the great Moltke and owner of the Silesian estate of Kreisau. From it arose the religious protest against National Socialism and its brutal rule of force and in the political company which the two friends gradually gathered round them, theologians and laymen interested in church and theological matters played a very prominent part. Both churches were represented in it by men who combined theological training with an unusually keen interest in politics and expert knowledge in the practical questions of life. The evangelicals were represented by Eugen Gerstenmaier, perhaps the most learned and vigorous of German theologians,<sup>1</sup> and one who had come from business life; the Roman Catholics by the young Jesuit Alfred Delp well known as a writer and lecturer on the questions of modern life. Moltke, half English by birth and a member of the English Bar, seems to have set his hopes so far as foreign policy was concerned, on Christian circles in Britain and shared in the oecumenical leanings of the Anglicans; at least an understanding between the two churches was a favourite topic in the Kreisau discussions. Father Delp introduced Moltke to the social ethics of the Papal encyclicals which greatly interested him. Inspired by representatives of the German Youth Movement and the Voluntary Labour Service, he was determined on social reform and had handed over part of his estate to become peasant small holdings. Plans for social reform and the overcoming of class hostility formed another of their chief topics and what can be considered as their most significant and still memorable achievement was to bring together representatives of the radical Left and members of the aristocracy and the churches in close and friendly co-operation. True Carlo Mierendorff and Theo Haubach were a special kind of socialist; they were not old heroes of the labour movement, nor workers who had risen to be party officials, but educated men of *bourgeois* origin who, like their contemporary

<sup>1</sup> It is a little ironical that the People's Court sentenced him to imprisonment (thus saving his life) because he made such an impression on his judges as a harmless, unworldly and honest man. He maintained that the Kreisau activities were innocent and stuck to that in spite of shocking maltreatment.

Schumacher, had tried by virtue of their superior intelligence and scientific training to impose themselves within the party on a spiritually exhausted doctrine and, in practice, opportunist party bureaucracy. The first world war in which they had both served with distinction, the comradeship of the trenches and the chaos of the revolution that followed — here they found the great political experience of their lives; in the intellectual atmosphere of Heidelberg saturated with political radicalism, and with its interest in aesthetics and philosophy their culture was fashioned. Despite great achievements as popular orators, journalists and organizers, particularly in the Socialist Youth Movement and in the 'Reichsbanner' their life in the party was not a happy one; Mierendorff had shown himself here the stronger and more active political force. They had proved the sincerity of their convictions through cruel years of torture in prisons and concentration camps. From the sources we have it is not easy to say what ideas they contributed to the Resistance movement. Mierendorff's chief concern seems to have been the struggle to prevent a continuance or revival of militant nationalism for the toleration, even the encouragement, of which in the Army he blamed the Weimar democracy especially the Defence Minister Gessler. To it he opposed the ideal of a European reconciliation and federation. Both believed in the possibility of a new national life through the combination of socialist reforms in economic and social affairs with patriotic feeling — but that not in Hitler's sense. They were independent of Marxism and sought a new relation with Christianity. Haubach, more a philosopher than a man of action, is described by a friend as a convinced Christian. Mierendorff accompanied Moltke on visits to the Roman Catholic bishop of Fulda, Dr Dietz, in order to discuss with him the social teachings of the Church. These two young Socialists had completely emancipated themselves from the party tradition of free-thought. Against the demon of a godless policy they appealed to the ideal of a 'Christian state' as the Moltke circle conceived it.<sup>1</sup>

This, it seems, does not completely hold good of their friend Julius Leber who, after Mierendorff's sudden death in an air raid in December 1943, was reckoned the outstanding political figure among the Socialists. He found the 'Kreisau circle' too academic and only occasionally took part in their discussions; Stauffenberg appears to have been his chief supporter. Of working-class origin he had risen

<sup>1</sup> On Mierendorff, v. the memorial speech by C. Zuckmayer in *Portrait eines deutschen Sozialisten* (privately printed) and reproduced in *Die Wandlung*, 1945-6, Part 12. The Socialist youth leader Alma de l'Aigle (v. her *Meine Briefe von Theo Haubach*, 1947 and his fiancée, Frä. Anneliese Schelchase both strongly emphasize Haubach's Christian convictions.

by his own efforts, and his long service as journalist, communal councillor and Reichstag member had gained him practical experience in the daily work, the rare triumphs and the cruel reverses of the Social Democratic Party. Calm but strong willed, he had not let himself be moved by the horrible experiences of long imprisonment. His papers (published by his friend Dahrendorf, one of the circle's trusted agents) give a clear impression of his personality and his political opinions. The most impressive is his ruthless criticism of his party written in prison in the summer of 1933. It is the criticism of a young activist, just as Mierendorff was; it strove to turn comfortable opportunism into fighting action. The positive aims are less clear. Here again we find the desire to create a new people's community which would replace the old 'Class Socialism' and which would lay emphasis on the conception of the Fatherland. Leber, unlike too many of his party, appreciated the need for comprehensive armament. He was not an anti-militarist in principle but certainly was very distrustful of the undemocratic spirit of the Army. But he had still the old mistrust of the '*bourgeois* politician' of the Centre and the Right. During the years of distress from 1930 to 1932 Leber was a passionate opponent of Bruening's 'crisis legislation', particularly attacked the cuts in wages and salaries as the policy of a '*bourgeois* bloc', yet at the same time demanded police action to keep low 'the fascist rabble'. Looking back, he said in 1933 that 'he could no longer put up with the old party system and that another form of democracy must be found. Bruening was the former's champion, and it was Bruening's fall that brought democracy to an end.'<sup>1</sup> The most important thing is the realism with which he declared that democracy demanded 'a sense of responsibility and discipline' on the part of the politicians, that democracy is not the rule of the masses, but that selection is needed, that is, of real personalities who are known to the people. He rejected proportional representation and demanded a strong and stable state authority as the best bulwark of freedom. He criticized in detail the Marxist theory of the class war and completely rejected it. He held fast to this aim, 'the ending of the capitalist epoch with its selfish economic liberalism and the proclamation of human labour as the criterion of social worth'. As a socialist he valued the man who believed in the possibility of a social transformation which would no longer 'allow property to be the criterion of all social worth and values' and made participation in the cultural heritage of the nation dependent on it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leber p. 232 *sq* from p. 242 it seems he was in favour of supporting Schleicher in January 1933 as the last bulwark against Hitler.

<sup>2</sup> Leber, pp. 224, 247.

If Leber thought that, holding such views, he was in opposition to Goerdeler's social conceptions, there was clearly a misunderstanding, perhaps due to imperfect knowledge of Goerdeler's work. Their one real difference was in the economic sphere on the question of state management to which Goerdeler was wholly opposed. No programme for the solution of these problems was drawn up by Leber. He was much more a practical politician than a theoretical planner and had the ambition one day to take the helm of state. He was occasionally just as critical of the interminable academic discussions of the 'Kreisau circle' as of the views that were held in it of 'Christian policies'. Of Catholic origins, but indifferent in religious matters, he was more openly and more deeply distrustful of clerical strivings for power than were the circle's Protestant members. Sometimes he angrily refused to speak of a 'Christian state' or of a 'Christian churches' mission from God in a secular state'. None the less he favoured Christian teaching of the young.<sup>1</sup>

Less a politician than a reformer was the fourth Socialist at Moltke's round table — the teacher Adolf Reichwein. He came from the Youth Movement and throughout an adventurous life had held fast to its ideal of the free development of personality and now sought that development in new forms. No programme of his own could be expected of him, but his own radical socialist views and those on education find expression in the 'Kreisau plans'. In so far as these exist in writing they give the impression that on constitutional questions there was a good deal of disagreement with Goerdeler. Their plans for a constitution have some resemblance to his, but there are important differences. The loosening of the fabric of the state is carried very far. How far is hard to tell, for the Moltke document is couched in vague, and from the juridical point of view completely unclear, terms and is indeed more an exposition of political-ethical principles than a draft of a constitution. That is the more obvious since the draft is in form instructions for the future 'provincial regent' to whom it seems the task of building a new Reich is left entirely. None of the authority and military power of a government is given him; he is instructed simply 'to possess himself of the necessary instruments of power, seek contact into the churches and the German union' (which has to be constructed), to reach agreement with neighbouring 'regents' on an immediate 'delimiting of new frontiers'

<sup>1</sup> The Catholic lawyer P. von Husen speaks of the terrible arguments he had with Leber, trying to convince him that parents should not be compelled to send their children to a Christian school. Leber was proud of the fact that he was the only member of the Social Democratic parliamentary party who had refused to leave the Church.

(according to map appended), to create a new self-government system (on principles as attached), to proceed to a reorganization (not defined) of his province's economy, but without loss of labour, to take over 'the necessary moneys' and, regardless of any resistance, take all measures to maintain the fighting efficiency of the armed forces.

One would expect such instructions to come from a newly-established national government. Of its powers, of any division of competence between the Reich and the Provinces, and of the task of the central authority at the moment of revolution nothing is said. On the contrary, we are told that the 'Kreisau circle' did not intend to form 'a new government'. Instead at 'the given moment' — whether this would be after a forcible deposition of Hitler or after a military collapse there was no agreement — a 'group of respected men as plenipotentiaries of the German people' would be appointed provincial regents in the various provinces (not simply in the old 'lands' but in the provinces to be created). The task of creating the new order would fall in practice to the regents.<sup>1</sup>

Whether such a plan had any chance of success and what the consequences of success would have been need not be discussed. But it shows how biased was Moltke's interest in the federal structure of his new state; in his efforts to gain new adherents in Bavaria he had dwelt on this aspect of his plan and explained it on a map. 'Germany in its present state (i.e. the centralized state) is anyhow a challenge to the world.'

The same tendency is seen in his proposal to compose the Upper House which he calls 'Council of the Reich' of heads of provinces and to form the Reichstag entirely, and not half of it as Goerdeler planned, of members of the provincial parliaments. These parliaments, unlike those envisaged in Goerdeler's plan, are not viewed as corporations of the higher communal administration but as political organs. They are elected by the district councils, which themselves are elected by the communal councils. The future Reichstag like the Upper House would be entirely composed of representatives of provincial particularism. Finally the statehood of the provinces is made clear by the fact that they have a provincial president and a provincial government and a state head (provincial regent), as well as a sort of Upper House whose functions are not further defined.

The main interest in the 'Kreisau drafts' lies in the relationship between state and church, in the educational system, in economic and

<sup>1</sup> On all this v. Steltzer. For the map v. Muenchheimer, p. 2191. The map there given seems to derive from Fritz Schulenburg and Haushoefler neither of whom were members of the Kreisau circle. V. Graefin F. von Moltke (as cited in note 1, p. 197) and Steltzer, p. 84.

social policy. There is mention of 'full co-operation of the two great Christian Churches in public life' as well as of a state-sponsored 'collaboration of leading personalities with a bishop as representative of the two Churches for a joint management of all questions concerning the Christian way of life which affect the public life', a conception which clearly corresponds to Goerdeler's wishes, but in the form here given is clearly utopian. There is the proposal that an Evangelical and a Catholic primate be appointed to negotiate with the national government; at the same time there is offered for consideration a plan for 'a German Christendom' to which all Christians without reference to confession can belong and see to it that, in 'all affairs in which the state is concerned', the Christian standpoint shall not be overlooked. How church autonomy and the sphere of the state is to be defined remains unexplained. The phrase 'Christian State' is avoided, but the state school is to be a Christian school with compulsory religious teaching which will be the task of the church, and preferably be done by clergymen. It is surprising that there is no discussion of the two most controversial questions, the confessional school and the rights of parents for, though it is said that 'the right is maintained of parents to have their children educated in Christian principles and according to the demands of conscience', nothing is laid down on the nature of the school. As for the universities, a division and gradation is proposed, reminding one slightly of the Anglo-Saxon difference between colleges and graduate schools. State high schools will provide technical training and above them will be the universities where research and teaching are combined according to the old German tradition. The aim is clearly to relieve the university from the burden of a mass entry of average students who require only technical training for their future. The education of theological students is left entirely to Church colleges.

The economic programme under the influence of Socialist ideas envisages a centrally controlled state economy but in which, it would appear, room is left for a free market economy. While Goerdeler made the central point of his plan increased production through free competition and the independence of those responsible for it, the Moltke programme puts as the central task of the economic leadership the 'security of the workers' standard of living'. Goerdeler wanted this to be achieved especially by way of co-operative self-help, through a great union organized with the help of the state which would represent the interests of the worker against those of the employer, administer the whole social welfare system and have its members not only on the boards of directors but in the various Chambers of Commerce and the like. The 'Kreisau plan' speaks of a co-operation between

the individual, the factory, the economic organs of self-government and the state to ensure the standard of life, but gave no indication how this co-operation would function in practice. The 'German union' appears only as a transitional step in the realization of the economic programme and 'the new state that will thereby be created'. Both ends attained, it will disappear and its functions taken over 'by the organs of the state and the local economic administration'; how and in what proportions is not stated. 'Works unions' are suggested as a permanent feature. The future national government will see to the development of each individual factory into an economic co-operative community of all those who work in it and this community will be called the 'works union'. Through it 'the participation of the employees in management and in results, especially in the increase of value of the concern' (nothing to be said about decrease?) 'will be arranged between the owners and the representatives of the employees with the approval of the "self governing provincial corporation" by which is meant apparently the provincial chambers of commerce'. As we know Goerdeler's plan provided for the workers' right of co-decision and so for the economic activity of the unions. But here it seems a question of something rather different, of a 'negotiated transformation of private enterprises' with a sort of association for production to the advantage of the workers' without any formal suppression of property rights.<sup>1</sup>

We find also clear survival of the traditional Social Democratic programme in the demand for the nationalization of certain industries; this Goerdeler on principle rejected in all cases except in the 'natural' monopolies of transport and water supply. But the relation between state and private economy is left singularly obscure. 'The national government' it is said, 'regards orderly competitive production as the foundation for economic reconstruction'. But this competition will be carried on 'within the framework of the economic state leadership' and remain 'under permanent state control so far as its methods are concerned'. Transport is placed under central state 'control and superintendence', but without further definition of these terms. But it is reasonably plain that it is intended that monopolies, cartels and combines shall come under state control in the sense that they are eliminated as hindrances to 'orderly competitive production', and not as the instruments of a central economic leadership. 'Key enterprises in the mining industry, in the heavy industries, in the chemical power industries' should become 'public property', that is, taken over by the state, but governed 'according

<sup>1</sup> Leuschner and Maas thought all this smacked of 'syndicalism', referred it back to Mierendorff and rejected it out of hand.



to the valid general principles of economics'; what is meant probably is that they must be made to pay. 'The businesses and large industries' in the provinces are to be under the permanent 'authority' of the Reich, a provision which is not easily reconciled with the circle's conception of the political structure of their Reich which is thought of as a loose federation. At the same time we hear constantly of 'an economic independence according to provinces of industrial, commercial and handicraft concerns' — with the co-operation of 'Chambers of Commerce' who together with the corresponding 'Chambers of Agriculture' (also arranged according to provinces) will be amalgamated into 'Provincial Chambers of Commerce'. All these chambers are comprised of equal numbers of employees and employers. Their function is not more clearly defined. There is only very general mention of 'economic self-government' apart from 'advices' which the provincial agriculture offices (probably the provincial economic ministries are meant here) should give; only the superintendence of apprentice training is given as a concrete task of such self-government. Finally a state Chamber of Commerce is put over the provincial chambers and a Reich economic ministry is placed over the 'provincial economic departments' without any explanation how the two state authorities divide their functions and how these are related to the functions of provincial authorities.

Such, so far as we can tell from the papers we now have, were the reform and reconstruction plans of the 'Kreisau circle'. That resistance group consisted entirely of highly educated, highly intellectual and critical minds. Its leaders were inclined to look a little disparagingly at Goerdeler's more prosaic plans though they highly esteemed his character and welcomed him as an ally; they thought of them as '*bourgeois-reactionary*' even, in Moltke's words, somewhat '*dilet-tanteish*' in comparison with their own. In a detailed memorandum which Theodore Steltzer wrote for the Western allies in July 15, 1944 and sent to London in order to portray to them 'the German opposition against National Socialism' — in anticipation of a reorganization of Germany by the victorious powers — he declared 'that, ourselves apart, there is no circle supported by anti-Hitler independent groups which is able to rally *all* the constructive forces of the country'. There were other resistance groups particularly a 'conservative circle with avowed intention of taking action'; the men of Kreisau, however, did not for the moment think that 'they could be taken very seriously'.<sup>1</sup>

Anyone who carefully compares the plans of both parties will hardly share such a derogatory opinion, indeed, would be inclined

<sup>1</sup> Steltzer, p. 87 sq.

rather to say that the boot was on the other foot. Goerdeler who had to suffer sharp enough criticism from 'the Counts' group' and its friends, some time in 1944 as he looked back on these controversies spoke of 'young men without experience', but he suppressed his feelings and constantly sought to find a basis of compromise so that a united front could be formed. Without denying the romantic character of their inchoate programme for the future, he was ready to use their talent in the reconstruction he had planned and to give their strongest political representatives outstanding posts in the new government.

He was supported in his efforts to find a compromise especially by Fritz von der Schulenburg who had been closely associated with Yorck since 1938 and shared in drafting the plans that have just been described. He did not, however, belong to 'Moltke's round table'. Nor had he spared those who sat there criticism for their over-theorizing; you can't make policy, he said, in purely literary discussions. Like Goerdeler he was a man with a practical administrative record whom bitter experience had driven into the Opposition camp. Active, energetic and discontented with the dull bureaucratic routine, he joined the National Socialist Party in 1932 as a follower of Gregor Strasser from whom he expected internal administrative, as well as social, reform, the latter in the sense more of the pro-labour young Conservatives who were enthusiasts for 'Prussian Socialism' than of the Marxists. His illusions were rudely shattered by his experiences in 1933 in East Prussia where in high office in Königsberg he was able to study party corruption at close quarters in the person of Gauleiter Koch. Though as a party member he held up to 1940 high office, by 1937 at the latest he had become a bitter enemy of the régime; a year later we find him concerned in the military opposition's plans for a *coup d'état*. Since then he had regarded as his main task such elaborate preparation of plans for a complete clearing out of the Prussian administration of corrupt elements and party agents as would enable these plans to be carried out immediately on the outbreak of revolution. Further, he strove by a well thought-out and clear plan to help to restore order within the state administration which was now in chaos as a result of the indiscriminate appointment by Hitler of more and more state officials with far-reaching special powers. To enable the first task to be accomplished it would be necessary to secure men of standing who were technically competent, completely trustworthy and free from party dogma; he had already found enough to make a long list of names, and had thus come into contact with all sorts of men; he was thus specially fitted to act as intermediary between the various Resistance groups.

The fulfilment of the second task, the simplifying and rationalizing of the state administration formed the subject of many official memoranda which he drew up as head of the province of Upper Silesia. He also drew up a comprehensive reform plan of his own which was completed in the spring of 1944 but of which no trace has been found. It can be traced in the Gestapo reports which I saw in Washington, but there they are so mixed up with the Goerdeler plans that no separation is possible. But these sentences can be ascribed to him :

'The aim of administrative reform should be to make responsibility clear and give freedom for independent decisions. The deficiencies of the present system are seen particularly in the confusion of special power and special responsibilities without regard to future developments, and in the over-rigid centralization which is seen in the handling by central authorities of trivial administrative business. A once proud administration is now just a collection of machines going aimlessly round and round. The lack of clarity about responsibility has led to a widespread lack of any sense of it, so that ten and more sections have to give their consent to even unimportant decisions. The solution lies in an efficient organization of the ministries, a restoration of the authority destroyed by the special powers system which has resulted in an undermining of the competence and authority of the ministers, and finally in the development of local self-government.'

According to the report of one of his collaborators some fifty-eight of the highest state authorities were to be dismissed and their functions transferred to nine state ministries. Schulenburg had obviously devoted much thought to the details of the new organization and to the separation of the functions of the central state offices from those of the organs of local self-government. He was increasingly competent to do so after his appointment as legal expert on the staff of General von Unruh — he had been in military posts since 1940 — where his duties included participation in the combing-out of members of the administrative services who were fit for military duty; he thus became acquainted with every section of the State administration.

It is to be understood that for Schulenburg the decentralization of the State administration meant a great strengthening of local self-government. How far he intended to go in that sphere cannot now be known, whether as far as the extreme 'federalism' demanded by the 'Kreissau circle', or only as far as the division of Prussia into provinces, as Goerdeler wanted, but without granting the new provinces state status. What is reported of his plans for a new delimitation of provincial frontiers is obscure and contradictory. But it is clear

that, in opposition to Goerdeler, he did share in the laborious, constantly changing and never fully satisfactory efforts of many members of the Opposition to alter the old historic provincial frontiers through a new division of Germany on rational principles. Thus the many contradictory viewpoints of local loyalties, old tradition, geography and transport and economic considerations would be reconciled, or, at any rate, in part. Planning of this kind had been begun by the Hitler Government in the new department, 'State Office for Territorial Organization', but was later discontinued. The statistical and geographical material which had been assembled was examined by Schulenburg in collaboration with Albrecht Haushofer,<sup>1</sup> the geopolitician (who had severed his connection with Hess and Ribbentrop and gone over to the Opposition), and some officials of the State Office. The results at least so far as the Resistance movement is concerned, are not particularly interesting. More interesting is the fact that Schulenburg's organization plan made a great impression in the head office of the Security Ministry, Himmler's main office, just as did the technical experience and organizing ability of his fellow prisoners Goerdeler and Popitz who in prison were allowed, as the last chapter of this book reveals, to work on their comprehensive plans for the rebuilding of the German cities which bombing had destroyed. May one see here a kind of triumph of the spirit over brute force?

Politically Schulenburg seems to have generally supported the Socialists of the circle and was instrumental in getting Leuschner, and then Leber, included in Goerdeler's provisional government. His 'socialism', however, was not much more than a friendliness towards the workers and in any case we know nothing of his own ideas in economics or social policy. What concerned him most as a practical administrator was the restoration of an honest and productive civil service of the old Prussian type. He worked on that with the Prussian Minister Popitz whose draft for a new constitution has survived; Popitz, however, was politically at the opposite pole from the ideas of the Socialist.

If we take this draft as the expression of the political ideal of its author we can speak only of enlightened absolutism. Any recollection of the historic character of the Reich as a federal state seems to have vanished when we hear that there is in the future to be only one state power in Germany, that of the Reich. The provinces, with boundaries redrawn on a rational basis,<sup>2</sup> are declared to be simple administrative districts of the Reich; they have some powers of self-government but

<sup>1</sup> On this complex personality v. Hildebrandt's fine book.

<sup>2</sup> V. Muenchheimer, *op. cit.*: Hassell, p. 376.

under Reich supervision. Reich governors control the organs of self-government. The Reich is the legal successor of the old 'Lands' which now will have no parliamentary bodies. These are superseded by 'provincial councils' which like the Reich Upper House, will, it seems, be constituted by the appointment of 'notables'; there will be no elections. A Reich regent governs the Reich, and like an absolute monarch, forms or dismisses his cabinets at his own discretion; the Chancellor whom he appoints submits the ministerial list for his approval. He is responsible only to 'God and the German name'. He represents the Reich internationally and is supreme commander of the armed forces; he requires on his orders no counter-signature; he is responsible for the drawing up and promulgation of laws. These 'laws' are enacted by the Government, but in cases where time is of minor importance, with the consent of the Upper House, whose members are selected by the regent.

The plan cannot be read without astonishment on the reader's part. Is the dictatorship of the corrupter of the nation to be replaced by a dictatorship of high state officials divorced from the people? An unfavourable impression of it is not really modified by the laying down of the principles contained in the first article — the inviolability of justice, integrity in public life, freedom of the churches, preservation of German culture and the like. Little is said on social or economic policy and that little is ambiguous. All strata in the nation are to share in the material and spiritual necessities of life 'in proportion to their contribution'; 'all who duly perform their obligations to nation and state will be assured a "worthy standard of living"'. As to economics the 'responsibility of independent employers is restored', and the flight from the land is halted. One could scarcely have drafted a less popular programme.

This draft constitution had been worked out over a long period by Popitz with his friends Jens Jensen, Hassell, the former state secretary Erwin Planck and with Beck.<sup>1</sup> Goerdeler cannot have shared in their labours; the draft is completely opposed to his own ideals and has nothing in common with them save in the matter of centralization and Popitz's centralization goes much farther than Goerdeler's.

Popitz and his friends were always considered as extreme Right wing, but perhaps his plan should be judged not as an ideal for the future but rather as something in the nature of a temporary solution for a transition period between the fall of Hitler and the bringing of order out of the resultant chaos. In the prologue to it, it is said expressly that his fundamental law will be promulgated by the possessors of executive power in order to establish a new order 'until a final

<sup>1</sup> Langbehn also took part according to Frau Irmg. Langbehn.

constitution can be framed by the co-operation of all sections of the people of the German Reich'. And in Article 10 it is said of the Upper House that it represents the people 'until the settlement of the conditions under which the German people will live, permits the creation of a popular representation on a broader basis'. If this is to be taken seriously, it means that Popitz's 'fundamental law' can be regarded as a remarkable emergency measure, that is, for the period in which the state of emergency lasts, because of its juridical clarity and precision in complete contrast to the haziness and fantasy of many others of the circle's programmes. But it cannot be regarded as representative of the Resistance movement's ideals for the future.

Along with his schemes for the new Germany Goerdeler worked on a whole series of peace programmes which showed that the ideal of his group was a world peace, which if not perpetual, would at least last for a long time. They can be regarded as his last desperate attempt to prevent by an appeal to pure reason the development of the present hostilities into a 'total' war — as did the first world war though in a much less terrible form — which would not only unchain unbounded political passions but all the technical demonism of modern war, and could end by reducing Germany to a scrap heap and burying below it the future of Europe.

The tragedy of such attempts lies in the fact that they were condemned to remain unrealized unless there was a revolution and that the only people who could make one — the generals — had patriotic scruples which could only be removed if Britain gave assurances that advantage would not be taken of the chaos which would follow, and that she would negotiate a moderate peace with a new, enlightened and trustworthy German Government.

Could such assurances be forthcoming after the disillusionments of 1939–40? Certainly they could not be if Britain was indissolubly bound to allies who strove to destroy for ever German 'militarism', or if heavy casualties and losses inflamed anger to fever heat, or if it was clear that the balance of fortune had tilted in the Allies' favour.

Each victory, if it lessened the Opposition's chances at home, increased them in the foreign field. As long as Hitler's triumphant progress continued revolution to most Germans would appear nothing but sabotage and treason. A change would come when the war was seen to be hopeless and then it would be too late. The enemy demanded 'unconditional surrender' and to them the Opposition leaders were no more than nationalist opportunists whose only aim was to let Germany escape the punishment which her shameful deeds merited. How desperate their situation was, they happily did not realize until

on August 4, 1944 Churchill cynically declared that the events of July 20th and the mass executions that followed interested Britain only by the evidence afforded that the rulers of Germany were now at each other's throats.

Of the abyss of hate and fear of all Germans which now yawned between us and other nations Goerdeler had no real conception, not even in his prison. His optimistic faith in the power of reason was too strong. But he was not so blind as not to see that, as the war went on, the chances of an agreed peace became ever more remote. It was his agonized fear that it might soon be too late that made him more than any other press for a revolution.

In November 1942 Jakob Wallenberg told him that a revolution should not be risked unless there was a British guarantee of a decent peace; 'You are a good patriot. You are fighting for the German common weal. You must not ask the enemy what he wants. He cannot give you a fair answer. Everybody knows you want peace, but not at the price of unconditional surrender. Ask yourself what would happen if you were in power? Do you think that a Beck-Goerdeler government has any more chance of evading unconditional surrender than a Hitler one? If your overtures were rejected, your government would be less able than Hitler's to fight on and win an honourable peace.'<sup>1</sup>

It was good advice and for a moment Goerdeler agreed with it. But it was not simply the difficulty of driving the military leaders from doubt to action that made things hard for him. He would, I think, have to have been not merely an optimist suffering from illusions — that was the charge so often brought against him after the war — but an irresponsible, almost lunatic, adventurer if he had not done all he could to get clarity on the foreign political consequences of a *coup d'état*. Should he throw himself blindly into the arms of the Allies despite the danger of an internal crisis which would make their victory easier? He would then be the man who had opened the gates to the enemy to do as they pleased within them. If he did not want simply to be a traitor must he not do all he could to convince them now of his honest determination to get a reasonable peace? At the worst he could fight on. But was it at all sure that a government which sought to win the masses because it was a peace government, could ever rouse those masses to fresh enthusiasm for this war? Was there not serious danger that such a government would be nothing more than a receiver in bankruptcy assuming the whole ghastly burden of Hitler's heritage and the moral responsibility for a final and hopeless struggle? By the end of 1942 the war was hopeless and no new government could alter that fact. When, in January 1943,

<sup>1</sup> Communicated to me by Jakob Wallenberg.

the Allies at Casablanca announced that their only peace terms were unconditional surrender, not only did most of the generals, but even many of the Opposition — the Moltke circle, for instance — refused to relieve the tyrant by revolution from the responsibility for such a disaster. Looked at in the light of these circumstances Goerdeler's peace plans are seen in the right historical perspective. Politically they might have no hope of success; morally they were a necessity. Everything must be tried to influence Allied policy before a revolution.

There is little profit in following in detail the innumerable attempts made after 1940 by members of the Opposition to gain contact with Britain, for of the precise aims, content and practical success of these we know very little.<sup>1</sup> It seems that for a surprisingly long time, at least until the end of 1942, news came indirectly from Britain by various routes which encouraged the conspirators, news of a willingness, even among Churchill's associates, to make an agreed peace if Hitler were overthrown and a government worthy of confidence took his place.<sup>2</sup>

But it was all mostly rumour at second or even third hand. Churchill naturally would have welcomed a revolution in Germany; he said so in 1939 and up to 1943 let it be seen that he would. But every attempt to involve his government in any sort of direct negotiation failed. Of one of these I was told by the man chiefly responsible Prof. Siegmund-Schultze who as a go-between was highly esteemed by Goerdeler.

He was certainly one of the Opposition's most useful contact-men. His house in Zurich served as a clearing-house for news and a port of call and, as he himself revealed, Chamberlain at the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> Opposition literature is full of these; there were, too, Nazi attempts which culminated in Hess's flight in 1941. Hassell's diaries tell us much about them (v. pp. 158, 181, 204, 218, 223, 227, 249, 285, 302, 321, 337; v. also Schlabrendorff, p. 114). The reports of the foreign connections of the Kreisau circle are contradictory. Steltzer, p. 79, says it avoided them since 'even well-meant information could be turned to propaganda purposes (but v. his statements on pp. 80 and 81; also *KB*, 12, ix and 29, xi, where Moltke talks of his English friends). Graefin Moltke says that her husband tried systematically to keep in touch with the Resistance movements in the occupied countries, especially Norway, and got into contact with Britain via Sweden. Husen reports that Moltke took advantage of an official journey to Ankara to try to get into an American uniform and fly to Cairo to speak there with an American general but the project fell through, v. Dulles, p. 87. *KB*, 29, xi gives a long survey of the links which the conspirators had with other countries.

<sup>2</sup> V. Hassell, pp. 249, 285, 287. According to *KB*, 29, xi, Alvensleben in the summer or autumn of 1942 said that Gessler had said that he had got good news in Switzerland about Churchill's attitude from an emissary of the latter. Gessler tells me that he never had dealings with any representative of an enemy country during the war.



the war had asked him to come to London for personal talks. He had become very sceptical about the possibility of getting peace proposals to London now that the Churchill Government was in power, and did not wish to be involved unless there were definite prospects of a revolution. But about Easter 1941 he agreed to forward proposals in writing to London if Brauchitsch would initial them.

It is now known that Halder and Brauchitsch had opposed the invasion of Russia which made the war one on two fronts, as they had opposed the offensive in the West. The grim Wehrmacht orders of May 12 and 13, 1941, for a bloody terror against the Russian people and for the shooting of all Communist party officials had incensed the High Command and the senior generals in the field; it was then that Halder, as he himself tells us, had tried in vain to induce the Commander-in-Chief to join him in submitting their resignations from the Army. As Schlabrendorff learned from Tresckow his indignation drove him again to consider seriously how they could compass Hitler's fall.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that it was at this moment that Brauchitsch initialled Goerdeler's peace proposals. It is a mystery how he was induced to do so after his denunciation of Mueller's negotiations in Rome as treason; he never spoke to Halder of any dealings with Goerdeler.<sup>2</sup> Is it possible that he merely made a routine initialling of a document placed before him without reading it?

The document with the 'B' on it reached Siegmund-Schultze on May 30th. Its contents had been agreed in a long exchange of letters between him and Goerdeler. It very closely resembles the peace demands which Hassell had got through to London in February 1940.<sup>3</sup> But in the interim France had been defeated and Belgium occupied. Now there was naturally no allusion to a renunciation of Alsace and Lorraine; instead, there is a demand for the restoration of the 1914 frontiers but at the same time the right of self-determination of peoples is emphasized; in later proposals that right is expressly extended to Alsace and Lorraine. A demand is made for the return of

<sup>1</sup> *IMT*, xx, p. 630 (Brauchitsch's statement): Halder at the Munich trial: Schlabrendorff, p. 68 (confirmed to me by Halder himself). Wheeler-Bennett, p. 513, says that Brauchitsch and Halder countersigned these murderous orders. If that had been so the Nuremberg prosecutors would surely have made that a cause for prosecution. He forgets that Halder signed only *operative* orders; the affidavit of which he speaks I could not find.

<sup>2</sup> Halder wrote me: 'If because of his upbringing and his inner conviction Brauchitsch was on the side of the conspirators he carefully avoided giving any definite undertaking on a matter on which his conscience dictated no plain course and logical reasoning failed to indicate clearly whether the enterprise would succeed or fail'.

<sup>3</sup> *V. supra*, p. 160.

the German colonies — but within the framework of an international mandates system; for a new organization of the European state system and of the League of Nations, with the removal of tariff frontiers, mutual aid for reconstruction, no reparations, currency control, compulsory arbitration and limitation and reduction of armaments.

Before 1941 it was hardly likely that such a programme would be thought over-presumptuous across the Channel. At the end of 1942 Hassell heard through Burckhardt<sup>1</sup> that there had been some surprise that it was so moderate although its terms had been rejected, the Churchill Government having refused to take official cognizance of them. When Siegmund-Schultze appeared with his document at the British Embassy in Berne he was told that, some months before, an order had been sent forbidding them to receive such papers. He was, however, able to give verbally its main contents and heard later that these had been telephoned to the Foreign Office. But no answer came and his efforts to get a written communication received through the intervention of Archbishop Temple (whom he had got to know through the latter's oecumenical activities) and other Church leaders were in vain. At the beginning of August, that is, after the invasion of Russia, the British Consul General in Zurich almost as an after-thought received permission to transmit it. Through Church friends Siegmund-Schultze learned later that the Archbishop had spoken about it to at least four Cabinet ministers, including Eden and Churchill; a letter which the Archbishop sent him on the matter never arrived. The answer came at last in two public speeches by Eden; Siegmund-Schultze recognized in them a sentence from the communication he had sent to the Archbishop. It was in the negative and it made clear, in Siegmund-Schultze's opinion, that an Opposition government would also have to surrender unconditionally.

It was evident that the Churchill Government did not wish to give the Opposition what it required for its *coup d'état*, that is, a guarantee for the future. Historically it is important to note that the refusal had at that time no connection with any political agreements with Russia and the United States. It has often been made clear since that its motive was to prevent the British Government after a long and difficult war finding itself in a position similar to that of 1918 when defeated Germany appealed to Wilson's fourteen points in order to extort a favourable peace. For the second time in a generation Britain found herself engaged in a limitless war for victory and Churchill, at this doubtful hour in it, would hear of no indefinite negotiations for peace lest the British will to fight was weakened. Also his deep and

<sup>1</sup> Hassell, p. 249.

understandable doubts about the practical chances of the revolutionary plans and his acceptance of the conventional theory of the German generals' irradicable 'militarism' of which we have evidence in his speeches, changed his attitude from that of 1938; he never realized what hopes the Opposition groups set upon him or their admiration of him.

Admiration of Britain and her art of finding compromises on political issues was one of the bases of Goerdeler's political memoranda. In the British Empire which had developed into a Commonwealth of free nations he found a pattern for the future organization of Europe. There should arise there a free community of peoples with a strong centre of power and preceded by an economic union. Since the winter of 1938-9 he had revised and enlarged the programmes he had worked out then so as to meet changed conditions; though his conception was now sketched on broader lines — with a political imaginativeness which during his imprisonment almost became fantasy — it remains virtually unchanged.

In the great memorandum, 'The Aim', the sections of which dealing with foreign affairs were drafted just before the attack on Russia his consciousness of Germany's military strength is expressed in stronger terms than in any other of his writings. That was due to the situation of Germany after the defeat of France and to his desire to convince the generals. He wishes her armed forces to be 'sufficiently strong' after the war and for that they need 'the re-establishment on moral bases of respect for the soldierly virtues' which the Hitler régime had corrupted. Thus renovated those forces could, if the political situation permitted, become 'the kernel of the military strength of Europe'. The European union, as Goerdeler conceived it, must mean a union of all the anti-Bolshevik forces. He will have no 'Gleichschaltung' of the national states; each must be fully free to organize itself politically as it desires. He gives an urgent warning against 'military intervention in Russia' with her 'undreamed of national strength' and he sees as a task for the future the incorporation of Russia into a European union. But, so long as the soulless, godless collectivism of the Bolshevik tyranny lasts, there can be no really fruitful political and economic co-operation with her.

A European community is thus under perpetual threat. It therefore needs 'strong military protection' and how can that be created without the co-operation of powerful and internally sound German armed forces? His patriotic hopes are, however, characteristically accompanied by urgent warnings against the misuse of strength. 'Their central position, their numbers and their great efficiency ensure for the German people the leadership of the European bloc provided

they do not let themselves be corrupted by immoderate ambition and the mad lust of power. It is stupid of them to speak of a master-race; it is folly to claim for themselves the preservation of national honour and independence and yet refuse that to others. The leadership of Europe will go to nations which respect the small nations and seek to guide their future with wise advice and helpful action and not with brutal force. The British method, unobtrusive and well nigh invisible leadership of the Empire leaving to each member room for its own organic development, should be imitated. Can the German people do so?" Looking back on their history Goerdeler thought they could.

Goerdeler's high hopes for the future were soon proved false and the alliance of Germany's enemies became ever stronger. On July 12, 1941 Britain and Russia signed a treaty pledging them not to make a separate peace. On August 14th Roosevelt and Churchill drew up the Atlantic Charter whose first seven paragraphs sound very like Goerdeler's wishes for peace. But in the eighth it clearly envisages a long period in which Germany would stay disarmed. It was soon made clear that from the Charter Germany would derive no advantage. Shortly after the United States entered the war, most of the countries which did not belong to the Hitler triple alliance formally accepted the Charter. Later still came the Anglo-Russian treaty of alliance on May 26, 1942 in which the signatories agreed to treat neither with the Hitler Government nor any other government which did not renounce all aggressive aims. Formally this was no obstacle to dealing with the German Opposition but it was an obstacle none the less, since each signatory doubted the will to peace of the other. Doubt on the Russian side was increased because for a long time her allies were in no position to relieve Russia by opening a second front on the Continent. To show their loyalty to the alliance the British Government promised to take after the war joint measures with Russia to make any repetition of Germany's aggression impossible and if, despite these, there was aggression, to come to Russia's assistance. It is true that the agreement that 'neither will seek territorial conquests nor to interfere in the internal affairs of other states' had a pleasant sound, but it had been added as a result of American pressure and in the end remained a dead letter from which Germany drew no profit.

It is not clear how detailed was the Opposition's knowledge of this agreement and how Goerdeler reacted to it.<sup>1</sup> Hassell and Popitz as early as August 1941 wondered whether it was not now too late for a *coup d'état* since 'Germany could no longer expect an acceptable peace'. Goerdeler was not so pessimistic and so felt compelled

<sup>1</sup> Hassell p. 214.

gradually to revise his peace proposals. A draft of December 1942 contains no mention of a return to Germany of Alsace and Lorraine but only of partition on the linguistic frontier and a plebiscite under international control after ten years. The future of the former German colonies and participation in colonization schemes was left open, as not a question of any urgency. A far-reaching and concrete proposal for future German disarmament<sup>1</sup> was made.

It is not known whether the draft was intended for British or was for German readers only, but it is known that Goerdeler tried again through his Church connections in Britain to get in touch with the Foreign Office. That was certainly behind the talks in Sweden between Pastor Schoenfeld and Dr Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, at the end of May 1942, talks in which with the help of the Counter-Intelligence Dietrich Boenhoffer took part. The two German theologians strove to convince the bishop that another Germany did exist though secretly and that it was ready both to regret and reverse Hitler's policy of force. The strength of feeling and the independence preserved by the German churches of which they told gave their words real significance. They told in sufficient detail (probably obtained from Goerdeler and Leuschner) of the conspiratorial chain which bound together against Hitler high officials and officers with the support of many of the organized workers. They presented a sort of peace programme which resembles Goerdeler's,<sup>2</sup> and asked the bishop to convey to the British Government the desire of the Opposition that it would declare its willingness to negotiate on the basis of it with an Opposition government after Hitler's fall, a request which ignored the fears of the Beck group<sup>3</sup> that suspicion would be aroused that this was 1918 all over again, and that the *coup d'état* would be ascribed to Allied pressure. Dr Schoenfeld added that, if the British Government refused, the Opposition would none the less carry through their revolution and, if it succeeded, would go on fighting to the bitter end rather than accept a humiliating peace; they had no doubt of the ability of the Wehrmacht to do so.

<sup>1</sup> The armament estimates were to be reduced from seventy-five to four milliard marks. The working out of this proposal is in one of the papers seized by the Gestapo; it is dated December 13, 1942 and is entitled 'Declaration on the Atlantic Charter'. *KB*, 16, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Dr Bell's report in *The Contemporary Review*, October 1945 (reprinted in *20 Juli 1944*) adds little about the political proposals. Wheeler-Bennett used the memoranda of Bell and Schoenfeld for the Foreign Office. I do not understand why he calls this 'the most ambitious peace offensive' since 1940 nor his assertion that the British Government feared a 'Venlo' incident.

<sup>3</sup> Hassell, p. 214. It is doubtful if the demand for a *public* declaration was contained in Schoenfeld's instruction for his mission.

This attempt like all the others was in vain. Eden listened with interest to what the bishop had to say, but, on July 17th, let him know that nothing would be done about it. In summer the tension had increased between Britain and Russia who felt herself left in the lurch. At the same time the heavy air attacks began on the residential districts of the German cities in the hope of breaking civilian morale and driving the people to revolt. Other means, it was believed, were to hand to produce a revolution than negotiations with anti-Hitler politicians and generals for a new and better Germany and Europe; this was one of the most terrible and fateful errors of 'militarist' thinking which contemporary history knows.

The decisive point at which Opposition efforts became completely utopian was the landing of the Anglo-Americans in North Africa (November 7-8, 1942) hard on the heels of which came the great disaster of Stalingrad. The balance was turned in favour of the Allies and against Hitler and at Casablanca (January 24, 1943) American diplomacy, already sure of victory, confirmed that by its demand for 'unconditional surrender'.

No Allied move has been so criticized in the Allied countries as this demand while its defenders have sought in vain to distort or deny its practical results. It created a new situation for the Opposition and so compelled a change in their tactics. It was due not to Churchill but to the crusading spirit and doctrinaire liberalism of Roosevelt. In the situation then neither had the time to weigh properly its political consequences; they thought principally of getting out an effective political communique from the conference which would 'encourage our friends everywhere'. Churchill arranged with his cabinet for its communication to the press but in a form that would 'in order to get a change of government there', give Italy the impression that the implied threat did not apply to her. It follows then, first, that Churchill realized quite well that it would hinder or even prevent a revolution in Germany and, second, that he no longer believed that there would be a revolution 'there'; at least he set so little hope on it that he had no scruples in putting obstacles in its way. The cabinet's answer to his message is no less clear; in London opinion was against making any exception: 'Italian morale will be still more fatally undermined if it is made clear that the worst will happen to the Italians'. In Germany it was the contrary effect that was obtained.

Criticism came from all sides. The State Department, Hull and his staff, feared that the demand would inspire the Germans to fiercer resistance, and prolong the war, and were horrified at the burden of responsibility which would fall on the Allies if they de-

stroyed every form of state authority in the conquered countries. Roosevelt had said that Grant had again used his famous phrase at the end of the American Civil War, and yet the vanquished had been fairly dealt with; what he forgot was that no one in Europe saw any intention of fair dealing and, in fact, Roosevelt presented Goebbels with the best of all his propaganda slogans. It made no difference that later he explained that there was no plan to destroy utterly any enemy people — which was in any case obvious — but only for the rooting out of the philosophy of unbridled force.

Just as little was it altered by its sponsors in later declarations to water it down (Churchill on June 30th; Roosevelt on February 12th). It was very soon seen that it was indeed a serious obstacle to the adoption of sane and realist policies. There had to be concessions on it to Badoglio before he would negotiate Italy's surrender and in the Moscow declaration of November Austria was promised favourable treatment if she left the German camp. At Teheran (declaration of December 1st) the Allies said they would welcome 'into the world family of democratic nations' any people ready to turn against tyranny. Stalin actually condemned the 'unconditional surrender' policy as bad tactics with regard to Germany and demanded its abandonment and its replacement by a statement of concrete peace conditions. Eden recommended this to Washington; Molotov urged it on the American ambassador (end of December), but Roosevelt who clung to his formula as if it were a religious dogma would hear nothing of a statement on peace terms before there was 'unconditional surrender'. With that Churchill agreed. The latter had realized in Moscow and Teheran the terrible sort of picture that a new order would present if it were established in co-operation with the Russians who wanted a total and permanent destruction of 'Prussian militarism', complete disarmament, a ban on all air activity, handing over of all persons guilty of war crimes, the delivery of masses of machinery to Russia and other victor nations, a final partition of Germany into several states, the expulsion of Germans from the east up to the Oder, the breaking-up of Prussia which would be deprived of the Ruhr and other industrial centres, the dissolution of the German General Staff and the condemnation to death or long terms of imprisonment of many Staff officers; Churchill thought in terms of the '50 to 100 most notorious criminals', a figure which did not seem nearly high enough for Stalin.

When compared to such peace terms Churchill considered the old formula less horrifying. He thought that all that should be said at the moment was that the Germans had no *right* to claim any definite treatment, but that at the same time the victor nations owed it to

themselves to 'respect the principles of humanity and civilization' in dealing with them. Later it was modified in the case of Hitler's satellites — Finland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary — to induce them to hasten their capitulation. Despite all the efforts of Russian and British diplomacy with which Hull was in agreement, no impression was made on Roosevelt's doctrinaire obstinacy. From April 13, 1944 Eisenhower and his Chief of Staff, Bedell Smith, tried in vain to move him to a milder interpretation of 'unconditional surrender' in the case of Germany, for the former knew by experience the incredibly tough resistance the German troops were offering and the results of the slogan-propaganda in the German Army and, supported by his political adviser, William Phillips, declared that without modification of the formula they would be unable to take advantage of the crisis which would immediately follow an Allied landing in France. Nor did similar efforts after the landing fare any better.<sup>1</sup>

From the Opposition's point of view it was perhaps fortunate that their leaders had no idea of the actual plans for Germany and Europe which were being drawn up at the Allied conferences. Had they known the grim truth they would have lost the courage to go on making plans of their own. Some of them, like Thomas and Planck with whom Oster agreed, had lost hope after Stalingrad of the possibility of Germany getting anything but 'a peace of shame' even after Hitler had fallen. The crimes of the Hitler régime, said Thomas, were too monstrous to be passed over without atonement being made. The German people had to fight on in order to get rid of the tyrant. Dismissed from his post as head of the Economic Office, Thomas virtually withdrew from Opposition activities.<sup>2</sup> But that was not the attitude of the majority. From March 1943 after Casablanca there was a series of attempts on Hitler's life; they were the desperate ventures of determined officers who wanted to force an end to a hopeless war and get rid of leaders who had ended by becoming a public danger and who were as inefficient as they were brutal. Since Casablanca, the prospects had decisively worsened and even if they had succeeded, they would have brought on the groups behind them the terrible reproach of having deliberately brought about the 'unconditional surrender' of their country.

Goerdeler did not allow himself to be either discouraged or deluded.

<sup>1</sup> V. Churchill, iv, Ch. 38. Sherwood, p. 695 sq; Hull, ii, p. 1570; v. also U. Meistler in *Zeitschrift fuer auslaendisches oeffentliches Recht* xiii, p. 393-410; P. Schmidt *Statist auf diplomatischer Buehne* (1949), p. 567 for the effect of Casablanca on Hitler.

<sup>2</sup> V. Thomas's unpublished papers especially that entitled 'Die Opposition'.



The little he could learn of the political developments in the Allied camp caused him much anxiety. He felt the danger was a double one, that the victors would deprive Germany of all independence and that as a result, at the end of the war Russia would stand out as the greatest power on the Continent and cast over the free world the shadow of its totalitarianism. In the summer and autumn of 1943, he made great efforts to get counter-propositions to London and to warn people there of the dangers ahead. Defence of Europe against Bolshevism was from now on the leading motif of his writing.

Much turned on how far he could find out what really was meant by Churchill and his associates when they talked of 'unconditional surrender' and what Germany could definitely expect of him. He turned again to his Swedish friends the Wallenbergs. Jakob he had met several times, reporting to him on the political situation in Germany and on the cares and needs of the Opposition.<sup>1</sup> In April 1942, Markus had told him there was no chance of getting assurances from Britain even if there was a revolution. In November Jakob was in Berlin and advised him to go ahead without reference to Britain. In February 1943 Goerdeler told him that the Casablanca formula had scared the generals out of the idea of a *coup d'état*, and that, because of the impenetrable barrier of security measures with which the Fuehrer had surrounded himself, it was very improbable that any attempt on his life would succeed.<sup>2</sup> He does not seem to have been convinced by Wallenberg's optimism that, when Hitler was got rid of, the Allies could not continue with their demand for *unconditional* surrender, and at their next meeting (in Stockholm May 19th-21st) he urged still more strongly that both brothers should try to get something concrete out of London; he said he knew Churchill personally and that the Prime Minister should be told that no other than Carl Goerdeler was behind the enquiry. Jakob continued to be sceptical, but finally said that he would write a letter in that sense to his brother who was then in London if Goerdeler would supply him with definite proposals. That was done that very night, and the next day (May 20th) Goerdeler brought him a memorandum whose chief points Jakob indicated in his letter to Markus; to get this private letter to his brother he invoked for the first and only time the aid of Swedish diplomacy.

<sup>1</sup> Dulles, p. 142. J. Wallenberg gave me additional information in 1953 from his diary. Frh. von Palombini tells me that Goerdeler by chance met Sumner Welles in Stockholm and talked with him about the attitude of the U.S.; he thinks this was in 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Mueller (v. Weissenborn p. 242) says that in March 1943 in a communication sent by Beck via the Vatican and possibly intended for Britain it was stated 'that the generals on ethical grounds feel themselves obliged to act'.

In his memorandum<sup>1</sup> Goerdeler began by stating emphatically that Germany must free herself by her own efforts from her present criminal rulers whose removal was in the interests of mankind as well as in those of the German people. He did not forget to point out what heavy losses resistance had already cost that people: 'Thousands of Germans have been executed and tortured and tens of thousands are in prisons and concentration camps'. Action would be taken soon to set Germany free; he hopes that it will not be ruined by an air attack; air attacks should be limited to the areas not yet liberated. That would be the greatest moral support to the rebels. The removal of lighting restrictions would have the effect of a torch of freedom. No action, however, could begin so long as those who would take it could not reckon that 'unconditional surrender' would not be demanded of them.

The new government, he went on, would represent 'all social classes, all religious bodies and all the German "lands"'. The new constitution which is planned is sketched on the lines already described and also the principles on which a sound economic and social organization will be founded. Until a new Reichstag is elected — and an election is not possible until peace is restored — a provisional council will be chosen to control the government. Evacuation of occupied territories will be completed as quickly as possible taking into consideration local conditions, and the 'full independence of all European nations' will be restored. The German-Polish frontier will be settled by negotiation. Return to the 1914 frontiers is not asked. 'Germany will give by agreement a guarantee of Polish independence and will further her union with Lithuania.' Poland's eastern frontier will be as in 1938. 'Any further changes will be made only in agreement with Poland and her allies.' In the West the linguistic frontier is the correct one. Poland and Czechoslovakia will be fully free and independent. 'Germany desires that Finland remain an independent state and is ready to fight for that', as for the eastern frontiers of Poland, for it is to the west of these that the new European community with its common interests and common culture must be formed between whose members war must never again occur. 'Russia's position will depend on negotiations with her.'

The plans for the new Europe we know. The first step will be an economic union and a joint enterprise of reconstruction; then will come arbitration courts and a European police force; then a world league regionally constructed but with only practically realizable aims, with provisions for the settlement of disputes and an international

<sup>1</sup> The original — five ms pages — is in Wallenberg's possession; it is unusually short and concise.

currency bank. Germany will have to disarm simply because of the state of her finances. 'The possible extent of armaments will depend on the relations between Europe and Russia', and on the situation in the Far East; 'there will be no naval armaments and Germany is ready to internationalize her air force. . . . This is the plan. Germany has enough capable people to carry it out. But, just as she respects the independence of all other peoples and desires to see it maintained, she passionately rejects intervention by other nations in German questions. When talk is heard of a demand by Poland for East Prussia and parts of Silesia, that intervention is envisaged in the realm of education, that others intend to do to Germany what the Germans themselves alone should do — the one condition on which anything will be successfully done — then one cannot but view in dark colours the future of Europe and the white peoples. That future can be founded only on their free alliance on their independence and their mutual respect; it cannot be on a fresh dishonour. We ourselves will bring Hitler and his fellow criminals to justice because they have stained our good name. But we will also defend our independence.'

In these terms Goerdeler couched his refusal to deliver his country unconditionally to the will of the future victors. He still did not see, or did not wish to believe, that it was already too late. He still clung fiercely to the hope that by this appeal to reason an end could be put to the woes of this total war.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks later, he was shattered to learn that the hour of the total collapse of all his hopes was at hand. At the beginning of August he visited Tresckow at the headquarters of the Centre Group of Armies and brought back the appalling news that in 1944 the Russians would be on the East German frontier, for the Germans could not stop their advance if they had also to devote attention to other fronts. Goerdeler asked Jakob Wallenberg to come to Berlin at once, which, after a good deal of difficulty, he did. He had no good news from London. Markus had succeeded in having a conversation with Desmond Morton, Churchill's private secretary. He had not dared to ask for an answer from the Prime Minister, for he felt that would be quite useless. What Goerdeler had said was treated simply as interesting information. Through a third party Markus had been told that Churchill would like him to maintain this connection with the German Opposition; they would be interested in London in getting more information about it and its activities. But no pledge of any kind at all was added.

<sup>1</sup> The former ambassador Richard Mayer von Aschenbach told me that in Stockholm in May 1943 and often later he had tried to warn Goerdeler that his efforts were in vain and tell him the true state of things; the views of the Polish Government in exile on Poland's western frontier came as a shock to Goerdeler.

But the hand of the go-between had not been absolutely rejected, and it is astonishing to see how hopefully Goerdeler clutched at this frail straw. In highly secret talks with his Swedish friend he begged him to go to London again and say there that the action planned against Hitler was about to be taken; everything was ready for a date in September. The Royal Air Force was urgently besought to spare Berlin, Leipzig and Stuttgart, the centres of the conspiracy; if these were bombed the consequent interruption of communications would wreck their plans.<sup>1</sup> Again he set forth with deep earnestness the dangers that threatened Europe if German cities were utterly destroyed and the Russians thus helped to total victory. A Germany completely ruined and impoverished would disappear from the world market, and an over-strong Russia threaten all free countries, in particular Sweden and the British Empire in Asia, both as an aggressive power and by the effort to overthrow by a Bolshevik revolution the democracies on the Continent. He begged that Churchill be told that it was in Britain's interest also to put an end as soon as possible to the madness of this war, and therefore to grasp the hand that the German Opposition offered. Wallenberg very sceptically asked what was meant by 'action' and was told that Hitler and Himmler would be arrested and condemned. 'Have you at your disposal' asked the Swede, 'a whole division of conspirators which could deal with Hitler's bodyguard?' Yet Goerdeler's insistence made a deep impression on him, and he promised to get what Goerdeler had said to London. Goerdeler was so certain that the 'putsch' would be carried out in September that he announced that, immediately after it, he would send Schlabrendorff to Stockholm to handle there negotiations for an armistice. Wallenberg was therefore much disappointed when September came and went and there was no 'putsch'. At the end of November he came to Berlin where on the 30th Goerdeler spoke with him for the last time. He was told that other attempts had also failed, but that the preparations for a *coup d'état* were going on with redoubled vigour; it now seemed quite clear that nothing of the kind would succeed until Hitler and Himmler were assassinated.

Much of their last talk was taken up with discussing the attitude of Britain to the Opposition. Goerdeler was overjoyed to be able to state as a fact that the cities mentioned by him had not been bombed. In his optimism he took more out of Wallenberg's words than the latter had actually said which was simply that there was some hope that the British Government might reconsider things once the revolution was accomplished, but only in that case: 'If Germany is beaten before that all is in vain; a Beck-Goerdeler government can do

<sup>1</sup> Dulles, p. 144, mistakenly dates this request to May.

nothing'. Nor were any assurances about the future to be had.<sup>1</sup>

But Goerdeler refused to abandon hope. A few weeks before he had told Hassell — if the latter reports correctly — that he had got, via Sweden, a genuine report that Churchill had said that, although he could give no assurances beforehand, it might be possible to do so if the revolution succeeded and the new government had sufficient real authority. After Wallenberg's latest visit Goerdeler had spoken of the 'benevolent interest' with which Churchill would watch the coming of a new régime.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly he was at least strong enough to make head against the crippling pessimism that threatened to overcome the conspirators, especially professional diplomatists like Hassell, and did not shrink from a good deal of exaggeration.

He continued to set down on paper his thoughts and suggestions on the future of Europe unweariedly pursuing his utopian aim of convincing the politicians by the sheer power of reason. The most impressive evidence of this is the memorandum<sup>3</sup> in which he outlines the natural reasons of state why Britain should not continue the policy of a total war of destruction; the contents show plainly that it was intended for British readers but it may be doubted if it ever got across the Channel. Its main argument is that Britain and the United States as Western powers are the representatives of the ideal of political freedom and so are in natural opposition — and despite changes in political alliances must continue to be — to Bolshevik Russia. Without the help of a strong, internally sound and militarily well-armed state in the heart of the Continent they are unable to defend themselves and Europe against the Red peril. For that defence Germany is indispensable, a Germany, that is, which has freed itself from the present totalitarian rule, and has by a process of internal change returned to the community of the peoples of the Christian West. From that, it follows logically that after the war it must be left frontiers and economic possibilities such as will enable it to play the role of the Eastern March of Europe against Russia for as long as Europe takes to develop further in the direction of a defensive alliance of all the Western nations.

'Germany can still be that if she gets rid of and punishes the criminals, and if Britain and the United States give her the chance of ending the war before a collapse. An obstacle to that is the demand for "un-

<sup>1</sup> From information from J. Wallenberg.

<sup>2</sup> Hassell, pp. 325, 334: for Goerdeler's own account of his talks with Wallenberg, v. *KB*, 17, viii. In a note dated September 1944 Goerdeler represents Churchill as having virtually accepted the peace plan. *V.* also *KB*, 21, ix.

<sup>3</sup> It fell into Gestapo hands after July 20, 1944; it is in *KB* as an appendix. *V.* also Pechel, p. 220 and *Norddeutsche Hefte*, p. 25.

conditional surrender". If Germany surrenders unconditionally, the road is open to the Russian advance and "no one can tell where that will stop".

Who can read these words today without being conscious of their prophetic significance? Equally prophetic is the statement that the two Anglo-Saxon powers can turn their attention to solving the great problems of East Asia only if the European front against Russia is absolutely secure. Goerdeler could not dream how completely Washington failed to appreciate the nature of Bolshevik power-politics, and how firmly, how dangerously firmly, the two Western powers were bound to their Russian ally. He refused to believe, and plainly feared to do so, that the Americans would enter Germany as 'avenging angels' and as the schoolmasters of 're-education' and thus would endanger its 'renewal' on the lines of Western ideas of freedom, a renewal which could only be effective and lasting if it came from her own free, unfettered decision. Against such dangers he placed his own ideal of a new Europe organized as a league of peoples in which there would never again be war because war is 'plain suicide', and of a new and better Germany in which justice and freedom ruled. 'The religious consciousness of Germany has been deepened and broadened by the persecutions of the last decade. For us the Christian religion and its teaching will be the strength and motive of all domestic and foreign political action. We believe it necessary that the principles of foreign policy be in agreement with the Christian ethic.'

To belief in this new Germany and new Europe, Goerdeler clung with his last spiritual strength even in the long months in prison which he used tirelessly to polish and complete his programme for the future. The stack of notes and memoranda written in the last months of his life, in pencil, in small script and on scraps of paper, yet very clearly and with a firm hand, is a big one.<sup>1</sup> There is no real variation in their contents. What he had already said still seemed to him to require no alteration as a result of any later events; they were the demands of political reason and as such needed no further change. He was the only politician of the Opposition who left behind him comprehensive and thoroughly thought-out plans for the new Europe. No clear foreign policy came from the Kreisau group. There they discussed constantly the idea of a German federation and at the same time a sort of 'co-operative society' of European states, all of which, ac-

<sup>1</sup> A detailed plan for the future organization of Europe was found by the Gestapo, and copies made by the Gestapo for the use of the investigators; extracts in Pechel, p. 213 *sq.* One copy seems to have been in Goerdeler's possession when he wrote his prison memoranda notably 'Our Ideal' (forty pages typescript).

ording to Steltzer, should regardless of size be represented on a 'European Council'; this might in time become the 'organ of European government'.<sup>1</sup> It is characteristic of the Socialist conceptions which played so great a part at Kreisau that the circle felt much less closely bound to Western ideas of freedom than did Goerdeler and his friends. Trott wrote a paper — it has not, it seems, survived — entitled 'Germany between East and West' in which he discussed the German task of being the honest broker between two spheres of culture. With Hassell, he thought that Germany's central position should in some way be used to bring pressure to bear on British policy. It cannot indeed be said that the Kreisau circle thought of an understanding with the East rather than with the West. Only Reichwein is reported as regarding Russia as the great power of the future without whom or against whom no European policy was any longer possible and in which a great and salutary transformation was in progress.<sup>2</sup> An arrangement with Russia on the basis of mutual interests should therefore be sought; it was this conception which drove him to his unfortunate dealings with the German Communists.

The other members of the circle desired in the historical tradition to have good relations with Russia and their sympathies were with Socialism rather than with what they called 'Western capitalism' but, combined with that, there was a violent dislike, such as all the Opposition groups had, of Bolshevism and its totalitarian system. The question what political consequences they deduced from this attitude and what position Goerdeler took with regard to an 'Eastern solution' can be studied only along with the action taken by the conspirators.

<sup>1</sup> *KB*, 12, ix (Steltzer's statement). Cf. Gerstenmaier in Hassell, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup> *V. KB*, 21, xi. Langbehn thought so too (Prof. Huber of Freiburg who discussed this point a fortnight before his arrest assures me that Reichwein had no Communist convictions at all) and Haushofer (according to O. John) spoke much about it. On Trott, v. *KB*, 8, viii and Hassell, pp. 321, 332 *sq.*

## CHAPTER IX

### *Before and After Stalingrad*

PLANS WERE meaningless if there was no revolution and to carry one through without the support of the Wehrmacht was even less possible in war than in peace. Navy and Air Force were under leaders devoted to the Fuehrer and uninfluenced by the old Prussian tradition which still dominated the Army Officers' corps and strengthened in its resistance to Hitler. The Army was the only ally available to the conspirators and even there there were many obstacles to overcome.

Some we know already. Hitler's brilliant triumph over France seemed to give the lie to the generals' pessimistic forecasts. The resultant crop of medals and promotions, of commands to generals and batons to field marshals won over many of the discontented who had neither the political insight nor the strength of character to withstand such temptation. Many a professional soldier who had earlier doubted Hitler's ability to conduct a campaign was no longer doubtful and became the eulogizer of the civilian strategist. That was particularly true of one of the new field marshals, Reichenau, who had been inclined to join the Opposition in the winter of 1939-40 and who, a year later, according to General Thomas, was now making things hard for the Resistance group by his adulation of Hitler's strategy and Hitler's genius. Hitler himself took the opportunity of increasing the gratitude and moral subjection of his military paladins by notable gifts in money or land. That he was successful is clear from the case of Kluge, a man of critical and independent judgement who did not shrink from accepting such a gift without actually being 'bought'. All that Hitler accomplished by this method was, of course, wrecked by his brutal treatment of high commanders who had character enough to pay no attention to the insane orders that came from his headquarters. The long tale of those injured and disgraced begins with the cashiering against all military law and etiquette of the best of the tank commanders, General Hoepner, for having, in January 1942, rightly ordered, against Hitler's instructions, the retreat of his Panzer Army from Moscow.

Hoepner's cashiering together with that of Graf Sponeck gave new impetus to the military conspiracy though such experiences became really effective only in the second part of the war. It was soon appar-



ent that the extremely difficult tasks which fell on the higher officers kept them from political activity. As Halder said later, 'Military leaders cannot give political leadership when they are on service duty eighteen to twenty hours a day'. Then there was the gigantic expansion of the Army; the 4000 officers and officials of the Reichswehr in 1932 rose to about 400,000 during the war, a mass politically amorphous, most of its members coming from the Hitler Youth and no longer able to be politically influenced.

Finally and above all, the Fuehrer withdrew from contact with the chief commanders. At the beginning of the Russian campaign he shut himself up in his lonely 'Wolf's Lair' near Rastenburg in East Prussia, with its triple wire protection and carefully camouflaged and reinforced bunkers in the forest, to which admittance was granted only to the favoured and then with the strictest precautions. Later he had a similar headquarters at Wyniza in the Ukraine. He left it only for rare visits and then only to the Headquarters of an Army Group and for a short stay at the Chancellery in Berlin or the 'Berghof' in the Obersalzberg. The insuperable difficulties that mode of life put in the way of attempts to assassinate or arrest him have often been described. The prospect of successfully carrying through a *coup d'état* were now much less hopeful than before for practical reasons.<sup>1</sup> The chances were first improved when his faulty leadership became obvious enough to drive the young officers, especially those on the staff, to criticism of and bitterness towards the man whom his followers hailed as 'the greatest commander of all time'. It was at this juncture that the younger group of active resisters under Stauffenberg was formed. But, in proportion as the opposition grew, so the chances diminished of getting a peace tolerable to Germany by the elimination of the tyrant and a speedy end to the war. Hence the burden that weighed on the conspirators that they ran the risk of being held responsible by the nation for the unavoidable catastrophe. The attempt on July 20th was one of sheer desperation.

Since the failure of Halder's efforts to persuade his Commander-in-Chief to go into open opposition to Hitler's bloody reign of terror,<sup>2</sup> the only hope of the leaders of the Opposition was to get the Army Group Commanders to turn against their war-lord. It was based on the general indignation of the senior officers at Hitler's orders to shoot Bolshevik commissars and to use the measures of the terror against the civilian population. Most zealous in making use of this indignation was Olbricht. Since May 1940 he had been Chief of Staff of the Home Army and so had far-reaching official contacts

<sup>1</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, p. 514 does not agree without giving reasons.

<sup>2</sup> *V. supra* p. 154.

with all the formations at the front. He used them in the service of the Resistance groups. For long he had been in personal and friendly relations with Beck, Oster, Witzleben and Falkenhausen and with Goerdeler whom he knew well from his service days in Leipzig and Dresden when he was Chief of Staff in the Fourth Army Corps (1933-8). Genuine moral and religious convictions brought him into the Opposition to which to the bitter end he rendered most valuable service without any personal ambition or claim to leadership and simply as a technical organizer in a sphere as difficult as it was dangerous.<sup>1</sup> Closely bound to him was Thomas, who in the summer of 1941 made a tour of the front to the headquarters of Rundstedt, Bock and Leeb. He gave their chiefs of staff a study in which he showed that the war for economic reasons could not now be won. In the first two he met understanding; in Leeb's the opposite, this time, was the case. On Bock's staff there had long been a determined opposition group led by the G.S.O.1, Henning von Tresckow, whose portrait has been drawn so well by his friend Schlabrendorff, a highly-gifted genuine aristocrat who long before the war had been an active foe of Hitlerism.<sup>2</sup> Among his staff colleagues who were of like mind were Graf Hans von Hardenberg and Count Heinrich von Lehndorff and also Freiherr von Gersdorff who later was to risk his life in an attempt to assassinate Hitler.<sup>3</sup>

It is no mere accident that so many names of aristocrats and land-owners from east of the Elbe appear on the conspirators' roll, for in their homeland the best traditions of old Prussia were still preserved as is a family heirloom. But it is not wholly an accident that there were so many convinced opponents of Hitler on the staffs, for so long as he could Halder, with the help of the 'Central Section' under Colonel von Ziehlberg, who was later shot, sent them deliberately to all the important commands. Only after his dismissal did this become impossible, for Hitler's adjutant Schmudt now dealt with personnel matters.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of several missions of Schlabrendorff to Berlin (from October 1941) Tresckow was in touch with conspiratorial circles there and also with the Foreign Ministry and State Secretary von

<sup>1</sup> V. Thomas MSS ('The Opposition).

<sup>2</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, pp. 54, 66; information supplied by Halder.

<sup>3</sup> In a MS memorandum which I have seen Gersdorff describes the effect of the Hitler murder orders on the professional soldiers; 'Horror of the Nazi tyranny and its brutalities drove us to do all we could to free Germany and the world from their destroyers . . . deep sense of responsibility before God and the German people was the impelling motive which made the members of the Resistance movement act as if under an overwhelming compulsion within themselves'.

<sup>4</sup> Communicated by Halder.

Weisaecker so that he could be kept informed of the general situation.<sup>1</sup> But what could one staff attain politically even if Tresckow had succeeded, as he never did, in his efforts to bring his chief Bock into the opposition? The Fuehrer was already revealing to the generals the brutality of his will to power. Against their opposition he insisted on the costly winter offensive against Moscow, and when it failed disastrously, threw the whole responsibility publicly on Brauchitsch<sup>2</sup> whom he dismissed in December, declared himself Commander-in-Chief, and in the next few months got rid of no fewer than four Army commanders and dozens of division and corps commanders. Thus the winter of 1941-2 brought to its logical end the development we have traced. The Army was not only deprived of its privileged position in the state; it was morally broken.

Jodl, the Director of Operations at Hitler's headquarters, greatly admired his master for taking the whole burden of the war on his shoulders. The majority of the Army leaders felt nothing but bitterness. Their mood gave the Opposition new hopes. We hear of 'putsch' plans being worked out in Berlin, though their content remains obscure. The commanders at the front were to refuse to accept Hitler's orders. During the winter battles the generals in Russia were in no position to take political action, nor were they greatly inclined to take it. So the Commander-in-Chief in France, the veteran Witzleben, was to take 'individual action', i.e. march his troops to Berlin and as he crossed the border into Germany, issue a proclamation to the nation that he was taking over. What is definitely known is that, at the end of December, a proclamation was drawn up whose authors included Goerdeler, Beck, Jessen, Popitz and Hassell, which outlined the new constitution and that plans for a monarchist restoration were discussed. Hassell and Pechel were sent to Paris to get into direct touch with Witzleben. Like Falkenhausen in Brussels whom Hassell also went to see, Witzleben had at his disposal only Landwehr formations of no great fighting value. To think of making a revolution with such forces was fantastic even if Hitler was first eliminated. After long argument Goerdeler's half-assent to an assassination was obtained but how this was to be accomplished remains as obscure as the details of the plot. To Hassell, Witzleben and Falkenhausen said the whole plan was 'utopian'. Witzleben sent one of his staff to

<sup>1</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, p. 79 sq: Hassell, p. 229. Wheeler-Bennett, p. 516, who from Schlabrendorff's statements (p. 74) arbitrarily concocts a story of an attempt against Hitler's life at Borisow on August 4th, which failed because of the conspirators' 'amateurish efforts'. An attempt to get rid of Hitler when the victorious advance was in progress would have been 'political amateurism' at its height.

<sup>2</sup> According to Hassell, p. 232, he had, apparently in October declared himself ready to take part in a *coup d'état* if Hitler were eliminated.

the east to find out what Halder thought and, although the Chief of Staff was fully in agreement on the question of a *coup d'état*, he could see no practical possibility of acting on the plans submitted; he had no longer the old freedom of action now that Hitler's staff officers were interfering in the movement of troops.<sup>1</sup> Soon after Witzleben went into hospital at Frankfurt for an operation; while he was there he received notice of his dismissal.

The summer of 1942 brought new and impressive victories. The German armies drove into the Caucasus simultaneously with Rommel's advance to the Egyptian frontier. It was not the hour to try to put revolutionary plans into action. None the less the Opposition worked on undaunted. The effort to get in touch with British politicians via Sweden have already been mentioned.<sup>2</sup> Goerdeler and Thomas tried to influence the generals by a joint memorandum which gave 'a warning to the German economy' and showed how economic difficulties made victory hopeless. It was signed by Goerdeler, by the acting president of the National Industrial Group, Stahl, by a leading banker and by two landowners. It was sent to Halder whom Thomas saw twice but without result. Halder entirely agreed in principle, but said there was no practical hope of 'checking the mad course of the criminal gang'. In September after stormy scenes with Hitler he was dismissed — a severe blow to the Opposition since with Halder's departure they had now no direct access to the High Command of the Army.

Nevertheless they did not give up the effort to stage a military *coup d'état*. In the late summer of 1942 Thomas tried to get List to receive Goerdeler but in September, only a few days later, List too was dismissed. Olbricht, made a yet more bitter hater of Hitler by the death in battle of his son, tried to influence Generals Reinhardt and Heinrici.<sup>3</sup> Beck wrote letters and sent emissaries to his former comrades but with no apparent success.<sup>4</sup> The outlook seemed brighter

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, *op. cit.*: Hassell, pp. 231, 244, 248: the last citation reveals that Hassell thought the Beck-Goerdeler plan of 'isolated action' by Witzleben was 'utopian': Pechel, p. 154 *sq* and Gisevius's review of Pechel's book in the *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* of April 1, 1947. Wheeler-Bennett, p. 526 confuses the plans of the winter of 1941-2 with what Gisevius, ii, p. 257, says about the plans of January 1943: partly through Gisevius's misstatement that Witzleben was still commanding in France.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, *op. cit.*: Schlabrendorff, p. 83. Several leaders of industry refused to sign at the last moment. For Goerdeler's ties with Rhenish industrialists v. *KB*, and *Nordwestdeutsche Hefte*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Thomas *op. cit.*, speaks of Manstein saying in answer to an emissary sent him: 'the time for getting rid of Hitler is not yet ripe'. Gisevius (*IMT*, xii, p. 264) says Manstein sent a refusal in answer to a letter from Beck; he tells of a visit to the

at Army Group Centre where Tresckow was active. Through Schlabrendorff he came into closer contact with the conspirators in Berlin and at Group headquarters found things easier since Kluge, who had taken command from Bock on December 1941, was more susceptible to Tresckow's political influence than his predecessors. What had decisive influence on him was Goerdeler's personal approach.

Like Olbricht, Goerdeler (in May 1942) had lost a son, and was spurred thereby to fresh activity. What was most bitter was that that son — his eldest and most beloved — had died in a war which to him had been as clearly a criminal one as it was to his father. Many a time did Goerdeler say to his friends that the best memorial to that son would be to make an end of this horrible sacrifice of Germany's youth. He felt it a personal duty to bring about the fall of the Hitler régime.

In August 1942 we find him, the most tireless of all the conspirators, in Königsberg where he tried to win over Kuechler commanding Army Group North, but without any real success. On his return he met Schlabrendorff who invited him to visit Kluge's headquarters in Smolensk — a most adventurous journey for a civilian — but Goerdeler shrank from no risk. With false papers which Oster got for him he reached Smolensk after a most exhausting journey which took eight days. He had a two-hour conversation with Kluge, made the acquaintance of Tresckow, and seems to have made a good impression on Kluge's officers. 'A political mind of the first order' was Schlabrendorff's verdict, and Tresckow especially was taken with him as a kindred spirit. Even Kluge was much impressed and it seemed possible he might be won over to the idea of a military *coup d'état*, though he very soon showed himself much more reserved. He from now on kept in touch with the conspirators but never found either the opportunity or the resolution to pass to action.<sup>1</sup>

As the hope diminished of winning over a front-line general, the organization of opposition in the Home Army and the agreement by the civilians on a joint programme became the more important

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marshal by Tresckow to whom he said 'A war is lost only when one gives it up as lost'. V. also *IMT*, xx, p. 680. Zeller, p. 335 *sq.* Manstein never gave any promise to the conspirators (v. Schlabrendorff, p. 160 for his declaration of loyalty to Hitler).

<sup>1</sup> From what Goerdeler told me at the end of 1942 it seems that there was talk of arresting Hitler when he visited Smolensk. To the Gestapo (*KB*, 21, ix) Goerdeler gave the date of his visit as 'August 1942' and on another occasion (*KB*, 21, viii) as 'late autumn 1942'; the latter date is the correct one. On his way back he met Popitz at Königsberg station. V. also Schlabrendorff, p. 93, Gisevius, ii, p. 253.

tasks. It had already been agreed that the triumvirate Goerdeler, Beck and Witzleben should form a provisional revolutionary government.<sup>1</sup> How was it to come to power? Was it possible to use the Home Army for a rising? The point was fiercely discussed. Goerdeler and Popitz who were much concerned at the deterioration of the foreign political situation were ready to say 'yes'. Thomas was of a contrary opinion for he feared that action by the Home Army would be called a 'stab in the back' by the front-line troops who would resist it. Also he did not trust Fromm the Home Army Commander, Olbricht's superior. They must, he insisted, have at least one senior commander at the front as collaborator. That view was shared by Beck, Oster and Planck.

In late autumn when the Anglo-Americans were in North Africa and disaster was approaching at Stalingrad a decision became urgent. Visits of officers from the front to Beck became more frequent. All of them spoke of the hopelessness of the prospects. In November Goerdeler and Olbricht met Tresckow in Berlin when Olbricht undertook to build up an organization in Berlin, Vienna, Cologne and Munich which would take over power from the present State authorities as soon as the first attempt on Hitler's life was made. The question of assassination was also discussed. Olbricht began at once to send trusted officers to posts in the various Commands. The revolution in Germany would be carried out by troops of the Home Army who would swing into action on receipt of the code word 'Valkyrie' to 'quell internal disturbances' — a plan which was partially carried out on July 20, 1944.<sup>2</sup> Olbricht's office now became the centre of technical preparations for the *coup de main*.<sup>3</sup> But — and this was still the fundamental question — where was the front line general to be found, who, by a sudden attack on Hitler, would give the signal for a general uprising?

For a time it would seem that the conspirators pinned their hopes on Paulus, commander of the 6th Army at Stalingrad. If, against Hitler's express orders, Paulus decided to retreat from his perilous position he could perhaps set the whole Russian front in motion. In vain some of his subordinates pressed him either to make further representations to Hitler or flatly to disobey orders.<sup>4</sup> In Beck's circle Paulus' weakness of character was well known. But it would have meant much if at least he decided before his army perished to address to the German people a flaming manifesto against the in-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, *op. cit.* : Hassell, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, *op. cit.* : Schlabrendorff, p. 94: *KB*, 21, viii.

<sup>3</sup> V. Gisevius, ii, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> V. Jesco von Puttkamer *Irrtum und Schuld. Geschichte der nationalen Komitees 'Freie Deutschland'* (1948) p. 51.

sanities of the present leadership, and so tear down the thick curtain of propaganda which kept the truth about Stalingrad from the nation. On November 24th, as Goerdeler relates, a staff officer from one of the corps of the 6th Army went to Beck and begged him to save the situation in time by a *coup d'état*. Beck then wrote to Manstein to whose command the 6th Army belonged and who had been ordered to relieve it — but with totally insufficient forces under Hoth which were brought to a standstill before they reached their objective. Manstein, says Goerdeler, returned an evasive answer. From Stalingrad came only protestations of loyalty to the Fuehrer, and by the end of January the disaster was complete.

In spite of all the tricks of propaganda it was the Stalingrad catastrophe that first deeply shook the confidence of the nation, not only in Hitler's military genius, but in his humanity. Coldbloodedly he had sent hundreds of thousands of his loyalest subjects to destruction through false ambition and for his own prestige. Among senior officers it was felt intolerable that they should be at the mercy of the obstinacy and folly of this amateur, and particularly among the younger staff officers.

The hope in Berlin that Kluge and Manstein by direct appeal to Hitler would make the Fuehrer surrender the direction of operations to a professional was quickly disappointed.<sup>1</sup> But there did remain the unrest, and on that the conspirators based their plan for a monarchist revolt.<sup>2</sup>

During this winter in which the bombardment of German cities became severer, the feeling spread not only in the Army but in the nation that the high tide of German victory had turned. Symptomatic of that was the unrest among the students of Munich which culminated in the famous call to action issued by Sophie Scholl and her brother which expressly demanded revenge for Stalingrad (February 16–19, 1943). Taken as a whole the 'White Rose' movement to which the Scholls belonged was not the result of the events of the war so much as of the revolt of consciences against the Hitler régime and was shot through with the ideals of the Catholic Youth Movement of South Germany. These young people had no more connection with

<sup>1</sup> V. Gisevius, ii, p. 257; *IMT*, xii, p. 264 sq; *KB*, 18, viii. At Nuremberg (*IMT*, xx, p. 679) Manstein declared that on several occasions he demanded that Hitler give up the command of the armies (v. also Schlabrendorff, p. 159; Hassell, p. 291). Kluge and Zeitzler made similar demands.

<sup>2</sup> V. the interesting report in *KB*, 'Critics of Command Organization and Conduct of the War' and the memorandum 'The non-political, only a soldier, Officer' sent to all high S.S. police officials by Kaltenbrunner on October 10, 1944. V. *Nordwestdeutsche Hefte*, p. 10 sq.

the conspirators than they had with politics in the narrower sense; their political proposals went no further than passive resistance and sabotage which extended to munition works. But naïve as it was it showed that the moral and religious idealism which the Munich professor Kurt Huber was preaching as Fichte did to his students, was waking ever stronger echoes in the Universities.<sup>1</sup>

The plans for a monarchist revolution collapsed and, as the Army Group Commanders would not undertake to 'remove' Hitler, the question whether or not to assassinate him became a burning one. Goerdeler still maintained his opposition to it chiefly on moral grounds, but also because he feared a new 'stab in the back' legend. He insisted that Hitler should be taken alive and in a court of law be unmasked before the nation and the world as a state criminal. Military colleagues said that was impossible and that any such enterprise would fail, and Beck agreed. So without further delay Tresckow began to plan an attempt.

At the end of 1942 he had a last talk with Olbricht. The latter said that, working with Oster, he could have in eight weeks occupation troops taken from the Home Army ready in Berlin, Cologne, Munich and Vienna. Towards the end of this period he would be able to report that everything had been arranged. We need not tell again what Schlabrendorff has described, the last talk between Tresckow and Dohnanyi in Smolensk, the invitation to Hitler to come to headquarters there, the alerting of Boeselager's cavalry regiment to secure the Fuehrer's person, Kluge's rejection of an act of violence which could only be successful with his connivance, and which would put him at the head of the conspiracy; then Tresckow's individual attempt, the bomb with a time-fuse smuggled by Schlabrendorff into Hitler's aircraft, the telephoning of an agreed code word to Berlin, and then complete failure, for, although it had been often successfully tested, the fuse did not go off (March 13th).

Failure of this attempt and of Gersdorff's some days later at the Berlin Arsenal must have been a bitter disappointment.<sup>2</sup> It was the harder to bear since the threat of Gestapo action now hung over their heads. The attempts remained undetected, but at the beginning of April the centre of the conspiracy, Oster's office, was raided by the police.

The offence that brought them there was foreign bonds smuggling not political activity, but information kept coming in, and some illegal — or let us say risky — financial transactions for which

<sup>1</sup> V. Clara Huber, *Kurt Huber zum Gedaechtnis* (1947): Inge Scholl *Die Weisse Rose* (1952): *Die Gegenwart* October, 30, 1946: Pechel, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, p. 112; Wheeler-Bennett, p. 564: Absagen, p. 313.



Dohnanyi took responsibility, led to his arrest. Oster came under suspicion and was removed from his post. Dr Josef Mueller, because of his activities as a Catholic agent, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer were also arrested. Only the clever manoeuvres of Canaris and the intervention, as bold as it was unselfish, of Dr Sack the Judge Advocate-General — one of the noblest and most gallant figures of the Resistance, whom so many of those accused by the régime had to thank for their salvation and who was hanged in 1944 — prevented the investigation from going further and so postponed for a year the great trial. But Oster's removal deprived the conspiracy of its base and Olbricht of his most important political collaborator.<sup>1</sup> Canaris remained in office until 1944 but was himself so threatened that his usefulness to the Opposition virtually was ended.<sup>2</sup> To complete the tale of disaster Beck fell ill and had to undergo a very dangerous intestinal operation and it was not until summer that he was cured, though, as it seems, he never completely recovered his bodily strength.

Thus the leadership of the movement fell to Goerdeler with only Olbricht with him as military organizer. His position as leader was not uncontested. His unquenchable faith in the future, so closely tied with his belief that he had a mission which led him to make rash prophecies, made some of his associates doubt whether he had the necessary sense of realism and the sure instinct which the political leader must possess. Such criticisms were increasingly heard among the older, often rather sceptical, politicians like Popitz and Hassell,<sup>3</sup> while the younger men who had gathered around Moltke because of their socialist views thought of him as a middle-class 'reactionary'. How unfounded was their suspicion Goerdeler sought to prove at a meeting which he had at the instance of Fritz von der Schulenburg with Moltke's friends. The arrangements had been made at talks between Hassell, Popitz and Gerstenmaier. The last-named who spoke for the socialists Mierendorff and Haubach, was like Moltke argumentatively hostile and described Goerdeler's statements as 'mere academic camouflage of differences'. None the less co-operation was arranged and agreement was reached on the necessity of 'carrying out a *coup d'état* as soon as possible'. This was against the views of Mierendorff and Haubach who had shortly before this decided that nothing should be undertaken until the Western Allies landed

<sup>1</sup> According to *KB* 22, viii, Oster was not told of further activities after his removal. Olbricht earlier had forbidden him to bring any more people into the conspiracy: he was considered incautious.

<sup>2</sup> *V. Absagen*, p. 356: Gisevius, ii, p. 265: Schlabrendorff, p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Pechel, p. 198: Hassell, p. 289.

on the Continent.<sup>1</sup> But the agreement was not a complete one. Moltke and some of his associates were still very sceptical about a *coup d'état* and inclined to accept catastrophe as inevitable and leave the total responsibility for it to Hitler. Nor was the hostility to Goerdeler's 'reactionary plans' allayed. Jacob Kaiser succeeded in calming the fears of his Catholic friends,<sup>2</sup> but a section at least of the Socialists remained suspicious and that in the summer led to new differences.

It cannot have been easy for Goerdeler to retain his confidence amid so many pressures from within and without. His own view was that the strong distinction which the men of Kreisau drew between an 'older' and a 'younger' generation was 'silly twaddle'. 'There is no such thing as a clearly defined generation; there is only one real division in Germany, and that is between the upright and the non-upright.'<sup>3</sup> Hassell noted in April that Goerdeler was again desperately looking for a partial solution which would bring salvation, presumably a *coup de main* by a general at the front. How he saw the situation and how he wanted the generals to see it is revealed most plainly in the great memorandum of March 23, 1943 which circulated in several copies, one of which fortunately has survived. It shows neither despair nor loss of courage but seeks to inspire the reader with Goerdeler's own optimism and make it clear that the time for action is now and that soon it would be too late to save Germany.

It begins impressively with a long quotation from a courageous letter addressed by Major Niemann to Ludendorff on July 20, 1918 with the advice that it was a political necessity that a war in which victory was impossible, should be ended at the right moment. With this Colonel Bauer agreed and on August 8th Ludendorff himself admitted its correctness. Today, Goerdeler argued, the situation was different from that in the First World War for this second one was unnecessary and unjust. Hitler, as the documents showed, had planned it in May 1938. It could never be won and most certainly not by leaders who were incapable as soldiers and recklessly adventurous in policy. The time had come when 'all the resources of Germany in

<sup>1</sup> V. Emil Henk *Die Tragödie des 20 Juli 1944* (1946) p. 34; for the meeting v. Hassell, pp. 290, 370. Beck presided at it. According to the bill of accusation against Goerdeler Moltke said 'What Goerdeler plans is a "Kerenski-revolution" and the Gestapo said later that he described Goerdeler as "a political crook" '.

<sup>2</sup> According to a U.S. War Department document Goerdeler told his brother Fritz that Moltke had brought him 'into disgrace' with Beck but that Leuschner put things right. On Catholic suspicions v. KB, 18, ix.

<sup>3</sup> From the memorandum of March 23, 1943: the single copy referred to was among Capt. Hermann Kaiser's papers. V. Hassell, p. 293.

all spheres were at the point of exhaustion'; the moral strength of Germany had been sapped and practical bolshevization was at hand. The good will of the soldier has been used shamefully to attain immoral ends. For the first time in the history of the German Army the generals were under a political leader who 'had thrown on to the scrap heap the tradition of honour and integrity we have inherited'. He adduced in proof the shameless corruption of high Party leaders, notably Goering, the fatal double rule of Party and State, the brutal treatment of generals and the insults to their honour.

Then came a dark picture of Germany's economic condition, the threatened lack of food, the tremendous destruction caused by air attacks, the drop in armaments potential and in available labour. True, Germany's enemies had made serious mistakes, but they had greater reserves of strength and incomparably better political leadership, while Hitler rule had in South and West Germany revived the old hate of Prussia and had entirely estranged Austria. It had also wrecked any foreign political chances by its monstrous crimes against the peoples of the occupied countries and the Jews which 'will for ever be a stain on our history which can be wiped off no more than could the blood on the key to Bluebeard's chamber'.

Germany's allies were at the end of their resources; they no longer believed in victory, and all, especially Italy, wanted to be free of German control. Goerdeler had heard of the failure of Japan's attempt to mediate between Stalin and Hitler and of her agreement with Russia which allowed Stalin to withdraw his troops from the Far East to Europe; he expected no real help from Japan. This general breakdown of alliances reminded him of the situation in 1918 when Ludendorff had hesitated too long and let himself be deceived by transitory military success. It would be intolerable if the same mistakes were now made and if the temporary stabilization of the Russian front caused political illusions. The war is and will remain a hopeless one. Political must replace military action. 'If the present leadership makes that impossible then it must go; if it does not understand that it is its duty to place the interest of the nation above its own then it must be made to do so.'

Thus — Goerdeler was addressing himself to officers who were not yet won over to the opposition — it is obvious that a *coup d'état* is necessary. Could honest and capable military and political leaders work together, then there was still a chance to save the situation. In his efforts to embolden his readers to undertake a *coup d'état* Goerdeler goes far, astonishingly far. He develops his whole programme in the form in which he sent it through Wallenberg to London, and boldly asserts that, unlike the situation in 1918 when no one could

say whether or not a negotiated peace was possible, it was 'obvious how the most important of our enemies, the Anglo-Saxons will, aye must, react to such a development in Germany'. They were ready to accept in the main the Goerdeler peace programme. Their economic situation compelled them to maintain Germany as a market for their goods. They had to try to stem the Bolshevik flood; it is, and always must be, a British interest to prevent Russia being too powerful. Goerdeler believed, a little prematurely, in a certain relaxing of the ties between Stalin and the Western Powers to the advantage of Japan, of course, only after Germany's defeat. To think of any such development before that would be childish. But there was certainly no doubt of the natural conflict between the vital interests of Britain and Russia. That had been visible at Casablanca and at the moment negotiation was going on in Washington to set bounds to Russia's war aims as the price of an Anglo-American invasion of the Continent.<sup>1</sup> The last chance had come of using this tension between the enemies; if a complete understanding was reached between Russia and the West, 'all out political chances are lessened'.

Naturally no one would expect that at the moment Britain's chief aim would be defence against Bolshevism. Before her stood the 'iron necessity of first destroying a system whose aggressive designs were incalculable and had reached a point beyond sanity'. Goerdeler thought that with a new trustworthy and honest government the air-war could be ended in forty-eight hours. 'The next step could then be a *détente* with the Western Powers thus enabling us to concentrate our whole strength in the East.'

Whence this astonishing confidence? Goerdeler based it on what he had learned in his pre-war journeys and was convinced of the practical possibilities of realizing his programme. 'At any time this could be proved by getting into touch with the Anglo-Saxons. But I advise against any attempt to do so at the moment, as it could be interpreted as moral weakness.' That seems incomprehensible when we consider his fierce efforts in the next months to get in touch with London and remember the conversation he had with Jacob Wallenberg in March 1943. Wallenberg had steadily warned him that there was no hope of getting assurances from Britain until the revolution had been made, though he had encouraged Goerdeler by saying that he was certain that British policy would not demand 'unconditional submission' or impose shameful peace conditions on a government which had destroyed the Hitler régime. Both the warning and the encouragement appear to be reflected in the appeal to the generals. Both are characteristically exaggerated, for it is characteristic of

<sup>1</sup> V. Hull, p. 1165. On Casablanca Churchill, iv. ch. 38.

Goerdeler that he over-estimated the power of reason in politics, that he invariably saw before his eyes as something concrete whatever his political sense said must happen. The intense desire to out-talk and convince others outstripped prudent doubt and reserve; his power to simplify played a great part in making impressive what he said. But there was always the danger that, in simplifying he would exaggerate and pass from the realm of hard fact to that of illusion.

He had other arguments to stress the urgency of his appeal. If a new government was to attain something so far as the enemy was concerned, the Army must remain strong and cohesive enough to stop Bolshevism at the old German-Polish frontier. The key to Poland's fate must remain in German hands. The hour had come. The nation 'in all its sections, particularly the working class', knew it was ruled by incapable gangsters: 'the nation is not only ripe for an act of salvation; it expects one'. But ripeness can yield to rottenness. Radicalism is increasing among the workers; the earlier confidence in the moral quality of the generals is waning for they are visibly letting things drift. If this state of things is allowed to go on and is not remedied, the manifestations of that radicalism will take a more unpleasant form than was seen in 1918.

A comforting reflection followed these dark and rather vague prophecies. 'I see no risk in the negotiations suggested.' Once the régime of terror was broken and the German people realized how they had been sinned against by it, no one would adhere to it. 'I stand surety for that.'

The truth needed only to be known for twenty-four hours to show that the moral strength of the nation had not been sapped, but had only been stifled by this system of brutal force. That was the belief to which to the last moment he clung, and on its strength he called to the generals to revolt, to the revolution from above.

One question, and that the most important, remained unanswered — how to set revolution in motion. The memorandum indicated that the Wehrmacht could either go along with the discontented sections of the National Socialist Party — with very problematical success — or ally itself with an Opposition group which was ready to take over the Government and had a well thought-out programme. Actually, after Tresckow's attempt failed, there was great uncertainty about how to proceed. Now that the Russian front had been stabilized they could hardly count on the co-operation of the Army leaders. There was much discussion about 'the psychological moment' for which they would now have to wait. Goerdeler's view, passionately expressed in a letter to Olbricht, was that they should not wait for that moment but create it. 'Stalingrad and Tunis' — where the Ger-

man and Italian forces had surrendered on May 12th — 'are disasters such as German history has not known since Jena and Auerstaedt'. Was this then not the very moment for revolution? And was it still not enough that Hitler had in the war murdered in bestial fashion millions of men, women and children of various races, including Russian prisoners of war. When these facts, and the others that would be added to them, were published, the 'moment' would be created. The almost incredible patience of the German people would be exhausted whenever they knew the truth. But how? 'If there is no other way I am ready to do all I can to get an interview with Hitler. I would say to him what has to be said, that his withdrawal is asked as a vital necessity for the nation. It is not to be supposed that, if such an interview were obtained, it would of necessity be a total failure. Surprises there certainly could be, but the risk should be taken.'<sup>1</sup>

Nothing shows better Goerdeler's personal courage and also the practical weaknesses of his efforts to bring about revolution. He would start with a discussion instead of an act of violence, still driven by a last, though very slender, hope that perhaps his oratory would produce the 'surprise', that the tyrant would yield the field to the force of reason. He offered to risk his life in the cause.

Olbricht had no power of direct command over the Home Army and could not take individual action. He could only do so in the name and on the orders of Fromm his Commander-in-Chief, and that officer, though no devoted National Socialist, was an opportunist and a climber, the dubiety of whose attitude was to have fatal consequences later on. The flippancy of his remarks, making light of the effects of the bombing of the Ruhr, put Goerdeler in a towering rage. He wrote on this subject on July 25th to Kluge in a letter which was the most passionate expression of his hate of Hitler's rule.<sup>2</sup>

As one who had seen with his own eyes the destruction of the industrial region in the Rhineland and Westphalia, he depicted the unutterable misery of the workers there and painted a horrid picture of the results to German industry if the bombing continued. (After the war a less doleful assessment was made of the results of the air attack.) 'To hear the levity with which educated people talk of reconstruction after the war fills one with holy wrath.'

And how frivolously so many live at the cost of the community. 'The moral restraints are gone. What we have now is mere conventionalism. . . . Even in the Army the foundations of morality

<sup>1</sup> For text of this letter v. *Die Wandlung* 1945-6, part ii, p. 173: cf. Gisevius ii, p. 261. The original by a slip of the pen is dated 17.v.44 instead of 17.v.43.

<sup>2</sup> For this letter Wheeler-Bennett, pp. 570-4; for these discussions v. Capt. Kaiser's diary as published in *Die Wandlung* 1945-6, part vi, p. 530 sq.

have been terribly shaken, for their religious basis has been lost; espionage has been substituted for the old comradeship. Worse still, German lads conscripted into the S.S. have been compelled to carry through the bestial mass-murders of Jews. What have they made of the proud army of the War of Independence and of Wilhelm I!<sup>1</sup>

But the people knew instinctively that they had been deceived, and, the longer men were kept under deception, the greater the effect of a revelation of the truth. The nation would turn against those who had laid co-responsibility upon it and not least against the generals. Did they not see the new tragedy which would be played out in Italy? Did they not realize that at the top madness ruled?

Then came a strong appeal to the heart and conscience of his correspondent; he unsparingly placed before him the choice between taking the easy way of the shirker and treading the dangerous but honourable path of duty. 'Can you think of any way of attaining a victory which, first, will make it possible to keep Russia finally out of Europe and, second, will compel the world and the British Empire to give up the attack and conclude peace?' If you cannot, then 'continuation of the war is just criminal since the aim must never be the heroic end of a nation but always the possibility of continuing life'. It is more than time for the army chiefs finally to 'pack up' deliberately and speedily.

Goerdeler 'whatever the danger' declared himself ready for anything, even if it were necessary, or even just useful, to put on officer's uniform again. He had always been 'an old Prussian' and he had defended the officers' corps against reproach and incredulity and now he felt the sting of the accusation made by South Germans that Prussian militarism was the cause of it all. 'They were not stupid people who said that; they were people who had a warm heart for Germany and the German soldier, but they despaired when they saw men of vision, intelligence and goodwill allowing the Fatherland to be led to the abyss by knaves and fools and German lads and German men sent to death and mutilation.'

Reading between the lines of his memorandum it would seem that Goerdeler felt that his complete confidence in British willingness to reach an understanding needed a new confirmation. His negotiation with Wallenberg had taken place. Up to the end of July no reply had come from London. That indeed did not prevent him vouching with

<sup>1</sup> Goerdeler spoke from bitter experience. His son Christian was on the accusation of his company commander sent before a court martial on charges of having with some of his fellows drawn up an anti-Hitler memorandum. Thanks to his colonel's intervention he was given only six week's detention and then sent to the Eastern front where he was killed (May 15, 1942).

great assurance for the possibility of getting a relatively favourable peace. He had, he said, once again confirmed that Hitler's fall was, of course, the essential pre-condition. 'It is self-evident . . . that no statesman anywhere can negotiate with knaves and fools.' But, if there was a revolution, then 'we can get an end to the air-war', and so bring the nation in its millions to our side. His proposals to London are represented to Kluge as if he had got definite promises. He certainly counted on the natural need of our enemies to keep Germany alive. Neither the Anglo Saxons nor Bolshevism should be over-feared, he thought. 'Things are stirring over there and we have a good deal to throw into the balance.'

The letter, even although he did not in the end, after much consultation, send it,<sup>1</sup> is impressive witness to the spiritual energy with which Goerdeler sought to win over the generals to his plans. He preferred always the shortest and straightest road, and he watched with real aversion the diplomatic manoeuvres by which Popitz hoped to make progress. That clever tactician had earlier had hopes of Goering staging a palace revolution, or at least applying the brake on Hitler's reckless war policy. He now tried the same game with Himmler. If there was no bringing the generals to make a revolution, might there not be a chance of working on the ambition of the head of the S.S. and on his belief that he had a mission, of turning him against his lord and master and so causing a split in the party? Popitz risked making the attempt in an interview with Himmler arranged by the latter's legal adviser, Langbehn. What had been long suspected in conspiratorial circles was confirmed; Himmler's belief in his Fuehrer's infallibility and in his final victory was a little shaky. But this blood-stained fanatical tool of the tyrant was intellectually far too unstable and much too pitiful a creature for plans for a revolution to be built upon him. Popitz can have been no judge of character if he did not realize that at the start. And, even if his over-subtle diplomacy had succeeded, the result would have been fatal to the Resistance movement. It would have hopelessly compromised it at home and abroad and caused the greatest bewilderment. Nor would it have made any difference, if — as was naturally planned — it was intended to over-trump Himmler and his S.S. In March 1943 the officers in Kluge's headquarters told Canaris that they would never shake hands with him again if he carried out his intention of having a confidential discussion with Himmler. 'Anyone who shakes hands with that swine' it was said 'will never have his hand shaken by any-

<sup>1</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, p. 161, and also *KB* (Stieff's statement) where a letter from Oibricht seems to have been confused with Goerdeler's; Stieff gave it to Kluge on August 13th. v. p. 246.



one else for to do so would be self-defilement'.<sup>1</sup> Naturally that was not exactly the attitude of Beck, Olbricht, Tresckow and Goerdeler. To them the situation seemed so desperate that they could not but welcome anything that caused a split in the National Socialist camp. Later Goerdeler confessed that he had strongly encouraged Langbehn in his designs, although he felt that the lawyer was 'a rather dubious, even slightly sinister character'. That was why he was so angry when he heard in August or September that he had been made acquainted by Popitz with the plans for an attempt on Hitler's life.

Langbehn told him of the talk with Himmler but gave no details; in any case he had no desire to know them. That was the general attitude taken by the conspirators; they would be delighted to see a split in the enemy camp but had no desire to have anything to do with making one. Popitz himself did not realize this; he was a typical and gifted intellectual with no sure political instinct. His reports on the conversation were couched in most optimistic terms, but later he had to realize that Himmler had never committed himself in the slightest, and to see Langbehn fall shortly after into the hands of the Gestapo when he was journeying to Switzerland on a sort of double mission for Himmler and for the conspirators to get in touch with British diplomacy.

Popitz earned no thanks from the Opposition for his bold deed;<sup>2</sup> he was more isolated than before. To accusations of 'reactionary sentiments' was now added in many conspiratorial circles deep distrust of a man who for many years had been Goering's Party comrade and collaborator. With Goerdeler, too, his relations became cooler from the autumn of 1943.

Meantime the situation on the Russian front suddenly worsened. The Russian counter-attack of mid-July not only brought the German advance to a halt, but pressed the Germans back westward along the whole line between the Crimea and Smolensk. Any serious observer could see that the Red Army would soon advance to the frontiers of the Reich, that human and material reserves would be ever more rapidly exhausted, that the increasing weight of the ever more horrible air offensive would reduce to ruin Germany's war industries. Simultaneously the fall of Mussolini, Badoglio's surrender, and the advance of the Allies in South Italy ended any military help from Italy, and added to all the others the heavy task of defending the Peninsula. With the prospect of an Anglo-American invasion of France the

<sup>1</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> The chief source for this is the indictment printed in Dulles, p. 151. On Langbehn's activities v. Hildebrandt, p. 135.

future looked black enough. None but the blind or the hopelessly naïve could any longer think of 'final victory'.

As a result, Goerdeler's warnings no longer went unheeded. In August Tresckow sought him out and assured him that Manstein, Kluge and Kuechler, the commanders of the three Army groups in the East, were clear that the situation must be 'dealt with', and that in the Centre Group even the S.S. generals Hausser and Sepp Dietrich would 'co-operate'. This then was the 'psychological moment' for a revolution. But the question still remained what the generals at the front meant by 'dealt with'. General Stieff at Army Headquarters whom Tresckow had won over to the conspiracy, and who on August 13th had handed to Kluge a warning letter from Olbricht (on the lines of Goerdeler's letter) told the Gestapo later that Kluge thought only in terms of a joint representation to Hitler by the Army leaders on the need for changes at the front. Tresckow, he said, had given him an entirely false account of Kluge's determination to place himself at the head of an Army revolt, and it had been entirely against the field marshal's will that he had been drawn into the conspiratorial foreground.<sup>1</sup> That looks like an attempt to cover Kluge. The truth is that in August Kluge was still not quite decided but that he had been won over by the representations made to him by Olbricht, Tresckow, Beck and, of course, Goerdeler. The last-named must have some grounds for writing so explicitly to his friend Wallenberg about a revolution in September.

In September Kluge came to Berlin and in Olbricht's house had a long private talk with Beck and Goerdeler of which we have a fairly full report.<sup>2</sup> The field marshal expressed his deep anxiety at the state of the war, and indicated clearly that our military strength was insufficient to maintain simultaneously a front in the East from Tero-mansk to the Black Sea and a front already shaky in Italy and also provide for a possible front in the West. At the moment it was virtually certain that the front line of the Dnieper could not be held. The war was lost unless drastic decisions were taken and the front line radically shortened. He asked Goerdeler what prospects abroad were there in such circumstances of getting a tolerable peace. Goerdeler thereupon outlined his peace programme which he had written down in March and recommended an understanding with Britain before it was too late. Kluge's fears that Britain would demand the total destruction of German power he sought to calm by pointing out Britain's interest in maintaining a strong bulwark against Bolshevism. He spoke of his conversations with Wallenberg, and admitting that so

<sup>1</sup> *V. KB*, 28, vii.

<sup>2</sup> *V. KB*, 21, ix.

far he had had no reply from London to his proposals (for the future of Europe and the immediate cessation of the air-war), stressed 'his knowledge through their history of the interests, policy and methods of the English and his good relations with English politicians of almost every party'. Finally at Kluge's request Goerdeler explained his domestic policy.

The two soldiers then discussed things in private after which Goerdeler rejoined them. Kluge said to him that 'this was the very time to act so as to save the military situation . . . when it was still possible by a timely understanding with the Anglo-Americans to stabilize the eastern front on the old eastern frontiers of Poland, and make it impregnable'. The Fuehrer was not prepared, however, to do any such thing as permit the soldiers to withdraw on this scale, quite apart from the fact that the Anglo-Saxons would never come to an understanding with him. He must therefore be removed, by force if necessary, in the national interests. The military leaders must now be independent. Goerdeler said he did not favour the method of assassination. 'The Fuehrer must be spoken to quite frankly; that is the duty of the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff. Something must come out of a discussion conducted with precision, with frankness and with courage.' That made little impression on Kluge. He insisted — and rightly — on the necessity of an assassination and Beck agreed. He thought a personal appeal to Hitler quite useless. Goerdeler could do nothing else than yield. As the military leaders, he said, 'through lack of frankness to Hitler have allowed things to come to this pass, they themselves must find the right way to save Germany', thus leaving to the generals the responsibility for an attempt on Hitler's life. Kluge said that he would take that responsibility. He would discuss details with his comrades. Goerdeler must see to it that 'the Anglo-Saxons took the right line'.

This discussion Goerdeler always thought of as the origin of the attempt on July 20, 1944, possibly rightly. Tresckow had been for long in Berlin on 'sick leave' granted him by Kluge, and had done a great deal towards enlarging and improving the preparation for a military 'putsch' begun by Olbricht which he found imperfect and technically inadequate.<sup>1</sup> In his opinion the Home Army could make no move until at least one of the senior commanders at the front had given the signal. They had now found that senior commander. In the

<sup>1</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, p. 125 sq; the chronology is confused and the reader can get the impression that what was done in winter with Stauffenberg's help was done in summer. What is certain is that in the summer of 1943, Tresckow — according to his widow he went on leave in May and in July gave up the idea of a convalescence stay in the Elmau — devoted himself entirely from July to September 1943 to preparing the *coup*.

West Falkenhausen and Stuelpnagel were ready. The *coup d'état* so often planned in vain, seemed likely to now become a reality.

But the mysterious fate that in these years ruled Germany had other views. Soon after he got back to his headquarters Kluge was seriously hurt in a car accident (October 12th) and was out of action for several months. Then Tresckow, instead of returning from leave to his headquarters, was sent for a tour of duty as a regimental commander. By the time he was appointed chief of staff to the Second Army he found that Kluge had been replaced as commander-in-chief by Busch, a complete devotee of Hitler without any political judgement. His efforts to become deputy to General Heusinger at headquarters where he would have personal chances for an attempt on Hitler's life failed, and so a whole series of attempts which like-minded associates went on making from the autumn of 1943 to the spring of 1944 were all unsuccessful, in spite of the reckless courage of the conspirators in making explosives, in spite of the readiness of young officers to sacrifice their own lives by blowing themselves up with Hitler, in spite of all the ingenuity expended to find ways of breaking through the defences of the tyrant.<sup>1</sup> Happenings, against whose disastrous effect no provision could have been made, wrecked at the last moment well thought-out plans, and Hitler's beastlike awareness of danger saved him in more than one situation. Without the removal of the tyrant a military 'putsch' was hopeless, and, now that none of the generals at the front were behind it, a 'putsch' was a very risky business.

In October 1943, however, a new personality, young and daring, appeared in the centre of the conspiracy, and steadily revealed himself to be a leader — Lt. Col. Graf Schenck von Stauffenberg. It was he who was at the back of the series of attempts in the winter of 1943–44 and gave new inspiration to the preparation of revolution at home, working on Tresckow's and Olbricht's line but with more violent energy and, careless of the doubts of his elders, feverishly resolved on action. In an old school friend E. Zeller he has of late found an enthusiastic biographer who sketches his political development from the immature enthusiasm of a lad for the Hitler movement to the passionate hatred of the tyrant and destroyer of Germany. There was in him — and that gave him his enormous influence over his comrades of like age — a rare combination of soldierly qualities — great

<sup>1</sup> Schlabrendorff, p. 163; Zeller, p. 185; Schulenburg's and Stieff's statements at their trials make it clear from October Stauffenberg was the driving force behind all the attempts. In the U.S. War Department a Gestapo report gives details of the ways in which explosives reached the Berlin conspirators. It is not clear what attempt was planned for September of which Goerdeler spoke to Wallenberg (v. *supra* p. 224).

technical proficiency, wonderful bravery and self-control — with an aesthetic education which, as an heritage and a personal possession, permeated his whole way of life. He had, too, a natural gift for fiery oratory. Politically he leaned more towards the romantic socialism of his contemporary Moltke than to the middle-class liberalism of Goerdeler or the old Prussian and conservative thought of Popitz. Without either schooling in, or experience of, politics he from the outset joined in the conspirators' political arguments refusing to be content with playing a subsidiary part simply as a military 'live wire'. He was preoccupied with high-flown ideas of the moral and political revival of Germany to whose advocacy he felt himself called. What concrete picture he had of this revival is not clear but it was certainly in the form of a revolutionary movement which in its raging course would sweep away all that was old. Here he was in decided opposition to the aims of the middle-class politicians like Goerdeler who wanted to be done with the 'raging courses' of revolutions and set in place of eternal revolutionary unrest a clear and assured order of society. If, as Zeller reports,<sup>1</sup> Stauffenberg in a conversation with Leber really described that attitude as 'the revolution of the greybeards', one can only say that it betrays a lack of understanding of his older colleague and of the real needs of the times, and can understand why Goerdeler, in spite of his admiration of his gifts and his courage, found it difficult to cope with one who was pig-headed and unreasonable. On the other hand, I am sure that in this stormy intolerant drive to action there was something of demoniac will to power that was neither in Beck nor in Goerdeler, and that without it the Resistance movement really was in danger of being bogged in a morass of preparations and plans. At the last decisive crisis the Opposition movement would have been stuck fast in helpless passivity had it not been for Stauffenberg's determination.<sup>2</sup>

Stauffenberg's appointment (beginning of October) as chief of staff to Olbricht gave him new influence. He now took over Tresckow's still incomplete draft for the practical carrying out of the *coup d'état*, mobilization timetable, occupation plans, secret notices to troops, appeals to the services and the civil population which had been discussed with Beck and partially corrected by him. Stauffenberg set feverishly to work supported by a growing staff of helpers among

<sup>1</sup> On p. 174 of his book, v. also p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> In his notes (November 1944) Goerdeler wrote: 'Tresckow made me acquainted (autumn 1943) with Lt. Col. Graf Stauffenberg . . . who later revealed himself as a cranky obstinate fellow who wanted to play politics. I had many a row with him but greatly esteemed him. He wanted to steer a dubious political course with the left Socialists and the Communists and gave me a bad time with his overwhelming egotism.' Cf. Maas's statement, *KB*, 12, viii.

whom the most important was Olbricht's friend Major Ulrich von Oerizen.<sup>1</sup>

The details of the staff work in preparing the *coup d'état* have been often related.<sup>2</sup> When the extraordinary difficulties are realized and the number of people involved in what was a secret conspiracy, the wonder is that up to July 20th these plans for high treason were not detected, and that ways and means were found whereby such undisciplined troops as the Berlin reserve battalions could be set on the march against the government quarter. It is quite unprecedented that so many of the high and highest officers in the Army, including a row of field marshals, should for years have known of the existence of a 'civil and military conspiracy' without betraying it and actually participating in it, even before Hitler's curve of victory had begun to decline. It would seem that the submission of the generals was not quite so blind as might appear. Now it was completely dwindling away. That made the conspirators' task easier. What made it more difficult was the accident to Kluge who, according to Tresckow's plans, was at the decisive moment to take command of all the Wehrmacht and the more than uncertain attitude of Fromm who commanded the Home Army. The only course was, as had been done so often since 1938, to appeal to Witzleben, now retired. He was ready to sign the prepared orders which could make the revolution a reality. But there was no certainty that the relatively small number of reserve units in Berlin could get the better of the Air Force units and S.S. troops also stationed there, and so plans had to be made to eliminate Goering and Himmler at the same time as Hitler was assassinated so as to prevent the outbreak of civil war. This in some fateful ways delayed the attempt.

In any circumstances the revolution could be controlled only by a military dictatorship which would be replaced as soon as possible by a civil government. The officers preparing the plans were thus forced to extend their preparations into the political sphere. It was therefore high time for the civilians to agree finally on a programme and, more important still, to agree on the persons who should form a cabinet. The last months of 1943,<sup>3</sup> when there was constant expectation of a successful attempt on Hitler's life, were fully occupied on this task. There was general agreement that Beck both for his noble character

<sup>1</sup> For these collaborators v. Zeller, p. 162.

By Schlabrendorff, p. 125; Zeller p. 162. who represents Stauffenberg as doing all the real work; if he is right in saying that the staff work was completed by October 10th Stauffenberg can have been only for a few days engaged in it. Frau von Tresckow who acted as her husband's secretary assures me that the really important work had been done by him in August and September.

<sup>2</sup> V. *supra* p. 224 (Goerdeler's talks with Wallenberg).

and his influence on the Army must be head of the state.<sup>1</sup> For the chancellorship Goerdeler was the foremost candidate. We know the reserves about the 'man of illusions' made on the right and about the 'reactionary' made on the left. But no one could deny that of all the civilians in the conspiracy he was by far the most active and the most courageous, that he possessed in unusually high measure political ideas and practical experience. About the end of November<sup>2</sup> Beck asked him formally to draw up a list of ministers.

Right up to his arrest Goerdeler was continually ~~trying to find~~ new personalities and secure their co-operation.<sup>3</sup> Names and posts varied from time to time; very different views and wishes had to be reconciled. Nor was there lacking obstructionism on the part of an ambitious few. Goerdeler sought to get together men of ability and technical experience wherever he could find them and to allot posts as nearly as possible equally between the various groups and tendencies in the movement. Thus at times we find in the lists names of people who never were in the movement, — Gayl, for instance, or Schwerin-Krosigk — who could not be asked to join a cabinet until the revolution had completed its task. In such cases a provisional name was inserted. To avoid party political one-sidedness and to be fair to as many as possible of the group, Goerdeler used the device of having the minister of a different party from that of his secretary of state. The Catholic group laid great stress on adequate representation for its confession. Kaiser and Wirmer proposed as Minister of the Interior the ex-state president of Wuerttemberg, Eugen Bolz, so that one at least of the four important ministries would be held by a Catholic.<sup>4</sup> They failed because Stauffenberg insisted on proposing the Social Democrat Leber. Bolz was then asked to take over the Ministry of Culture which he did. For a time it was intended to give to the future chancellor as secretary of state the Catholic lawyer Otto Lenz, but he accorded so ill with Goerdeler that this plan was dropped. To leave the Ministry of Culture free for Bolz, Popitz who wanted it had to abandon it. For a time he appears as the future Minister of

<sup>1</sup> From Zeller (p. 169) it would appear that Stauffenberg's friends aimed at making their hero not only Beck's State Secretary but his 'possible successor'.

<sup>2</sup> From the verdict on Goerdeler it appears this took place as a result of Stieff's and Felgiebel's reports on the desperateness of the situation on the Eastern front.

<sup>3</sup> In January 1943 Goerdeler asked me confidentially to suggest names for the Ministry of Culture preferably a Catholic. He asked if I would be prepared to take it with a Catholic under-secretary but I said at once that as a scholar I did not feel myself suitable for a political post. It was very noticeable how carefully Goerdeler went about this task. He never mentioned names to me and asked me to use camouflage in my letters to him when it came to persons.

<sup>4</sup> *KB*, 26, ix. (Wirmer's statement on August 30th) and information given me in a letter from J. Ersing.

Finance, but was so violently rejected — as a ‘reactionary’ and for many years Goering’s collaborator — by the Socialists and Stauffenberg, that by the end of 1943 he was off the cabinet list altogether. He was very seriously annoyed and disapproved highly of the ‘much too *bourgeois* methods’ of Goerdeler’s revolutionary planning and desired to substitute for them his own. His place as Minister of Finance was taken by Loeser, one of Krupp’s directors and a much-valued colleague of Goerdeler in Leipzig.<sup>1</sup> The most contested ministry was that of the Interior which Goerdeler wished to assign provisionally at least to Fritz von der Schulenburg who acted as go-between with the Kreisau circle, and was also a very useful adviser on questions of personnel; in any event he was to be secretary of state under Leber.<sup>2</sup> Leber made no concealment of the feeling that he would find it difficult to work with a liberal chancellor. As little dispensable was his party comrade Leuschner whose great experience in parliamentary work (as former Minister of the Interior in Hesse) and in organization (as trade union leader) was just as weighty a recommendation as his attractive character. We know that he had worked on political matters with Goerdeler and defended him, as did his assistant Maas, against the accusations of ‘reactionary’ views for both recognized his superior gifts and character. Leuschner appears in all the lists known to me as Vice-Chancellor. Stauffenberg wanted either him or Leber to take Goerdeler’s place for the ‘younger men’ carried their dislike of Goerdeler so far as to want him to be considered simply as the head of a ‘transitional cabinet’.<sup>3</sup> Langbehn, Popitz’s trusted adviser, was originally considered for the Ministry of Justice probably on the recommendation of Popitz against Goerdeler’s known objections to him; after his arrest (autumn 1943) his name naturally dropped out. For him was substituted, first, Judge Advocate-General Sack who deserved so well of the Resistance, and, later, the Catholic lawyer Wirmer one of the most active of his group.

<sup>1</sup> *KB*, 19, viii for Goerdeler’s difficulties in inducing Loeser to accept. On Popitz, v. Hassell, pp. 326, 339 *sq.* Since October Goerdeler had broken off dealings with Popitz’s loyalest friend Prof. Jessen because he anticipated trouble from that quarter, particularly on questions of personnel. (v. Dulles, p. 154). Ex-minister Dr Guenter Gereke tells me that Popitz with the support of Hassell and Leuschner tried, and not without success, to persuade Witzleben to take over the Chancellorship in addition to the Commander-in-Chiefship; this was confirmed by Otto John. Later, according to a letter of Falkenhausen, Popitz in agreement with Trott and Moltke wanted to make that general Chancellor.

<sup>2</sup> According to a letter from Dr E. Kessler this was known to him in January 1944.

<sup>3</sup> *KB*, 12, viii (Maas’s statement): Zeller, pp. 174, 176. Gisevius, ii, p. 270. From Leber’s statement (*KB*, 10, viii) he thought of later putting Leuschner in Beck’s place. In *KB* the opposition of the Socialists to Goerdeler is much exaggerated.



There was some difficulty in finding someone for the Ministry of Economics, an office which, in Goerdeler's view, should be closely linked with the Ministry of Labour. Finally the choice fell on the ex-German National member of the Reichstag, Paul Lejeune-Jung, who was credited with the semi-socialist idea of creating a state authority over all property in minerals, which meant the nationalization of the mines.<sup>1</sup> He had discussed this with the trade-unionist members of the Berlin circle and the Kreisau circle, but it was later rejected by them; he was thought, and even, it was said, by himself, to be a sick man not quite able to tackle the tasks that would be imposed upon him.

For a time the post of Foreign Minister was left unfilled. It was at first taken for granted that it would be given to the former ambassador Ulrich von Hassell, a man of high culture who had long been a member of the group. From 1943 the name of the former Ambassador in Moscow, Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg began to be mentioned in whom Goerdeler had little interest, but who was strongly supported by Stauffenberg.<sup>2</sup> Goerdeler left it to themselves to decide who would be Foreign Minister but, as these two old-fashioned diplomatists of the best type declined to do so, the post was left temporarily unoccupied. Choice depended on the decision about what the future foreign policy should be.

It was inevitable that the attempt to give substance to the plans for a *coup d'état* by the formation of a 'shadow cabinet' would bring out clearly the differences between those who were united against tyranny. Just as inevitably the conflict of views between men so politically active and representing forces and ideas of such varied provenance, produced sharp controversy and misunderstandings which caused bitterness.

Politics has no resemblance to a peaceful social club, especially when each member is desperately convinced of the rightness of his own particular view, and it is really rather extraordinary that the building of a united front from men of such diverse party persuasions from Right to Left was possible at all. But there was already among them such a degree of self-abnegation, of strength of character and of tireless patience as to enable them to pursue the work of unification unembittered by unjust accusations, and also undeterred by just criticism, and to make so many men of strong individuality tread a common path, the more so as from month to month the dangers grew of discovery and destruction. In January what was known as

<sup>1</sup> Schlabrendorff, p. 153. The Kreisau circle discussed mines nationalization with him. *V. KB*, 6, ix (Goerdeler's statement).

<sup>2</sup> Hassell, pp. 327 sq, 332.

the 'Solf group', consisting of members of Berlin society, mostly diplomatists, were arrested and condemned to death. About the same time Moltke who had given the arrested men a warning, was himself arrested which meant the end of the Kreisau circle. In February an official of the counter-intelligence, Erich Vermehren, a friend of Consul-General Kiep who had been arrested, deserted to the British from his post in Istanbul with the result that his chief Canaris was dismissed. The blows were falling on the very heart of the conspiracy. And what was to become of Germany if this terrible war became even more cruel, if attempts at assassination always failed, and the prospects of a revolution went on receding? Only one who remembers the unbearable nervous tension in which the conspirators lived can rightly judge the sharpness and passion of their dissensions.

In spite of these they went on united with their preparations. The organizers of the *coup d'état*, especially Stauffenberg, naturally had trustworthy associates, not only in Berlin but in all the provincial capitals, ready to take over the public powers on reception of a code word, in close co-operation with the civilian and military authorities. An attempt was made to find a liaison officer in each military district who could be initiated into the conspiracy and a 'political representative' who, when the moment came, would co-operate with him. That made it necessary to get into secret contact with a very large number of people and more or less inform them of the actual plans — a remarkably dangerous and difficult proceeding. Goerdeler took most of the responsibility for this on his own shoulders, tirelessly travelled throughout the country and that with a skill and caution that later was chronicled with amazement in the reports of the Gestapo. He paid no attention to those who reproached him with hustling things and even with talking too much and being reckless. He often said to his friends that he knew all that was said about him, but that he suffered it for he could not keep cautious silence or speak only in carefully chosen veiled language if such a colossal edifice as the 'Third Reich' were to be destroyed. Risks had to be taken even with one's own life. When a general said to him that there was nothing less difficult than to send others on dangerous tasks which he himself did not undertake, Goerdeler promptly handed him a paper written by himself and signed with his full name which contained a savage condemnation of Hitlerism and an appeal for its destruction. 'I wanted to show you' he added, 'that I take full responsibility for what I have done, and am determined to risk my own life in the cause'.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, after difficult negotiations and many failures, a long list

<sup>1</sup> V. Dulles, p. 32 without giving his source. Was it Gisevius?

of ministers who could be trusted was agreed upon. That list fell into the hands of Hitler's myrmidons on July 20th, for it had been taken to the Information Bureau of the Home Army in the Bendlerstrasse as material for Stauffenberg's instruction of the military district commanders. The Gestapo were thus able at the first moment of the attempted *coup* to arrest the conspirators outside Berlin. Until then virtually nothing had been discovered by them, and Goerdeler's activity was so concealed that, although there was growing suspicion of him, they had no good grounds for his arrest until mid-July.<sup>1</sup>

An important part of the preparations was the drafting of emergency measures, proclamations, fly-sheets and broadcast talks in which it seems almost all the members of the inner conspiratorial circle took part. Popitz drew up 'principles for legal administration during the state of siege';<sup>2</sup> Paul van Husen, the Kreisau legal expert, 'proposals for the punishment of violators of law and justice';<sup>3</sup> Goerdeler himself a mass of proclamations in which he justified the *coup d'état* by exposing the crimes and catastrophic political errors of the Hitler Government and setting forth the foreign and domestic political aims of the new government.<sup>4</sup> From the beginning the intention of telling the nation the truth about its rulers through the Berlin radio whose station was to be seized as one of the first acts of the revolt, figured largely in Goerdeler's plans. His broadcast talks resembled his writings; not always precise enough and at times slightly didactic when he got on to his pet economic and political ideas and then again most impressive in their convincingness and in the clarity with which he expounded his programme. It is noteworthy how in the drafts of these talks polemic against the hated rule of the tyrant yields to the inner compulsion to expound his own ideas for the future of Germany and Europe, to instil confidence and to appeal to reason, to goodwill, to the nobler instincts of mankind, instead of to their passions and their capacity for hate.

On these drafts others collaborated, and their author had to take pains to keep the circle united. References to social policy and religious ideas occur which are not to be found in Goerdeler's other

<sup>1</sup> At my investigation the police official Schrey who conducted it, assured me of this.

<sup>2</sup> V. Hassell, p. 385.

<sup>3</sup> V. Steltzer, p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> V. (a) 'Government Programme' early summer 1944 (printed in *Die Gegenwart*: June 24, 1946, (b) Proclamation. (? end of 1943) in Schlabrendorff, p. 149; (c) 'Government declaration No. 2' in Pechel, p. 314; (d) draft proclamation (? spring 1943) *KB*, 19, viii; (e) wireless speech found by the Gestapo, *KB*, 14, viii, v. Pechel, p. 309.

writings. The former were there obviously to pacify Leber and Reichwein and they come close to a position which he could not reconcile with his own convictions; that is why at his trial he refused to claim them as his very own. As a source for the interpretation of his political ideas they are not to be used without qualification. They are a compromise such as is any declaration by a coalition government.

Co-operation with Wirmer and Hassell was easy enough; with Stauffenberg, who wrote drafts of his own,<sup>1</sup> there was often tension, and as for Leber it has been reported that he finally had not the patience to listen to the end to a reading of Goerdeler's drafts. With Reichwein and Mierendorff he had at the end of 1943 drawn up his own 'appeal to the people' but did not get full agreement to it.<sup>2</sup> According to a Socialist report the conspirators were not content simply with issuing proclamations but made great efforts to prepare for a great popular rising at the moment of the *coup d'état*. It appears that links between the old trade unionists and the Socialists, never entirely broken, had been in many places renewed. In Hesse-Darmstadt, Leuschner's old domain, delegates were established even in the smallest places who were in touch with a secret group in Frankfurt led by the former Counsellor of State Ludwig Schwamb and they had a following of resolute and trustworthy men. But it is questionable if we are dealing with anything more than a loose association of like-minded people such as existed everywhere and especially in the industrial areas, but which gradually gained in importance as Hitler's star paled.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At his trial (Thierack's report to Bormann) Goerdeler said he had nothing to do with Stauffenberg's draft proclamations and corrected them merely to show how unusable they were. This it seems should be referred not to the 'Appeal to the Soldiers' which the court (contrary to Goerdeler's view in War Department Archives) ascribed to Stauffenberg (printed in Pechel, p. 304) but to 'Proclamation to the German People' (Pechel, p. 305, Zeller, p. 182) who finds in it a 'new tone' which I cannot detect.

<sup>2</sup> *V. KB*, 8, viii and 14, viii. *V.* also *KB*, 24, xi.

<sup>3</sup> Henk, p. 46, gives an account of a socialist revolutionary movement, principally in Hesse and gives many names, but it is rather a mystery how it was built up in a few weeks in the summer of 1944 and how it escaped the notice of the Gestapo. Henk, on p. 60, admits no practical arrangement for a rising had been made apart from a railway strike at Mainz: *v.* too *KB*, 24, xi.

*The Catastrophe of July 20, 1944*

STAUFFENBERG'S TECHNICAL preparations for the attempt on Hitler's life were completed by the end of November 1943. He himself awaited with confidence the success of an attempt to take place during the Christmas festivities on the occasion of an inspection of new uniforms which would blow to pieces both Hitler and the assassin (Captain Axel von dem Bussche). But the inspection never was held; this attempt, too, failed like all the others and the war continued on its fatal course. Ever more agonisedly was the old question put — would a military 'putsch' be too late? In November Wallenberg had said that unless it succeeded very soon there would be no point in a revolution. The favourable meaning which Goerdeler had taken out of Churchill's words was seriously doubted by his fellow-conspirators who knew his optimistic nature. All that was known with certainty of Anglo-Saxon policy was the loudly proclaimed intention of going on fighting until Germany 'unconditionally' surrendered. Under these circumstances should not feelers be put out eastwards, despite the group's total rejection of Bolshevism?

Russian policy from time to time seemed to indicate a desire to meet such a feeler halfway. Some encouragement was to be drawn from Stalin's order of the day (February 24, 1942): 'It would be absurd to equate the Hitler clique with the German people, with the German state. The teachings of history show that Hitlers come and go but that the German people, the German state remain.' No one in Germany had ever heard such words from the West and Russian propaganda repeated them in ever new form until the war ended; they were even placarded on the walls of houses after the capture of Berlin.

But it was more than propaganda rhetoric that emboldened the Opposition to turn to Moscow. We now know how extremely distrustful Stalin was of his allies who took so long to get their ground forces into the war against Hitler. First, they postponed the promised invasion of the Continent from year to year. Then they landed in Africa instead of in Europe. Then there came the cautious, and, from the military point of view not very impressive, invasion of Italy, and then Churchill wanted the main stroke to be made in the Balkans and not in France — obviously to prevent the Russians over-running South Eastern Europe. Was it the real aim of the 'capitalist' powers

to misuse their Communist ally as their sword on the Continent, to let it bleed to exhaustion and then themselves to be triumphant arbiters of a continent and take to themselves all the fruits of victory? Stalin's mistrust was the result of the opposition he found in London and Washington to a binding agreement on a strategically favourable western frontier for Russia. Nor had the U.S. ever entered into formal alliance with Russia; consent to that would have had to be given by the Senate. Until Yalta (February 11, 1945) the Americans obstinately refused to go beyond arrangements on single points, promises to deliver munitions, assurances of friendship, pledges of aid and purely military agreements. They stoutly refused to make any secret agreement on frontiers before the forthcoming peace conference. The Secretary of State Cordell Hull who clung to this policy against his President's inclination to more flexibility, thought that Russia should prefer to seek her security in a future 'League of Nations', the world organization for peace. He always reminded Roosevelt of the unfortunate experience of secret treaties after the first world war which had led to Versailles and the departure of the disillusioned Americans from Europe into the post-1918 policy of isolation. He feared Russia's extravagant expansionist aims — at least in America's first war-year (1941-2) — and was dismayed to hear that, in the negotiations for an Anglo-Russian alliance, Stalin had demanded the abandonment of Finland and the Baltic States to Russia and also a guarantee of the return of all the territory taken by Russia from Poland and Rumania after the conclusion of the pact with Hitler — not to speak of the dissolution of Germany through the loss of East Prussia and the Rhineland, by the separation from her of an independent Bavaria and Austria and the restoration of the old state of things in Czechoslovakia and South Eastern Europe. Churchill, who rejected these demands in the winter of 1941-2, was in May 1942, in his embarrassment at being so little able to help the Russian ally militarily, ready to compromise, but Hull succeeded in securing that the Anglo-Russian treaty (May 26th) contained no frontier guarantees and that in Art. 5 the principle was laid down that the Allies would neither seek territorial gains for themselves nor interfere in the internal affairs of other states. In all this regard to the wishes of the exiled Polish Government played a part both in London and in Washington. That government which was politically affiliated to Western democracy demanded the return of the eastern districts of Poland lost in 1939, feared and hated Bolshevism and proclaimed the creation of a 'Third Europe' composed of the liberated border states of east and central Europe from the Baltic to Rumania, whose confederacy would be a dyke against the Red

flood from the east. In that way it appeared sometimes to be almost a kind of ally of the German Opposition.

The only question was how long the Western powers would back these aims. It is an exciting drama to watch how the policy of Stalin, as cunning as it was dogged, forced its way despite all resistance to the attainment of its imperialist ambitions, giving Russia security behind a wall of communist vassal states, the dissolution of German unity, the control and exploitation of a great Russian zone of occupation and the final destruction of German 'militarism'. Looking back, the path it pursued seems straighter than it actually was. Just like Hitler, Stalin won his power positions piece by piece, and, again like him, did not shrink from taking any roundabout way to the goal. But in the clarity and consistency of his efforts to attain it he was far superior to his German rival.

Soviet foreign policy won its first success after Stalingrad. Its boycott of the Casablanca conference influenced the decision to demand 'unconditional surrender' by which the Western powers deprived themselves of the barrier Germany could have provided against the Russian claims. The efforts of the Polish Government were crippled by the founding in Moscow on March 1, 1943 of the 'Union of Polish Patriots' which later served as Stalin's instrument in making Poland a vassal state. Soon after, Russian diplomacy ascertained that London and Washington were prepared to deliver up to Russia eastern Poland up to the so-called Curzon line (roughly to the frontiers existing at the end of 1939) and to compensate Poland with a large area of Germany. On April 25th negotiations were broken off with the Polish Government in exile. Four weeks later the Comintern was dissolved, thus lessening Western fear of Bolshevism and leaving the way free for an alliance of the power of Communism with that of nationalism and democracy. Benes went to Moscow, severed every connection with plans for a 'Third Europe' and placed his country under the 'protection' of her great eastern neighbour. A conference of foreign ministers in Moscow was arranged for autumn to prepare for a meeting of the 'Big Three'. For that the Russians had carefully paved the way; they reported to Washington that Japan (September 16th) had offered to mediate for peace between them and Hitler; with relative truth they added that the offer had been rejected. But, at the same time, they withdrew their ambassadors Litvinov and Maiski from the Western capitals alleging they were 'western minded' and replaced them by younger men; they played the same double game with Germany.

From the end of 1942 a carefully camouflaged and very secret connection existed between one of Ribbentrop's collaborators,

Peter Kleist, and an intermediary of Russian diplomacy named Klaus who had more or less mysterious relations with the foreign section of the Russian secret police. The two met in Stockholm in December 1942 and June and September 1943. On each occasion the initiative came from the Russian side. Three times Klaus with great persistence repeated the same offer to Kleist: a separate peace on the basis of the frontiers of 1939 or 1914, a free hand for Russia in the Straits and in Asia, greatly developed trade on both sides — all this to be discussed by plenipotentiaries of both countries at a secret conference to be held in some neutral place. The repetition of this offer is the more astonishing since Hitler declined to negotiate on a separate peace and, at once deeply mistrustful and fanatically convinced of final victory, would do no more than permit this contact now that it had been made, to continue in entirely 'private' form. It is hard to believe that, after the experience of 1941, Stalin could ever have thought it possible to make a lasting peace with Hitler. What really was behind these offers remains an open question. There are signs to show that they may just have been pure fictions of the Russian intermediary. What appears most probable to me is that the Russians were trying to find whether and how far they could threaten their allies with a separate peace and so lessen their obstinate resistance to Stalin's territorial demands.

Such threatening was soon seen to be unnecessary. In August 1943, at the Quebec Conference, Churchill and Roosevelt were so pleased at the prospect of direct discussion with Stalin that they were ready to make great concessions. Even then the circles round Roosevelt were convinced that Russia after the defeat of Germany would be the great power of the future casting its shadow over all Europe. Therefore they held it must be American policy to be good friends with it and so gain its assistance to defeat Japan.<sup>1</sup> This was the entire opposite of the policy which the German Opposition had imagined to be the natural and realistic policy of the West on which they relied. The results were terrible for Germany and fateful for Europe. The agreement was to sacrifice Germany to the friendship which Churchill and Roosevelt hoped for from Russia. To attain that end Germany was robbed of her eastern provinces, divided up into occupation zones, completely destroyed as a factor of power and, with half her territory gone, left at the mercy of Russia. Today no German can read the Moscow-Teheran negotiations without deep indignation; they began with no other than Hull gratifying the Russians unasked with a statement which went further than their boldest hopes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sherwood, p. 748.

<sup>2</sup> *V. the important and excellent book by Boris Meissner, *Russland die Westmächte und Deutschland* (2nd ed. Hamburg 1954). The chief sources are the Hull*



It is against this background that one must see in the right light the questioning in the Opposition in the autumn of 1943 whether it was not time to put out feelers to Moscow rather than London. Actually it was only in those decisive months between August and December, before West and East united on a programme for a joint destruction of Germany, that there was opportunity for so desperate an attempt at salvation. It was favoured by the fact that the Russians after Stalingrad began on their side to seek contact with the Army Opposition. Of the existence of such contact through the Communist underground, including the 'Rote Capelle', we know already and also of contact with a *bourgeois*-liberal group. The capitulation of the Sixth Army brought into Russian hands a throng of generals and high General Staff officers, officers who made no concealment of their bitterness at Hitler and his senseless sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers. Was this not a splendid opportunity to get into contact with the non-Communist Resistance movement, drive a wedge into the anti-Russian front of German Nationalism, weaken the middle class's and the dreaded 'East Elbian Junkerdom's' hatred of Communism and use it to the advantage of Russian strategy and foreign policy? The earlier attempts of German Communists who had found refuge in Russia — Pieck, Ulbricht, Weinert, Plevier, Becher and their comrades — to impair the morale of the German front line troops by fly-sheets and the like, appealing to 'the international solidarity of the working class', had been a miserable failure. Would it be possible to induce German generals, well-known Army leaders, to ask German soldiers to abandon their Fuehrer, lay down their arms or desert? Up to now the camouflage of the 'anti-capitalist' propaganda under a liberal vocabulary and phrases about freedom had been as little profitable as the dissolution of the Comintern. Ideological considerations had to go by the board if these gains were to be won: the breaking of front line morale, encouragement of civilian Opposition inside Germany and the effect on London and Washington in the warning that peace could be got by co-operation with a German Opposition government. An unexceptionable liberal programme like that drawn up by the 'National Committee of Free Germany' formed in mid-July 1943 in the Moscow prisoner-of-war camps, might help to allay the fear of Bolshevism in the 'capitalist' countries.

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and Churchill memoirs and Sherwood's book. See also Kleist *Zwischen Hitler und Stalin* and H. G. Sasse, *Die ostdeutsche Frage auf den Konferenzen von Teheran bis Potsdam* in 'Jahrbuch fuer die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands', vol. ii, 1954, pp. 11-82.

Today we know how this odd freedom movement was brought into being behind the barbed wire and a 'German Officers' Association organized through unexpectedly courteous treatment of the higher ranks, and a mixture of brutality and bribery towards the middle and lower ones; by strong appeal to patriotism, the chief theme of a newspaper with a black, white and red border called 'Free Germany'; by search for young officers with well-known aristocratic names from whom it was hoped to learn more about the nationalist middle-class and church opposition in Germany — all reckoning on the political inexperience and *naïvete* of the professional soldier.<sup>1</sup> How could many escape temptation? More astonishing is the fact that the Russians were ready to switch the Communist underground in Germany over to the use of the catchwords of liberalism and freedom. It is alleged that there was a close link between that underground and the Moscow National Committee created by German prisoners of war who here and there crossed the German lines on missions of sabotage. Whether that is true or not, it is at least certain that, apart from a meeting — with what unfortunate consequences we have already seen — with Leber and Reichwein in June the Communists had steadily avoided any direct contact with the groups under Beck, Goerdeler, Moltke and Schulenburg.<sup>2</sup>

Gisevius, and after him Allan Dulles, has said that the Kreisau group of aristocrats and their Socialist friends were enthusiasts for a sort of anti-Fascist world revolution which, arm in arm with the Communists and the foreign workers in Germany, they would carry through, a brotherhood of all those oppressed by Hitler, with the intention of coming to a peaceful understanding with Russia.<sup>3</sup> This 'militant socialism' is supposed to have fired Stauffenberg's imagination and heightened his political ambition, an ambition which aimed at nothing less than national leadership along new revolutionary ways in the future. Adam von Trott zu Solz in particular, it is claimed, was, as foreign political expert in Kreisau, all for obtaining contact with the East, which means Stalin, instead of with the West. Even if he was 'western-inclined' he not only despaired of getting the West to renounce its intention to destroy Germany, but he too was filled with that 'revolutionary dynamism' of which we know from Stauffenberg.

It is established that in January 1943 Trott went to Dulles in

<sup>1</sup> Puttkamer and Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, *Tagebuch der Versuchung* 1950. *Deutsche Wohin? Protokoll der Grundesversammlung des Nationalkomitees 'Freies Deutschland' und des Bundes deutscher Offiziere*: Vorwort von P. Merker and A. V. von Golssenau (Mexico City 1944). For further literature v. E. Mathias, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> V. *supra* pp. 47, 48, 272, cf. *Nordwestdeutsche Hefte*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Gisevius, ii, 275. Dulles, pp. 81, 131, 137, 172.

Switzerland on a sort of mission which opened up revolutionary prospects. Dulles had come to the American Embassy in Berne in the autumn of 1942 as a special representative of Roosevelt to study European economic questions, and from there had watched with increasing interest and comprehension, even open sympathy, the efforts at revolution of the Opposition movement. Trott's mission was to impress upon him how deeply the Opposition had been disillusioned by the results of their efforts to get into contact with the Western governments, and at the complete, often pharasaical, misconceptions about their difficult situation under the Nazi terror. Trott had then stated that there was a certain similarity of situation and of feeling between the Russian people and the German people. Both had broken with '*bourgeois* ideology', both had suffered and struggled to get a radical solution of social problems, both had the idea 'of returning to the spiritual (if not the ecclesiastical) traditions of Christianity'. After the war there could well be a coming together of the two people and a common social revolution threatening all Europe.

The political aim of all this is clear.<sup>1</sup> It sketched vaguely the danger of a social revolution of those crushed miserably to the wall and thereby hoped to scare the politicians of the 'capitalist' West out of thoughts of the total wreckage of the German economic potential and the total destruction of German power and honour. Certainly the romantic pictures of an inner change in Russia and the possibility of the union of the oppressed such as Reichwein more than the others at Kreisau was wont to draw, accord with it. Is it necessary, however, to conclude that the sympathies of the author were with Russia or that he had revolutionary leanings of his own? Trott repeated and emphasized his warnings in another mission to Dulles in April 1944. He reported on the greatly increased activity of the Communist underground, of its connections with the 'Free Germany Committee' and of the support given it by the Russian Government. The danger was intensified by the presence of the very numerous and not effectively guarded Russian prisoners of war. What was especially dangerous was that all the new 'constructive ideas and plans' for the post-war reconstruction of Germany came from Moscow, and were spread by a well-organized whispering campaign all over Germany; clearly the 'liberation programme' of the Moscow Committee is meant. Nothing like them came from the West but only more threats of indiscriminate destruction. The German Socialist leaders believed that as a result they could see a formidable swing to the extreme Left on the part of the workers, a danger of which Goerdeler had already spoken to the generals. It might well be that in the end the demo-

<sup>1</sup> Dulles, p. 131.

cracies would win the war and lose the peace, for Germany would be Communist and only exchange one dictator for another. To win German Labour for the Allies they would need to help the Socialist Resistance groups. They ought to encourage these by public statements that the Western governments would be glad to see Socialist leaders in a new German cabinet, that the future Labour movement would be free to organize itself without any interference by 'Western capitalist groups which were hostile to the workers', that the new Germany would be freely governed and need not fear a puppet government of 'German Quislings'. These public declarations should be reinforced by a private message in similar terms to the German Labour leaders from the American Government. It would also be a good thing to increase the dropping of leaflets, and to agree with the Opposition on their wording, and to establish for the Socialists as clear a co-operation with 'the progressive forces of the West' as the Communists had with Moscow. Also the air offensive should be aimed as far as possible against military and industrial targets instead of against the residential districts whose destruction would only help on the 'proletarianization' of Europe.

In my view Trott's second mission reveals very clearly the real political attitude of the Socialist group around Leber who was certainly its intellectual creator, or at least its inspirer.<sup>1</sup> These old Socialists were not just unfriendly but actually bitterly hostile to Communism; like the middle-class Opposition they wanted close connection with the West. But they were still afraid, as their party had always been, of losing the mass of the workers to Left extremism and wanted to overtrump the seductions of Moscow by suitable and well-chosen counter-propaganda. They did not speak, as Goerdeler had done in his memoranda for the British, of the threat to free Europe of the superiority of Russian power. They thought only in terms of their own domestic needs. But for this mission they used virtually the same arguments that the Socialist emigrés had used earlier in the Western capitals. Looking back, it may be said today that they exaggerated the danger for Germany of Communist propaganda and failed to estimate the effect on the German soldiers of their experiences in Russia. None the less they cannot be reproached with having indulged in visions of a fundamental revolt from West to East.

Trott had offered himself as transmitter of their views to Washington and London, that is, made it possible for the Socialists to pursue a political action of their own apart from Beck and Goerdeler. Such action, however, was not directed towards stealing a march on the

<sup>1</sup> V. Leber p. 286 where Dahrenberg answers Gisevius.

middle-class groups, but to ensure the participation of the Socialists in the future government to which they were entitled. Trott did not say that the Opposition would file into the Russian camp, but that the workers would be diverted into the Russian stream. If, in this sense, he played East against West, it was not because of preference for the East but a tactical manoeuvre whose usefulness and even necessity Hassell himself recognized.<sup>1</sup> Like him, Trott believed that in her central position Germany had to aim at enduring relations with her Eastern as well as her Western neighbours. We have already mentioned his pamphlet 'Germany between East and West' in which he expounded this thesis. We may assume that it is identical with a pamphlet 'Europe between East and West' which the Gestapo found among the papers of Graf Schwerin-Schwanefeld and on which there is a fairly full police report.<sup>2</sup> In this the danger of the German worker being infected through Communist propaganda is emphasized in the same way as Trott emphasized it to Dulles, and the same allusions are made to certain similarities in the political and economic structure of the two nations, to the alleged radicalization of German youth and to the 12,000,000 foreign workers in Germany. 'Against Bolshevism Britain is the only counter-weight in Europe. A British policy conceived in the spirit of Versailles would be an error; it would prevent the maintenance of a balance of powers. Germany will remain the second strongest power in Europe. Britain will have to play her against Russia. An honourable peace without an occupation, without loss of territory, without a war indemnity, without political encirclement and economic subjection is the only possibility. The loss of East Prussia may be thought of as compensation to Poland and Austrian independence considered. Unfortunately British opinion which regards Germany as irredeemably aggressive is against any such development although it was Versailles which first provoked the aggressive spirit. An honourable peace would prevent war for a long time and would prevent friction between Britain and Russia since they would have nowhere a common frontier. The opposition to such a solution comes in the main from those who refuse to recognize that, as compared with the United States, Britain is now a second-class power.'

<sup>1</sup> V. Hassell, pp. 321, 332 *sq.* What Gisevius reports (ii, p. 278) shows that Trott, deeply disillusioned, no longer thought that the Opposition could reach an understanding with the West. What Dulles (p. 89) says of Trott's study of Marxism when he was a student in Berlin has no bearing on his political views in 1943-4 especially as he later studied at Oxford. His 'communist tendencies' have become a sort of legend rightly disposed of by Goetz von Selles in 'Jahrbuch der Albertus Universitat Koenigsberg', 1954, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> KB, 24, vii.

In the autumn of 1943 Trott, it appears, went to Sweden with the intention of getting English friends to discuss with him Goerdeler's statement that Churchill was ready for an understanding. They told him that there was great anxiety about Russia and very great interest in developments in Germany, but much suspicion that they were camouflage for the continuance of the militarist methods of Nazi-ism under another name. He reported to Stauffenberg that they could not count on Britain's readiness to come to an understanding.<sup>1</sup>

If that was correct, then should not there be at least an attempt to see if Stalin was ready for peace? Trott and Schulenburg, the former ambassador in Moscow, were well enough informed on the very secret offer of a separate peace which Peter Kleist had brought from Stockholm. Both had heard about it for the first time in December 1942 and had at once concluded that 'we must not let slip even such a slender possibility as is offered'.<sup>2</sup> Hassell thought that Stalin may have feared an overwhelming American victory. As he wrote in his diary in August 1943: 'If Hitler reaches an understanding with Stalin it is impossible to conceive the full extent of the mischief that will cause. There is still only one course — to convince the Russians or the Anglo-Americans that it is in their interest that Germany should remain as a strong and permanent power in Europe, and that Central Europe should be prosperous was in the interests of both East and West. I prefer in this game to play on Britain's side, but if it is necessary I could think in terms of an understanding with Russia. Trott fully agrees with me, the others from the moral point of view which I understand, have doubts but are slowly being convinced.'<sup>3</sup>

The possibility of reaching agreement with Moscow was in the late summer and autumn carefully examined by the conspirators who belonged to the Right. Goerdeler met Hassell and Schulenburg in the house of Counsellor of Legation Bruecklmeier who was acting as mediator. He asked Schulenburg about Stalin's character and whether he really believed in the chances of an agreement with Russia. The answer was: Stalin is a cold calculator; the result of any negotiations will depend on what one can offer him. Russia is not firmly bound to her Anglo-Saxon partners; this, as far as Britain was concerned, was not accurate after the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Treaty of Alliance of May 26, 1942. Goerdeler saw that the ambassador estimated the chances surprisingly optimistically and asked him to cooperate with him for 'something must happen soon or it will be too late'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *V. Hassell*, p. 337. *KB*, 29, xi.

<sup>2</sup> *V. Kleist*, p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> *V. Hassell*, p. 321.

<sup>4</sup> *KB*, 26, viii (Schulenburg's statement).

To understand Schulenburg's attitude it should be made clear that in September the Russians, through Kleist, had expressed the wish that Alexandrov, the head of the European Section of their Foreign Office, should have a talk with Schulenburg on the peace terms they had suggested.<sup>1</sup> The ambassador was very optimistic. If Russia was offering such terms to Hitler, how much more favourable would be the terms to a new and far more trustworthy government! One of his collaborators, Franz von Sonnleithner, revealed in 1947<sup>2</sup> that Schulenburg had placed himself at Ribbentrop's disposal for the negotiations for which the Russians had asked. Hitler had rejected anything of the kind, so the ambassador sought to act on his own, that is, with the help of the Resistance movement. He now placed himself at Goerdeler's disposal and said he was ready to slip through the German lines to see Stalin. Sonnleithner says that the Chief of Staff of an Army corps on the Eastern front was asked to examine the chances of getting through the Russian lines, and that Tresckow had had a hand in the game, for he had discussed such plans with Schulenburg in August. At any rate he was delighted over the possibility of ending hostilities in the East, since that would make it possible to use the troops there to combat the Hitler régime.<sup>3</sup>

The ambassador seems to have held to this plan for a longish time. In December, apparently in ignorance of what had happened in the conferences at Moscow and Teheran, he had been very optimistic when talking to Hassell about the prospects.<sup>4</sup> None the less, the risky enterprise never was undertaken. Was it technically impossible? Did it seem finally to be over-adventurous? Or were there political objections to it? According to Sonnleithner, Schulenburg had the impression that the Resistance groups intended merely to amuse the Russians and wanted an agreement with the West. He himself thought in terms of a genuinely central position of Germany between East and West and had no intention of deceiving Stalin; in view of Russia's growing strength he thought that too dangerous; he wanted no firm agreements with the West, so as not to endanger good relations with Russia.

<sup>1</sup> *V. Kleist*, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> *V. account of his interrogation in War Department Record Branch.*

<sup>3</sup> *KB*, 29, xi. Wheeler-Bennett (p. 616) on the strength of a letter from G. Hilger doubts if ever Schulenburg was serious in his offer. Gisevius (ii, p. 304) heard in July 1944 that Schulenburg had actually discussed with Kluge the project of getting through the front lines. That must have been before October 12th. But was Kluge so deep in the plot as to be consulted? In *KB*, 29, viii we read that Goerdeler talked about the project with Tresckow but thought it useless to seek contact with the Russians unless there was definitely no hope of negotiating with the West.

<sup>4</sup> *V. Hassell*, p. 332.

If this is correct, Schulenburg must be considered as definitely a believer in 'the Eastern Solution', and as a victim of illusions so blind that it is extraordinary that Beck and Goerdeler did not oppose his nomination as Foreign Minister. The Gestapo in the event proved its falsity. Schulenburg was as little inclined to one-sided Easternism as Beck and Goerdeler were.<sup>1</sup> None of them knew what Stalin's real intentions were towards Germany, but they never at any time thought of basing our future exclusively on a pact with Russia. Rather they agreed with Hassell that 'obvious fairness to Britain was the decisive factor', but that the 'possibility of a switch eastwards' had always to be taken into consideration as a tactical means of bringing pressure to bear. Hassell had spoken often to Schulenburg and found he disagreed only on his appreciation of the practical results of playing this game, never on the fundamentals. According to the later police reports — on this point not to be trusted — the whole Resistance, apart from Reichwein and Langbehn, was agreed, first, that there could in the long run be no fruitful collaboration with the Bolsheviks, but only with the West; second, that the increasing power of Russia meant so great a danger to Central Europe that we could hope to defend ourselves against it only in alliance with Britain and the United States. Of the attitude of the Seydlitz group Stauffenberg was very critical; there had never been any real association with the Moscow National Committee which was held to be 'infected with Bolshevism'. Trott indeed got through Stockholm regular information about the Committee's activities but disagreed with them.<sup>2</sup>

The fate of the Seydlitz group shows quite clearly how vain was every attempt to get any sort of assurance on Germany's future through yielding to Russian wishes, or even on the eastern frontiers.<sup>3</sup> It appears that the Opposition leaders at the end of the year were agreed not to seek any agreement with Moscow before their revolution was successful, but on Hitler's fall to obtain diplomatic relations with the East as well as the West so as to be able to use the existing differences between them to play one off against the other. Goerdeler reasoned thus: the German armies still held the eastern frontier of Poland; there was still a Polish government in exile in London which feared nothing so much as the entry of Russian troops into

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *KB*, 28, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Stauffenberg is said to have declared that he took no stock of proclamations issued from behind barbed wire. Only Col. Mertz von Quirnheim whose brother-in-law Maj. Gen. Korfes was with Seydlitz had said that perhaps Russia in the end would co-operate seriously with the Seydlitz group (*KB*, 28, xi). For Beck's and Goerdeler's opinions *KB*, 21, xi; Trott's statement *KB*, 8, viii. The story that he sought out Mme Kollontai seems to me incredible. *V.* also Kleist, p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> *V.* Puttkamer, p. 66.



their country; the provision in the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1942 which pledged the signatories not to seek extensions of territory was still formally valid; finally the United States was not as yet bound by a formal alliance to Russian policy. That Germany's fate had already been decided in the Moscow-Teheran conferences he did not know. His conclusions, therefore, were quite logical. Russia must either renounce her plans of conquest or break with Britain or, immediately after Hitler's fall, try to get in touch with us, the new German Government. To facilitate that, the German who knew the Russians best, Schulenburg, would go to Stockholm to be in readiness. In Madrid, Berne and Rome other emissaries of the new Government, people with the best foreign connections, would be ready to get into touch with the Western governments.<sup>1</sup>

Goerdeler expected Wallenberg's support for his emissary in Sweden; in Berne he relied on Gisevius's relations with Dulles. Trott agreed, but added that direct negotiations should be begun in Moscow and London at the earliest possible moment. In the second he himself would negotiate possibly accompanied by Falkenhausen; in the first Schulenburg would with the support of the former military attaché in Moscow, Koestring. The game Hassell suggested should be played was not abandoned but merely postponed. None of the conspirators dreamed of what deep illusions they were the victims.

The winter was one of painful tension. The air offensive became ever harder to endure and from the military point of view had the terrible effect of slowing down the armaments factories and so deliveries to the Air Force. What troubled Goerdeler most was the collapse of the German resistance in the southern part of the Eastern front. If the Army did not succeed in defending Poland's eastern frontiers from the Russian advance, his greatest political hope was wrecked i.e. that British policy, under the pressure of the Polish Government in exile, would be ready one day to join with a new Germany against the East and not permit the sacrifice of East Germany, particularly his beloved East Prussia.

He was still opposed to political assassinations. He still looked to generals at the front to help him to get rid of Hitler by force but not by murder. Once again he had hopes — this time of Zeitzler, the new Chief of the General Staff, of whose toughness and of whose frequent quarrels with Hitler he had often heard.<sup>2</sup> In vain he besought Beck and Stauffenberg to put him in touch with Zeitzler. Beck disliked the general; Stauffenberg said he had often told him

<sup>1</sup> See his notes made in September 1944: *KB*, 21, xi and 29, xi.

<sup>2</sup> From Goerdeler's notes made in November 1944.

that he believed the war was lost and had received the answer 'Lots of people think so; only a very few say so openly.' In March Goerdeler had a visit from General von Choltitz who had promised to introduce him to Zeitzler but never did so.<sup>1</sup> In early summer Goerdeler had some hope of winning over Major-General Jaeneke for a united approach to Hitler by the generals at the front and the General Staff. He had heard that Jaeneke had fallen into disfavour because he had made very strong representations at Hitler's Headquarters to prevent the senseless sacrifice of the troops in the Crimea. He sent General von Rabenau to him and Jaeneke eagerly said he was ready to support this move, but could do nothing to help it on.

Meantime attempts at assassination continued. The story is completely false that Stauffenberg constantly postponed them in order 'to give Hitler a last chance'.<sup>2</sup> There is little information, and that contradictory, about them, but it is certain that further attempts — by revolver or by bomb — were made in February and March; once again mysterious accidents made them all fail and the increased precautions taken by Hitler made it virtually impossible for anyone armed to get near him.<sup>3</sup> Then, too, it became more difficult and more dangerous to make, transport and conceal explosives; in December 1943 a store of explosives blew up and nearly gave away the whole plot in which more and more people were becoming involved.

The least patient members of the conspiracy were the Labour leaders. It appears that — quite understandably — they were not informed by the soldiers in detail about the planned attempts and that as a result the old Socialist mistrust of 'the military caste' appeared again not only in Leber's case but also in Leuschner's. There were some violent exchanges in Wirmer's office in mid-May and in the beginning or middle of June. Goerdeler who wanted to read out his governmental proposals was met by angry protests from Leber on his foreign policy in particular. The latter's view was that it was madness to hope to carry on the war after a revolution in order to get 'an honourable peace'; an enemy occupation of all Germany could not be avoided. At this point Leuschner interrupted to say that they should no longer let the soldiers lead them by the nose, for they only wanted to have a political alibi to give the trade unions for the period after the collapse of the Third Reich; Hitler could not hold out much longer; the action so often promised by the officers was already too late. It is said, though this is denied by Jakob Kaiser, that Leuschner withdrew his name from Goerdeler's cabinet list.

<sup>1</sup> *KB*, 11, ix.

<sup>2</sup> Gisevius, ii, p. 321.

<sup>3</sup> Zeller, p. 90.

Leber then developed his views on the policy for the period after the collapse; it should be a purely Socialist policy and later he said to his friends that in foreign policy Goerdeler was 'an illusionist' and in domestic policy 'a man of the heavy industries'.

For a moment it seemed as if the party coalition so painfully formed would break up, the more so as at this very time differences arose between the Socialist and Catholic leaders on the Christian character of the future state. Conservatives like Popitz and Gisevius (who in mid-July had been rash enough to return from Switzerland to Berlin so as not to miss the 'putsch') and their friend Graf Hellendorff, protested against a coalition with the trade unions. They thought Goerdeler had got much too much influence. It was Jakob Kaiser with Wirmer and Habermann who did most service in composing or shelving these differences. They told Leber that a simple reaffirmation of the old Social Democrat Party programme was in these times no more than reaction. Leuschner was the first to be appeased and then was sent to treat with Leber. Stauffenberg who also had expressed distrust of Goerdeler, was assured by Wirmer and Schwerin-Schwandenfeld that the last thing Goerdeler wanted was a restoration of the Weimar system and that he was really chockfull of original and productive ideas. As a basis for compromise Wirmer put forward draft proposals of his own which he compared with Leber's. Finally it was agreed to remain united and ready to take over the government immediately on the military collapse.<sup>1</sup>

The mere fact that this purely political conference was held with Stauffenberg shows how steadily his importance had increased, how steadily Beck's political authority had decreased and how Goerdeler was no longer able alone to reconcile the contesting views. That may have been due to the fact that, after the arrests in the winter of 1942-3, he was considered by the conspirators to be in great danger and had to keep a little more in the background, to come to Berlin less often than before, to change his place of residence as often as he could<sup>2</sup> with the help of missions to Sweden — some genuine, others fictitious — for the Bosch firm. And now, in the matter of the time and execution of the *coup d'état* who would make the decision — he or Stauffenberg?

In this sharp conflict of opinion did the divergent views of Leber and Goerdeler on the East-West controversy play a part? The Gestapo bill of accusation against the Socialist leaders asserts that it did. But

<sup>1</sup> KB, 8, viii and 14, viii, Wirmer's statement.

<sup>2</sup> V. Hassell, p. 343; Schlabrendorff, p. 171 (a dark threat by Himmler 1943): Gisevius, ii, p. 305. Gisevius was severely shocked to find Stauffenberg now the central figure in the conspiracy and resented it; generally his book is 'anti-militarist' in tone.

the other evidence shows that this is true only in the sense that Leber did not share his partner's hopes about the readiness of the Western powers to reach an understanding — after all his message sent through Trott had had no answer — and was very anxious about the attitude of the German Communists if the new government tried to continue the war against Russia. Would not the working class refuse to accept a government which resumed the war arm-in-arm with the 'capitalist' West? To get things clear on this point, a week after his second debate with Goerdeler and against the advice of nearly all his friends, he took the risk of going with Reichwein to that meeting with the German Communist leaders which led to their arrest (June 4–5th). This new lightning stroke, this time in the very centre of the conspiracy, shocked immeasurably all its members and made Stauffenberg earnestly desire to set them free from anxiety. But the Gestapo, as it turned out, never got on the track of the plot — the Communist spy had really learned very little — and the effect on Stauffenberg was to make him hasten to carry out the attempt which had been so long planned. It was long overdue and the greatest fear of the conspirators was that it was already too late.<sup>1</sup>

The Opposition had always held that the *coup d'état* must be made before Germany's last resources were exhausted for only for as long as there was serious resistance in the field could there be any hope of peace negotiations instead of 'unconditional surrender'. About the end of March, or the beginning of April, Beck and Goerdeler made a last effort to find out whether the Western powers had any idea of negotiating. By the spring of 1944 both had arrived at the conclusion that it was useless and hopeless to get any assurances of peace *before* there was a revolution. Now they tried to find out whether Washington and London were ready to receive emissaries of the new government that would be formed *after* the revolution. The only new feature was that now they did not feel it necessary to obtain direct contact with Moscow. They noted the action of the Finns who, at the end of February, had begun negotiations for peace with the Russians alone. They stressed the importance of preserving Central Europe from an ideological and political subjection to Bolshevism. Such an end to the war, they declared, meant the end of real democracy and Christian culture in Europe; to one total tyranny another would succeed. The danger latent in the millions of 'proletarians' in the war-devastated zones should not be under-estimated. If, primarily,<sup>2</sup> there was no avoiding dealing with Moscow, other groups could see to that. But

<sup>1</sup> The news that Nikolaus von Halem and Mumm von Schwarzenberg had been condemned to death on June 16th greatly disturbed the conspirators (Schlabrendorff, p. 178).

<sup>2</sup> In English in the text.

now they did not confine themselves to warnings and appeals. They offered the other side a good exchange for readiness to negotiate. The generals commanding-in-chief in the West, notably Rundstedt and Falkenhausen, would be ordered to cease fighting at once and permit the Allied troops to land in France; preparations would be made to receive Allied paratroops at key points on German territory. Now the moment had come. Were the Allies interested?

The Opposition leaders thus were ready to accept the formula of 'unconditional surrender' in the West, in full confidence, of course, that statesmanship there would triumph over the will to destroy utterly, that common interest in the preservation of Western culture would save the German state from total ruin. Clearly they thought, not merely of an armistice with consequent shortening of the front by withdrawal to the French frontier, for instance, or to the so-called 'West Wall', but also of a sort of co-operation between the German and the Anglo-Saxon armies, and of procuring a speedy Western occupation of all Germany before the Red Army overran Poland and stood on Germany's eastern frontiers. Then peace negotiations should begin between victors and vanquished but with a new German government, thanks to which the last period of the conflict had been cut short and which by agreement the former had recognized as their partner in negotiation. Grievous as this would be it was better than capitulation after the Russians had taken Berlin. Goerdeler and Beck took so great a responsibility on themselves in the belief that it was their moral and political duty to end the war as soon as the last hope of winning it, or even of forcing a draw, had gone. They wanted an end to it all and thought it criminal to sacrifice uselessly the life of a single German soldier. They had been well enough informed by Zeitzler's Staff and the staffs of all the commanders in the West — Rundstedt, Falkenhausen and lately Rommel himself — that there was no hope of victory or even of preventing an Allied landing in France.

Gisevius who was handling the matter with Dulles, received at the beginning of May a similar, but on the most important point rather different, proposal from a group (unspecified) of military conspirators in Berlin. This suggested the landing of three divisions of paratroops in the Berlin area which would be supported by commanding officers who were in the conspiracy and then for the landing of greater numbers of Allied troops in Hamburg and Bremen. Meantime troops in Munich who were anti-Hitler and could be relied upon would 'isolate' Hitler and his entourage in Obersalzberg. The idea was to use the Anglo-American armies as a sort of support troops for a *coup d'état* that was not yet fully carried through — a plan so fan-

tastic even in its details that it is hard to credit that it was conceived by the leaders of the conspiracy;<sup>1</sup> it must have been the amateurish effort of a small circle which had not been made fully aware of their leaders' plans.

Gisevius in any event could only tell Berlin what he had learned from Dulles that the Western powers had no thought of separating from their Russian allies and it was useless to hope that they would. After Teheran the defeat and dismemberment of Germany was a settled policy and in the West, after the elaborate and costly preparations for a landing and assurance of complete mastery of the air, the Anglo-Saxons were too confident of success to come to any arrangement whatever with Hitler's internal enemies. Churchill in a sense answered the question put by the German Opposition in April. On May 24th in the House of Commons he declared the British Empire would fight on until Germany surrendered unconditionally, and that this time there would be no sort of preliminary like Wilson's fourteen points in 1918; anything of the kind would only give the Germans another opportunity to protest against a later peace '*diktat*'. The deputy Prime Minister Attlee later (July 6th) added an appeal to the German Opposition. If there really was in Germany any group which might wish to return to a régime which was based on the acceptance of international law and the claims of men to freedom, these people, he said, should understand now that no one could believe in their genuineness so long as they took no active steps to get rid of the present régime; the longer they continued to support, or to endure, it, the more terrible became their share of the responsibility for its continuance.<sup>2</sup>

Wise they may have been, but such admonitions did not help much. In these circumstances what chances were left to the German Opposition? Stauffenberg seems to have clung to the hope that the Allied landing would not come so soon as it was feared or even that it would fail; if it did perhaps the proud British would be readier to treat.<sup>3</sup> To his friends he was saying as much up to the beginning of June. There is some reason to believe that the reason for this optimism was that, without the full knowledge of his fellow-conspirators, he had got into touch with Western military representatives and set

<sup>1</sup> Dulles, p. 139; How could have Olbricht and Stauffenberg induced the fleet to give up Bremen and Hamburg? How could they count on having 'reliable' troops in Munich and how would these 'isolate' Hitler. Nor do the authors of this plan seem to have known of Rommel's attitude with which the Goerdeler group was well acquainted long before mid-May.

<sup>2</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, p. 621: there is no proof that his view is correct that the speeches discouraged the conspirators.

<sup>3</sup> V. Wheeler-Bennett, p. 626.

great hopes on the possibilities. He did not even abandon these on June 6th when the Allies did land in France and gave the lie to his prophecies; at the end of June, we are told, he and Goerdeler were still preparing messages to Britain and at their last meeting on July 18th he spoke confidently about Churchill's attitude.<sup>1</sup>

None the less the invasion of France was a severe blow to the conspirators. They were greatly perplexed. If the invasion continued successfully, or if in it the Allied peoples suffered heavy losses which made them bitterly seek revenge, would there be any sense at all in thinking the enemy would be ready to treat with any Opposition group? Through friends Goerdeler asked Wallenberg's views. The answer received on June 20th was decidedly in the negative, and for a moment even Goerdeler's iron optimism seems to have broken down. His friend Mueller, and soon after his brother Fritz, the most faithful of his East Prussian associates, told him there was hardly the barest hope of his plans succeeding. He now spoke bitterly of the failure of the generals and with sceptical distrust of the policy of Stauffenberg and his friends, distrust not unconnected with his suspicion that 'the younger lot' were more and more aiming at pushing him aside. Other groups, too, were restive and the Socialists in particular thought that Germany's cause was now lost. Stauffenberg did not agree publicly, but in private he was discussing with his friends whether there was any point now in assassinating Hitler and whether it would not be best to let him live on to bear the full responsibility for the catastrophe. Tresckow's answer sent through Lehndorff will always remain as the classic formulation of the feelings which had created the military opposition: 'The attempt must succeed, *coûte que coûte*. If it fails, we must act in Berlin. It is now no longer a question of practical results, but of showing to the world and to history that the Resistance movement risked the last throw. Nothing else matters now.'<sup>2</sup> Nothing shows more clearly the purely moral basis of the opposition of the old Prussian officers. In the last resort what mattered most was German honour; everything else was secondary.

Tresckow, against the views prevailing at Headquarters, was convinced that a great Russian offensive was about to break on the thin lines of the Centre Group of Armies on the Eastern front. What if it did break? The horrid vision of the Red Army flooding over Germany appeared more threatening than ever. To avoid that there seemed

<sup>1</sup> On Stauffenberg's contact with Britain v. *KB*, 2, viii, App. xii and Goerdeler's statement (*KB*, 17, viii). Goerdeler did not appreciate Stauffenberg's intervention in this particular field and complained to Beck.

<sup>2</sup> Schlabrendorff, p. 175.

only that one desperate course of which Beck and Goerdeler had thought in April: to open the Western front and let the Anglo-Americans occupy Germany before the Russians arrived. Tresckow urged Stauffenberg to go at once to France, see Speidel, now Chief of Staff to Rommel, and get him to agree to it.

Now there comes on the stage a new personality, one as important politically as militarily, Hitler's most popular marshal, the much belauded hero of the African campaign, the symbol of the new German Army and its brilliant armoured technique. At the end of 1943 Goerdeler had tried to get in touch with Rommel through the Lord Mayor of Stuttgart, Karl Stroelin, who was an old member of the Opposition group around Bosch. At the beginning of February 1944, Stroelin could report after a meeting at Herrlingen near Ulm that Rommel too had lost belief in 'final victory'; the Fuehrer had said to him: 'The war is lost, but no one will make peace with me'. The passage from *Mein Kampf* which Stroelin quoted made a deep impression on the Field-Marshal: 'If the governmental power is leading a people to destruction, then for every subject rebellion is not only a right but a duty. Human rights always obtain over state rights.' Rommel was, Stroelin said, convinced that the dictator had given himself a problem to which there was no solution, to defeat an overwhelmingly strong invader without giving the men on the spot the indispensable freedom of action in the field. His own reputation might be used as concealment from the people of the grave deficiencies of the German defence; he therefore said he was ready to support in his own way the efforts of the Opposition as Stroelin had explained them. He would represent to Hitler the necessity of a quick end to the war and, if he could not make him see reason, he would then 'act independently'.<sup>1</sup>

What he meant he explained to Speidel, his Chief of Staff since April 15th. Hans Speidel was a brilliantly competent General Staff officer, a man of culture and university education. He was one of the closest friends of Karl Heinrich von Stuelpnagel, military commander in France, who had collected on his small staff a group of officers who belonged to the Opposition. Both had sought to influence Rommel and had even talked of plans for a *coup d'état* with Rundstedt, Commander-in-Chief West, but that typical non-political soldier had refused to accept any political responsibilities. Rommel refused to have anything to do with the plans for assassination of which he heard for the first time from Quartermaster-General Wagner, who went from Berlin to see him. He favoured arresting Hitler with the

<sup>1</sup> Karl Stroelin, *Verraeter oder Patrioten* (1952), p. 32; Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944* (1950); Lutz Koch, *Rommel*, 1950, p. 216.



aid of trustworthy tank units and sending him for trial before a German court — a *coup d'état* in the Halder manner of 1938. But that should not be done unless the Fuehrer rejected the urgent pleas which he himself would make, that the war, now a lost one, should be immediately ended; that, of course, meant Hitler's abdication as Head of State.

He never explained fully what he would plead. The furthest he ever went in the way of 'practical opposition' was to try often and in vain to persuade Hitler that the invasion could not be thrown back with the inferior means at his disposal. Finally, on July 15th, he sent a memorandum couched in 'ultimate' language repeating his views and ending with the request that 'the political consequences of this situation should be drawn without a moment's delay'. On Speidel's advice the word 'political' was deleted since its use would only cause 'useless outbursts of mad rage'. What was the political sense of all this? Did Rommel wish to give Hitler another last chance? Did he wish to justify his revolt by the angry reaction which he expected of Hitler? Did he himself require to resolve his own doubts a final proof that Hitler was bereft of reason? We do not know; two days later he was shot up by British aircraft, severely wounded and put out of action.

It is, however, clear that his sort of opposition was fundamentally different from that of Goerdeler. To become really active opposition it needed constantly proof that the war was now lost, proof gathered on visits to the front and innumerable talks with the commanders there. It was, in fact, purely military and not at all political in its nature. His collaborators do not seem to have appreciated the difference. The Field-Marshal, of course, did undoubtedly realize too the moral depravity of the National Socialist system and its upholders, and the conspirators themselves were happy to have won to their side so popular a soldier and did not push enquiry too far.<sup>1</sup>

Tresckow's plan to create a gap in the Western front to facilitate an Allied breakthrough had been anticipated by similar plans which were agreed upon in May between Stuelpnagel, Speidel and Rommel. They did not imply an unconditional abandonment of the front, still less a capitulation; they were based on the conclusion without Hitler's consent of an armistice with Eisenhower and Montgomery. This would provide for evacuation of territory occupied in the West,

<sup>1</sup> Stroelin's proposal to make Rommel head of the state instead of Beck or to make him supreme commander of the Wehrmacht found no response in Berlin. Rommel himself refused a political part (Stroelin, p. 34: Speidel, p. 86). Wheeler-Bennett (p. 609) raises the question whether Goerdeler planned to substitute Rommel for Beck and Witzleben can surely be answered in the negative. The idea of making him regent seems to have been due to the imaginativeness of some of the Paris conspirators, v. Koch, p. 221.

withdrawal of the German armies beyond the Rhine, the cessation of air attacks on Germany and then peace negotiations. Meantime a manifesto would be issued to the German people unsparingly explaining to them the real military situation and the crimes of the régime; Hitler would be judged by a German court and a Beck-Goerdeler-Leuschner government take over power — a plan for a revolution which would be as nearly as possible such an end to an unsuccessful war as would avoid as far as possible disturbances, and would also preserve the Army from the angry reproach of having betrayed the Fatherland by abandoning the front to the enemy. The withdrawal of the fighting line to the West Wall before the Allies landed could, from the purely military point of view, be defended as a desirable manoeuvre.

Whether the plan was discussed in detail with Stauffenberg is doubtful. But it is certain that he too believed that it was possible to get into touch with the Allied commanders, and conclude a purely military agreement with them, without, to any great extent, the politicians sharing in it.<sup>1</sup>

Practical steps to that end had not been made by Rommel before June 6th; he could hardly have done so except in agreement with Rundstedt, and that soldier was not to be won over. The situation changed when Hitler made the old Field-Marshal the scapegoat for the disaster of the successful invasion, and replaced him on July 7th by Kluge now recovered from his injuries. Kluge was soon convinced that the success of the invasion was due neither to Rundstedt's weakness as he had been told, nor to Rommel's stubbornness, but to the Supreme Commander himself, and that the situation of the Army in view of the allied superiority was now hopeless. Agreement was soon reached between Kluge, Stuelpnagel and Rommel, the three highest commanders in the West. Now the two field-m Marshals were approached by emissaries from the Berlin conspirators. On July 9th, Lt.-Col. Caesar von Hofacker, a trusted colleague of Stuelpnagel and a cousin of Stauffenberg, appeared at Rommel's headquarters, handed him a politico-military memorandum and begged him, in the name of the conspirators, to take independent action as soon as possible to end the war in the West. To his question how long could the front hold, the answer came: 'At a maximum two to three weeks'. He promised to report this to Kluge and to Beck and to return on the 15th to disclose the Berlin plans for a *coup d'état*.<sup>2</sup> The result

<sup>1</sup> *V. KB*, 30, vii: report of a meeting in Stauffenberg's house on July 16th when the 'soldier to soldier' tactics were favoured.

<sup>2</sup> Wheeler-Bennett (p. 631) is in error when he says that there was no co-ordination between Rommel's plans and the Berlin conspiracy.

of his appeal was to make Rommel steel himself for a revolt from Hitler. The technical possibility of getting in touch with the enemy by wireless was tested — advantage was taken of a local lull in the fighting — the opinion of the commanders at the front investigated, and at a talk with Kluge (July 12th) progress was so far made that Rommel's idea of an 'ultimative letter' to Hitler was approved; Kluge also agreed that, if the letter had no effect, 'independent action' must follow. Speidel was charged with getting Stuelpnagel's agreement and to say that Rommel was prepared to take that action alone, should Kluge refuse to co-operate.<sup>1</sup>

Kluge had been longer and deeper in the conspiracy than he had admitted to the new convert. A short time before his talk with Rommel, he had received a message sent him through Boeselager by Tresckow<sup>2</sup> whose fears of a Russian offensive on the central front had been realized; within a few weeks the situation there would be irretrievable. If Germany was to be preserved from a Russian invasion then, he thought, it was more than high time that the now hopeless battle in the West should be broken off and all the German forces be concentrated on the Eastern front. Tresckow asked his old commander to open the way to the enemy even without armistice negotiations and to move against Hitler instead of against the Anglo-Americans. But Kluge refused; the enemy breakthrough would come anyway in a very short time; there was no need for him to open a way for them. But there was no possibility of leading his troops against Hitler. Certainly he was Commander-in-Chief but he was not sure of his staff and was so fenced in that he could no longer act as the conspirators desired.

He was undoubtedly right. How could a commander, still barely known to his troops, by himself set in movement armies involved in a desperate defensive battle in Normandy for a march to Upper Bavaria or East Prussia on Hitler's headquarters? Could he have any confidence that his subordinates would be brought to agree to capitulation if contrary orders came from the Fuehrer? The impossibility of it all should be realized before Kluge's weakness of character is blamed. It is certain that, through Hofacker, he sent a message to Beck that he thought the battle in the West was lost and that the front now could not hold out for more than a fortnight. The *coup d'état* should be made as soon as possible; he said again he was ready to support it, i.e. place himself and his armies under Beck's

<sup>1</sup> V. Speidel, p. 133 sq.

<sup>2</sup> V. Schlabrendorff, p. 177; the date there given ('end of June') cannot be correct for Kluge took over the Western Command on July 7th. Kluge would not have Tresckow as chief of staff fearing his revolutionary enthusiasm (Speidel, p. 145; Schlabrendorff, p. 178).

orders, but only on the condition he had laid down in the previous year that Hitler was first got rid of. If he wasn't then, and surely rightly, Kluge thought any attempt at a 'putsch' had no hope of success.<sup>1</sup> That was why he held back on July 20th.

If both in the West and the East the fronts were about to be broken, it was indeed high time for the Berlin conspirators to act. Assassination must be attempted again. A new chance had arisen. From mid-June Stauffenberg had been temporarily, and since July 1st officially, Chief of Staff in the Home Army, that is, first aide to its commander Fromm. This was of double advantage to the Opposition. The Chief of Staff could get orders out to all the subordinate officers in that army which he could counter-sign as coming from the Commander-in-Chief and which would therefore have full validity. That gave him the power himself to set in motion, for a time at least, that enormous machine that was the Home Army, and if he failed to carry his chief with him, to delay any counter-orders going out. He had repeatedly told Fromm before he was appointed that he thought the war lost and that that was Hitler's fault, and, as his chief had taken no offence at his frankness, had some reason to hope that in the end Fromm would give the *coup* his support — only, of course, if Hitler was no longer there. The second advantage was, that, as Chief of Staff, he could at any time be summoned to attend the discussions on the 'situation reports' which Hitler every day held with the heads of the armed forces. He had been presented to Hitler on June 7th or 8th on the Obersalzberg and had found that he could resist that personal fascination to which so many had succumbed. His plan was to make the attempt himself. He would prepare a bomb with a time-fuse supplied by the Counter-Intelligence, carry it in his brief case and in spite of his physical disadvantage — he had lost his whole right hand and two fingers of the left hand in the war — get it out with the help of a small pair of pincers. It was a pretty precarious enterprise. If it succeeded, not only would Hitler but also the soldiers round him be blown to bits. So too would the assassin and then he would not be at his post with the Home Army where he was indispensable until the *coup d'état* had fully succeeded. It is as useless as unwise to criticize after the event. There was no other way to obtain quickly the desired end; at least no one had yet found one. To entrust the task to another officer was to leave everything at the mercy of accident and for that it was definitely too late.

<sup>1</sup> V. Dulles, p. 176; he does not give his source which was probably Gisevius (v. Gisevius, ii, pp. 299, 321). That Kluge insisted on Hitler's assassination is clear from his telephone conversation with Beck on July 20th, (Wheeler-Bennett p. 663) and what Blumentritt said (Liddell Hart, *The Other Side of the Hill*, p. 432 sq).

Ever since his appointment Stauffenberg had worked feverishly at the carrying out of the *coup d'état*, increasing the number of his collaborators and putting the final touches on the 1943 plans.<sup>1</sup> Bad news was coming in from every front, and already the official task of supplying the fronts with men and munitions by itself demanded for fulfilment more than normal human strength. Everything had to be done in an atmosphere of tense excitement. How long now before the enemy crossed the borders? Would a new government virtually ready to function ever be given a say in deciding Germany's future? Was there any sense now in undertaking this perilous enterprise? Would it not be the cursed cause of a new 'stab in the back' legend? Would it have any political results at all?

It was natural that such doubts should torment all the conspirators. When Gisevius returned to Berlin on July 12th, Beck said quite openly that he thought the right moment for an attempt had already passed; on all fronts the doom of the German armies was sealed and nothing could now prevent an enemy occupation of Germany; for him there was left only the thankless task of being a sort of German Badoglio to liquidate the régime, and see to it that 'the unavoidable was accomplished honourably and with dignity'.<sup>2</sup> That breathes extreme resignation, but Beck still shared Tresckow's view that dignity and self-respect demanded that Germans themselves should get rid of the tyrant. Besides he hoped the Western Allies would be in Germany before the Russians. Goerdeler more than he clung to the belief that the Anglo-Saxons in their own interests would be compelled to come to terms with the new government in order to save Europe from Bolshevism. He was not shaken even by Gisevius's view that, after Teheran (of which Gisevius had got information) no negotiations could be thought of, and that the only hope for Germany lay in the fact that in Teheran occupation zones had not been fixed, and so in theory there was still a possibility of letting the Anglo-Americans reach the line Königsberg-Prague-Vienna-Budapest before the Russians.<sup>3</sup>

Stauffenberg appears to have agreed with Goerdeler that there might be still a hope of coming to an arrangement with the Western governments. But, in view of his heavy responsibility which must

<sup>1</sup> V. Zeller, p. 201 *sq.*

<sup>2</sup> V. Gisevius, ii, pp. 299, 322 and *ibid.*, pp. 302, 304.

<sup>3</sup> In complete contrast to this account taken from Gisevius is *KB*, 17, viii, based it seems on Struenck's statements. I cannot reconcile them. The latter says that Gisevius at lunch with Col. Hansen in Struenck's house said he had definitely learned in Switzerland that negotiation with Britain was possible; both British and Americans would like to conclude it before the invasion to have their hands free in Asia. Hansen and Gisevius then went to Beck. V. also *KB*, 7, ix.

have greatly weighed upon him just before the carrying out of the assassination attempt, he felt it his moral duty in conversation with his friends and helpers to make clear all the dangers, complexities and obscurities of the situation before he took his gigantic gamble.<sup>1</sup> His greatest hope was to get into direct touch with either Eisenhower's or Montgomery's headquarters and then 'as soldier to soldier' get an arrangement whereby the Eastern front could be reinforced from the Western which would now have been surrendered. Actually in July Otto John who, as director of the sister Lufthansa company in Madrid, had been of great service to the conspirators, succeeded in making the necessary connection; the U.S. military attaché in Madrid said he was prepared to pass on any messages reaching him to Eisenhower. But, at the same time, John was warned that hostilities would not be ended except by an unconditional surrender to *all* the Allies i.e. to the Russians as well. No matter what sort of government took over from Hitler that condition would remain. One of John's personal friends in the Allied camp added that he personally thought that the British and Americans would make no effort to get to Berlin before the Russians. Many people, he said, thought Berlin needed punishment; that they would willingly leave to the Russians.<sup>2</sup>

When this news reached Berlin on July 11th, the decision to make the attempt had already been taken. Under pressure of the shattering news of the breaking of the Eastern front and of the arrest of Leber and Reichwein, Stauffenberg, deaf to the pleadings of his friends, had by the beginning of July reached the conclusion that he must make it himself and alone. He appears to have had on July 6th a talk with Stieff and Fellgiebel at Berchtesgaden on arrangements to be made to get the news of its success to Berlin and then to prevent any communication between Hitler's headquarters and the outer world.<sup>3</sup> On the 11th he flew accompanied by the young Captain Klausing to a 'Fuehrer-conference' at Berchtesgaden with the bomb in his brief case. Himmler, however, was not present, and that attempt was postponed, either in hopes of a more favourable opportunity or because

<sup>1</sup> The need for this Gisevius clearly did not understand, ii, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> V. Wheeler-Bennett, p. 630: John was his authority. V. also Klaus Bonhoeffer's statement, *KB*, 12, x. At Stauffenberg's request Otto John came to Berlin on July 18th and confirmed all this.

<sup>3</sup> V. Stieff's statement at his investigation on August 7th, also *IMT*, xxxiii, p. 317, Doc. 3881, PS: Zeller, p. 210 and note 33. Schlabrendorff's statement that the first attempt failed on July 7th must be due to a confusion of dates. If what he heard (p. 184) is right that two attempts failed, only July 11th and 15th are possible dates. Stieff said he had put off an attempt on July 6th: for Stauffenberg's movements on July 6th, 11th, 15th and 20th, see a document in War Department Archives dated July 22nd.

the people in Berlin were not yet quite ready. When he got back to the capital in the afternoon he found John's bad news, but that did not restrain him from making the attempt a few days later.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that Goerdeler's pressing energy played a part here. From the diary of Capt. Hermann Kaiser who acted as go-between, we learn that at this time the two were in close personal touch.<sup>2</sup> Goerdeler indeed was still against assassination and constantly devised schemes for arresting Hitler, but equally constantly urged swift action. He let Stauffenberg know that, while he himself refused to be concerned in political murder, he was quite ready to let others take the responsibility for it, and for his part would make the political consequences serve the revolution. On the 10th, through Kaiser, Stauffenberg asked him to be ready by the 11th; in the afternoon he was told that the plan had not been carried out. On that he said to Stauffenberg that the tension was now such that as quickly as possible it 'must be broken' and next day urged him to act without delay. Gisevius added his exhortations to speed. In the night of the 12th-13th he told Stauffenberg that, although there was now no hope of negotiation with the West and there was nothing for it but capitulation and the occupation of all Germany, everything would depend on 'whether the last act was the work of Germans or of the enemy and whether the Army would now at least rouse itself to action'.<sup>3</sup> But, more than by any such advice, Stauffenberg's course was determined by the news Hofacker brought from Paris, that Kluge was ready to participate in the *coup d'état* as soon as Hitler was out of the way and the summons came from Berlin, that Rommel was ready to revolt and that the front could hold out only for a week or two before the Allies broke through.<sup>4</sup> On the 14th, the conspirators were once again alerted; next day the attempt would be made during a special conference in the 'Wolf's Lair' to which he would be accompanied by Fromm. At 11 a.m. Olbricht sent the code word 'Valkyrie' to the troops in and around Berlin to move on the centre of the city — allegedly, in order to cover the real objective, to suppress 'internal disturbances'. The conference was to begin at 1 p.m. and the attempt would be made immediately after that. Half an hour later Stauffen-

<sup>1</sup> I agree with Zeller that Klausning's statement (v. *IMT*, B, xxxiii, p. 432) is trustworthy. Zeller does not give his source for saying (p. 212) that Olbricht telephoned Stauffenberg not to make the attempt. The 'Valkyrie' alert was not given on the 11th.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in the bill of accusation against Goerdeler.

<sup>3</sup> V. Gisevius, ii, p. 308.

<sup>4</sup> That Stauffenberg (as Gisevius learned on July 12th from Beck) got this news on July 10th, i.e. the day before the first attempt, seems improbable though Zeller states (p. 211) this to be the case; on the 10th Hofacker must still have been in Paris with Kluge.

berg telephoned to say that once again things had gone wrong and Olbricht had the greatest difficulty in persuading the troops and their officers that his premature summons had been merely 'practice'.<sup>1</sup> According to the only report from an ear-witness, what happened was that, finding Himmler and Goering were not present, Stauffenberg went out of the room to telephone Berlin and ask if he should none the less proceed as arranged. By the time he got back the conference was over and Hitler had disappeared. Be it noted that both Rommel and Kluge had demanded that Himmler should also be got rid of; the conspirators had always feared the possibility of resistance to the *coup* being offered by the S.S. troops and Air Force units stationed in Berlin if their chiefs sent them orders to that effect. That may explain Stauffenberg's odd delay.<sup>2</sup>

No one suffered more than Goerdeler under the terrible tension of these days when nothing happened. He was now with Gisevius in Beck's house. The endless discussions on Cabinet posts with which they sought to shorten their vigils, were as little helpful as Beck's critical elucidation of Stauffenberg's draft proclamations and Gisevius's views on how far the future political 'purge' should go. What most deeply shocked Goerdeler were the messages sent through Hofacker by Kluge and Rommel, messages which finished any hopes of negotiation with the West before capitulation, the more so as at the same time Tresckow reported that, after the shattering of the central front in Russia — 27 divisions wiped out and the enemy tanks less than 70 miles from the 'Wolf's Lair' —, East Prussia could not now be saved. Looking back later he wrote: 'If that was the situation in the West and the East we had to decide either to go on or divest ourselves of responsibility. I was shattered and I proposed to Beck that we should go at once to the West, discuss things with Kluge and there decide to act or not to act, and if the former, how should we act. Beck promised to discuss this proposal with Stauffenberg.'<sup>3</sup>

It may well be that at this hour Goerdeler was at the end of his

<sup>1</sup> Olbricht intentionally gave the alert two hours before news came from Obersalzberg to anticipate any move by the S.S. As a result on July 20th no action was taken until news came from Rastenburg. The conspirators on the 20th lost three hours; the *coup* was not launched until Stauffenberg got back to Berlin. On Fellgiebel's actions on July 20th, v. *KB*, 31, viii. (Col. Hahn's statement.)

<sup>2</sup> It is strange that such an emergency was not foreseen and arrangements made. Zeller (p. 357) says that 'after the failure on the 11th Beck took over the arrangements for the 20th'. Zeller cites for this only Goerlitz's excellent book though his sources here are imperfect. He does not explain Stauffenberg's telephone call.

<sup>3</sup> In a note written in November 1944.



tether. As Gisevius reports, he had said plainly on the 12th that he saw no other possibility than to leave it to Kluge and Rommel to ask Eisenhower for an armistice in the West and let the Western armies enter Germany as soon as possible. Beck objected that they did not know whether or not the Allies would recognize a new government as competent to negotiate. His friends, Helldorf and Nebe, contrary to what they said in earlier years, now told him that it would be impossible for the police to co-operate in the *coup d'état* and were very critical of Stauffenberg as a conspirator. Now he wanted to abandon the attempt at assassination, preferring simply to surrender in the West in the hope of saving Germany from a Russian occupation. It seems that he did not know of John's latest message from Madrid saying that simultaneous capitulation on both fronts was demanded, but he knew enough about the Teheran agreements to abandon hope of maintaining the battle in the East.<sup>1</sup> What he called 'the Western solution' meant not only capitulation, but a race between the Allies for the occupation of Germany.

Three days earlier he had protested vehemently against a surrender in the West. Now, if Gisevius's account is correct, he favoured it. He wanted to fly to Paris in a plane provided by Col. Hansen of Counter-Intelligence and deal with the commanders-in-chief.<sup>2</sup> On Sunday morning (July 16th) he went to Leipzig to take leave of his family and entrusted Gisevius with the task of getting Beck to agree.

According to his own rather different account he had no intention of advising Kluge and Rommel to surrender unconditionally, but to try to get some sort of agreement; an armistice should be sought, whereby the Anglo-American armies stood fast, and let the Germans go straight through Germany to the Eastern front. 'Hitler', he wrote, 'would then be faced with the choice either to agree and resign or to be forced to abdicate by the expressed will of the people. Thus the unhappy deed of assassination would be avoided; the nation would be informed openly and honestly and success would follow.'

I do not think it quite certain that this apologia which he wrote in prison and in which these views are expressed, can be taken historically as a description of his real thoughts at the time. In it it may well be that he shows himself more opposed to the attempt on Hitler's life than he actually was in July 1944. But he wanted himself to reveal himself to posterity, and it is understandable that, as he reproached himself because he had hesitated about carrying out that plan, he wanted to indicate at least his belief that the plan was practically

<sup>1</sup> V. Dulles, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Connection with Counter-Intelligence was maintained by Capt. Struenck whose house countless times served as meeting place for the conspirators.

possible. It was his last contribution towards a solution and, if it does nothing else, it shows how far the firm belief of a noble character in the victory of reason carried him over the limits of political reality. He ended his life as a stout idealist helpless against the reality of demonic power.

When he got back from Leipzig on Tuesday he learned from Captain Kaiser sent by Gisevius, who knew of it from Nebe, that the Gestapo had ordered his arrest. Stauffenberg then appeared and announced that he had now got 'directly' in touch with Churchill and that the latter now knew of the demand that 'if action took place, all German districts would remain in the Reich, or be united with it'.<sup>1</sup> That sounded hopeful but, when Goerdeler mentioned his wish to fly with Beck to Paris to see Kluge, Stauffenberg told him that he and Beck were now agreed that such a visit would serve no purpose at all. They parted on friendly terms and agreed on a temporary address (Rahnisdorf near Herzfeld) at which Goerdeler could be reached in the next few days. Stauffenberg advised him strongly to disappear as quickly as he could, and not endanger the whole conspiracy by staying and telephoning longer in Berlin. He was reluctant to follow that advice. He tried in vain to arrange by telephone a meeting with Gisevius, and suddenly felt with horrified astonishment that his friends were shrinking from him as if he were plague-stricken and that the shadow of the Gestapo was over him. With a heavy heart he started on his flight.

During his absence from Berlin Stauffenberg's closest friends had succeeded in bringing him to a clear, simple and final decision. On Sunday evening (July 16th) Trott, Fritz Schulenburg and Hofacker foregathered with Berthold and Klaus Stauffenberg in their house at Wannsee to discuss the situation created by the failure of the second attempt. Hofacker reported that, thanks to quick reinforcements, the Anglo-Americans would in a fortnight have a crushing superiority in men and material and that the front could not possibly hold out for more than six weeks. Trott maintained, as the police report now lying before me says, 'that the enemy would be inclined to treat the moment that the necessary pre-condition, a complete change of régime, had been fulfilled'. As we know Trott was a diplomatic expert of clear vision, we must take this to mean that his view was that, at this hour of greatest danger for Germany, no further clarification of 'unconditional surrender' could be expected from the enemy, and

<sup>1</sup> At his interrogation on August 13th Goerdeler said that on the 18th neither Stauffenberg nor Kaiser had said anything about the attempt planned for the 20th. That indicates that at this date when he might be arrested at any moment his knowledge of it would be as dangerous as unprofitable.

that the only hope was to risk for freedom's sake the attempt on Hitler's life in the expectation that, if it succeeded, a better diplomatic atmosphere would be created. After discussion, it was agreed to go on on the 'soldier to soldier' basis as regards both the West and Russia, with Trott ready to go westward and the aged Schulenburg with Koestring ready to go to eastwards.<sup>1</sup>

This is very much a return to the plans made in autumn 1943. The illusion of ending the war in the West to save the East is given up and the so-called 'West solution' of Gisevius and his friends quickly dropped. The sound solution to which Beck next day agreed was found, that is to make the decisive attempt to rid Germany of the tyrant and then throw themselves with shut eyes into the stream of destiny in the belief that destiny would be kinder if it was Germany herself who won her freedom.

In that spirit which reminds us of Gneisenau and the young Clausewitz the attempt of July 20th was made from the conviction that, as Clausewitz once wrote, 'a people has nothing higher to preserve than its honour and its freedom' and that 'the stain of a cowardly surrender is never wiped away'. Those who condemned such a deed as mad or politically stupid understand neither its essence nor its historic significance. It failed through no technical bungling, through no faltering on the part of those who shared in it — let the critics of them say how they would have handled things better in the actual circumstances on July 20th — but from the strange accident which prevented Hitler being killed. His survival wrecked everything. But one should not speak of accident; it was a dispensation of Providence; it was destiny. It was predestined that Germany should drink to the bitter dregs the cup of the humiliation and misfortune she had brought on herself. But, as a result, there perished the old Europe.

<sup>1</sup> *KB*, 30, vii and 28, viii. Goerdeler stated that on July 15th at a re-examination of the cabinet list Schulenburg, he thought, as *persona grata* with Stalin should be Foreign Minister instead of Hassell. There was a feeling in Britain against Hassell who was known there as Tirpitz's son-in-law. Beck agreed (*KB*, 28, viii). *V.* also Gisevius, ii, pp. 304, 335. Beck wanted to induce Hassell to relinquish this post voluntarily and to make him State Secretary.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The End*

IF GISEVIUS'S information is correct,<sup>1</sup> the issue of a warrant for Goerdeler's arrest on July 17th did not mean that anything very definite had been discovered about his activities as a conspirator; someone in the group had just chanced to speak of him as a future Chancellor. On the 17th, then, he had not much to fear, but the events of the 20th placed him in the gravest peril. His flight was now veritably a race for life. In 1945 his son Reinhard tried, by questioning all those concerned, to trace it in detail.<sup>2</sup>

At first, despite the entreaties of his friends, Goerdeler would not leave Berlin. After his talk with Stauffenberg on the 18th he appealed to an old friend of his Leipzig days, Gerhard Wolf of the Traffic Control Department of the Police, who had several times provided him with a police car for a long journey. Wolf was again ready to help and it is part of the grotesquerie of Goerdeler's flight that it began in a police car. He called first on Jakob Kaiser and Leuschner who were at the moment conferring together. There was a hasty discussion on what to do now. As 'the great action' was now imminent, it was natural that they should agree with him that he should go into hiding. He told his friends the addresses agreed on with Stauffenberg and arranged with Wolf to go next day to Herzfeld. He saw, it appears, other friends in the capital, but he was disappointed at the outcome. That night he spent with his niece Frau Eva Held in Potsdam; from next morning until afternoon he was at his sister's house there, and sent letters to Kaiser for Beck and to Strunck, whom he asked to get him a false pass; the events of the 20th put an end to any attempt of that kind. In the afternoon of the 19th Wolf took him — he was to his friend's distress very late at the rendezvous — in his own car with changed number plates by a roundabout route to Herzfeld, where he set down his dangerous passenger near the station after they had agreed that, on receipt of a codeword by

<sup>1</sup> *V. Gisevius*, ii, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> His account completes what Goerdeler said at his first interrogation on August 13th when he was obviously trying to cover his hosts and helpers. He said that from July 25th to August 8th he had hid in the woods round Berlin and slept in the open every night save two. The Gestapo did not believe him (*KB*, 15, viii) and gradually tracked down all his hosts.

telephone, Wolf would pick him up again and take him back to Berlin. He was depressed and anxious. 'I must say' wrote Wolf later 'that he did not look like a man who was looking forward cheerfully to shouldering the tasks of the future Chancellor of Germany. He was a man bowed down with a heavy load of responsibility'.

On foot he reached the Rahnisdorf estate whose owner, Baron Palombini, a cousin of General von Choltitz, was an old and trusted political friend; his house had often been used as a rendezvous by the conspirators. He waited there for news of the attempt, though he did not tell his friend that, nor why he was there, a reserve which later saved the latter's life. When on the 21st the Gestapo appeared to arrest Palombini, Goerdeler was able to get away in time to another estate twelve and half miles away, which belonged to his old war comrade Major Ehrhardt, and there he stayed until July 24th. On the 25th he went back via Dessau, where he called in at the Air Ministry, to Berlin so as to be able to consult with friends notably Kaiser, Frau Dr Nebgen, Leuschner and Wirmer. He met them at different rendezvous changing his quarters each night, finding shelter among the busy crowds of the capital. Finally even this was found to be too risky. His plan had been simply to deny if arrested all knowledge of the military 'putsch', but that was now evidently useless, for the Gestapo had already seized the lists of 'political representatives' in the military districts and very soon afterwards found the cabinet lists in Olbricht's safe. The arrest of civilians had already begun and so a new hiding-place must be found. With the help of the former town councillor of Chemnitz, Curt Schatter, and ex-Lord Mayor Klimpl, one was found in Friedrichshagen in the house of a junior clerk, Bruno Labedzki, who knew nothing of him but out of sheer humanity gave him asylum and shared the meagre family rations with him.

Goerdeler stayed only two nights, for the Labedzkis lived in a large block of flats and, if there was an air-raid alarm, discovery was most likely. He made a vain attempt to find a new refuge with Herbert Lehmann in Strausberg and then, on the night of the 29th-30th, went to his cousin Willy Ulbrich in Berlin-Nikolassee. Ulrich advised him to disguise himself and try to escape to the Russians, but Goerdeler hoped to get Swedish help. On the 29th he had gone to see Pastor Lilje (now Bishop of Hanover) in Lichterfelde and asked him to get in touch with the Swedish Embassy. As Lilje was busy with church services, he advised Goerdeler to attend service at the Swedish church on Sunday (the 30th). After the service he spoke to the preacher but found that he was not the regular Swedish pastor, who was away, but the German Confessional minister Desert, who was taking his

place. Desert promised to pass on his request for Swedish protection but without result.<sup>1</sup>

The fugitive now went to Potsdam and sought out Dr Brodfuehrer, who had been in the same corps at the university and who now received him most cordially, even staging a little ceremony to celebrate his sixtieth birthday. About midday he conferred with political friends at Voss's cigar shop in the Rosenthalerstrasse. But Berlin was much too dangerous and from July 31st to August 8th, he was again with the Labedzkis who were unperturbed by the news heard on the B.B.C. that a reward of a million marks had been put on his head; the reward and his photograph were printed in every German newspaper. His host had to admit to his neighbours the Schatters who his guest was, but these unselfishly placed themselves at Goerdeler's service, taking messages to all the friends with whom Goerdeler was vainly seeking to confer. Wirmer promised him money and a new place of refuge but was himself arrested, a heavy blow to the fugitive. Yet in these days of enforced leisure his tireless nature drove him to fresh writing. Apart from reminiscences of his young days he wrote a longish memorandum entitled 'The Tasks of the German Future'.<sup>2</sup> In short precise form this develops those views on future policy of which we have already heard and concludes with 'lessons from history'. Christianity, he asserts, must become the basis of all policy and 'the state is not an end in itself but only a medium to secure order in social life and the welfare of the citizen'. Even in those desperate days he was busy at plans for the future and at the writing of a sort of political testament.

Goerdeler could not go on imperilling the lives of these devoted friends. What prevented him fleeing abroad — besides the fact that he had no passport — was the fear that by fleeing he would endanger his relatives and it is clear from what he said at his interrogation that he was quite aware he had no real chance of escape or even of asylum.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Swedish ambassador was out of town and his deputy would not take action without authority.

<sup>2</sup> Eleven closely-typed pages written between August 1st and 11th. A 'farewell' beginning 'German sisters and brothers' (eight pages) marked as written in the woods of the Dubener Heath, end of July 1944, I now consider not to be genuine; I gave extracts from it in the *Neue Zeitung* of November 11, 1946. Both style and thought are unlike Goerdeler and Goerdeler never was in the woods of Dubener Heath. It was given to his family by a man whom they had never heard of as a friend of Goerdeler. From a prophecy in it of Hitler's suicide it seems to have been written in 1945.

<sup>3</sup> So he told his niece Frau Held on the 29th (Frau Held's notes). The danger to his hosts is made clear when it is remembered that C. Schatter, Ulrich, Lilje, Klimpl and Palombini were all sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for aiding and abetting; a report of their trial is in War Department Archives.

But if he was going to fall sooner or later into the hands of his pursuers, he wanted to take a last farewell of his home in West Prussia and of the graves of his parents in Marienwerder. This, it seems, was in his mind when, on the evening of August 8th, he packed his rucksack, took his stick and set out on his dangerous journey. Official passes were needed to go to the east, and to avoid the control posts he went by branch lines and after many detours and stops arrived on the evening of the 10th at Marienburg. Here he passed the night in the station waiting-room, and early next morning reached Marienwerder where he visited two old friends and the cemetery. Now he realized the folly of going to this little town where everyone knew him. Near the cemetery he was recognized by a woman who followed him. He did not dare go to his parents' grave and, in the hope of shaking her off, went by side roads in the direction of Rahnisdorf-Stuhm-Marienburg. After walking for several hours he reached Stuhnsdorf, booked in his rucksack as luggage through to Marienwerder, being apparently too weary to carry it further, and passed the night by the Stuhmer lake. Next morning he walked to an inn at Konradswalde where, worn out, he hoped to have breakfast. In his exhaustion he did not grasp that the inn was also the pay office of a nearby airfield. After a time he noticed an Air Force woman eyeing him closely from a table opposite and, without having eaten anything, he left at once to seek cover in the neighbouring woods. It was too late. The woman, Helene Schwærzel, came from Rauschen where the Goerdeler family used to go for holidays. She had known the family for many years and she and her mother had had much kindness from them. It was not malice and certainly not mere love of money, but the irresistible love of sensation and a sort of subconscious desire for notoriety that made her call the attention of two pay office men at her table to the stranger and, when they hesitated, urged them to follow him. Later she greatly regretted what she had done.<sup>1</sup> Neither Goerdeler, who offered no resistance to his captors, nor his family bore her any particular enmity regarding her as a mere tool of a destiny from which there was no escape.

The five months between arrest and execution present a biographer with many problems. It is fairly clear that the failure of the attempt of July 20th seemed to him at once to confirm his serious objection to political assassination and to Stauffenberg's policy. He did not deny his own responsibility before the law: 'I knew of the plans which were carried out on July 20th. I agreed to be a leading party

<sup>1</sup> V. the account of her trial in Berlin on November 1, 1947. Goerdeler said to his gaoler Brandenburg that he did not blame the men who arrested him. If they had not done so, their punishment would have been very severe indeed.

to them' was the first sentences in his answers to his interrogators. But morally and politically he rejected assassination as a policy. When he met Frau Dr Nebgen in an underground station in Berlin on July 25th his first words were: 'Thou shalt not kill'. To all his hosts during his flight he seems to have spoken with some bitterness about the rejection of his own plan to talk frankly to Hitler. He had not indeed directly opposed the attempt; he had only made an alternative proposal; now he saw in Stauffenberg's failure 'the judgement of God', who brought to nought what was an offence against the moral law.

We are thus faced with the fact that the principal actor in, and the real organizer of, the German Resistance movement not only was in his heart against the attempt of July 20th but later radically disavowed it. For those who recognized its moral necessity that is hard to bear, and also for Goerdeler's friends who had now sharply revealed to them the limits of his political comprehension. Any plans for a *coup d'état* were from the point of view of political reason entirely utopian unless there was an assassination. Goerdeler's attitude can be understood only if we think of him as a man possessed, possessed with an idea of justice and peace as strongly as Hitler was possessed of his idea, increase of power by brutal force.

By the time he was handed over to the Gestapo headquarters in the Prinz-Albrechtstrasse, the names of the conspirators and the political background of the military plot were already well known, thanks to the seizure of papers<sup>1</sup> and to confessions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of these the most important were the lists of 'political representatives' and 'contact men' found in the Bendlerstrasse and the cabinet lists. The find of Goerdeler's papers in the hostel in the Askanischen Platz is noted in *KB*, 3, viii; there is no question here of cabinet lists such as were found in Olbricht's safe. They were proclamations such as are mentioned in Pechel, p. 213 *sq.*, and p. 304 *sq.* To talk of Goerdeler's carelessness is nonsense. He kept no notebook or address book, no notes of telephone numbers; these he learned by heart. He often left sealed envelopes to be kept for him with the hostel keeper Frau Erna Benoit a native of Königsberg who knew his family; they were locked in a safe in her presence. Frau Benoit says that 'he was terribly orderly and never left anything lying about'. At the end of January 1944 the hostel was bombed and Frau Benoit left it. She gave the safe key to a neighbour Frau Klatt-Schauman, who had the house repaired. Goerdeler used it again as soon as rooms were available from June. He did not know Frau Klatt and gave her no papers. After July 20th the house was not searched by the Gestapo nor the safe opened (letter from Frau Klatt). If there was no search, who handed over the papers? A thief in the hotel employment? What Wheeler-Bennett says about carelessness (derived from Otto John?) and the multiplication of copies of cabinet lists is sheer fantasy.

<sup>2</sup> The most important were the statements of those sentenced to death on August 8th — Hansen, Fritz Schulenburg, Helldorff, Bismarck, Berthold Stauffenberg, Kranzfelder, Trott, Wirmer, Leber and Maas — and of Haubach and Leuschner who were arrested on the 15th.



The chief organizers of the attempt had at Hitler's orders been executed on the 8th, thus depriving the Gestapo of important witnesses. All the more necessary was it to extract further details from Goerdeler, whose leading role their confessions had made clear; before that the Gestapo had known him only as a 'defeatist' like Beck, and had kept him under mild surveillance.<sup>1</sup> Now he was regarded as a mine of information the richness of which caused general astonishment.

In Kaltenbrunner's report there is from the very first day mention of 'Goerdeler's extremely comprehensive statements' and his giving of 'precise information', indicating 'a marvellous memory'; further investigation proved the correctness of what he said.<sup>2</sup> Only about his flight did he give false or incomplete information for the sake of his helpers. He was held up to his fellow-prisoners as their model in the matter of confessing; they were warned to conceal nothing and not to refuse to answer for, if they were confronted with Goerdeler, he would tell the whole truth — warnings which put him in a bad light and to some made him seem almost a traitor.<sup>3</sup>

Was this the case? Was he spiritually and mentally broken and did he unhesitatingly throw himself and his comrades to the executioner? Or had he some vain hope to prolonging his life till the end of the war which he felt was near? One thing can certainly be said. There was nothing in the nature of a physical or mental collapse. There is overwhelming witness to the fact that his attitude to Hitler and the régime never altered, nor his affirmation that his conscience was clear about his role as a radical opponent of both. His spiritual and intellectual force was unimpaired as his writings in prison show and as all those who in these months spoke with him can testify. I was confronted with him on January 8, 1945 and at a long session, despite traces of bodily and mental change, his mind was astonishingly alive and clear. Although my unexpected appearance in prison must have shocked him, he made his statement to the stenographer calmly, deliberately and in careful phrasing. There was nothing of excitement about him or of that uninhibited garrulity such as certain drugs induce. All the time he was the old Goerdeler whom I knew so well. I do not believe his gaolers used either torture or drugs; neither was necessary.<sup>4</sup> He was convinced that the police were coldly re-

<sup>1</sup> *V. Norddeutsche Hefte*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *KB*, 15, viii and 4, ix.

<sup>3</sup> That was my own experience.

<sup>4</sup> The police official Schrey who interrogated me assured me of this; that may not indeed be conclusive evidence though Schrey was an official of the old type and impressed me as such. Note too (a) that Goerdeler made 'comprehensive statements' on the *first* day; (b) he never made complaint to his gaoler whom he

solved to get the truth<sup>1</sup> and from the outset he was ready to help them.

There was, of course, also the People's Court whose procedures under the presidency of the satanic Freisler he felt to be purely propaganda and a mockery of any sort of justice. And there were horrible methods of indirect torture — overheating of cells, painfully tight shackling especially at night, bright light shining in one's face while one tried to sleep, completely insufficient food — Dr Mueller, who was in the cell next to him, says he often heard him groaning aloud from hunger<sup>2</sup> — noise and loud talking outside the cell whose door was kept always open; in a word, week and month long deprivation of sleep such as can drive a man to despair and affect his mind. But that sort of torture did not break this man of sixty and his clarity and productivity were not appreciably lessened.

On closer examination, however, Goerdeler's answers do not seem to be so full of truth as his questioners thought they were. Their very wealth of detail obscured the fact that things were omitted or were coloured in the interests of those in danger. That is seen in his statements about his flight, the only ones on which we have a full report. Very cleverly indeed he covered his hosts or quietly omitted to say anything about them. When I was confronted with him, I was astonished at the fulness of his statements, especially when it came to dates and the circumstances in which this or that conversation had been held, and just as much at the extreme cleverness with which at critical points they were so coloured as to make them even tell in my favour. He seemed instinctively to realize the lines on which I was trying to defend myself and the official hearing us believed every word since he repeated what I had already said. Others have reported similar experiences.<sup>3</sup> Pechel thinks that he soon perceived that, by the time he was in their hands, the police knew all about the actual happenings and the identity of the chief conspirators and so he spun out the investigation by constantly giving new details in the hope that it would go on until the war ended, the Hitler régime fell and the prisoners

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trusted (and who confirmed this to me) either of maltreatment or drugs and (c) Dr Mueller told me that, as he could observe him, constantly, the administering of drugs was out of the question.

<sup>1</sup> V. the instructions to Brandenburg along with the MSS of 'Our Ideal'.

<sup>2</sup> V. report of Huppenkothen trial on January 5, and February 9, 1951 (Mueller's evidence); he told this also to me personally.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished notes by Dr Wolf. Cf. Pechel, pp. 223, 301, confirmed by KB, 4, ix. Dr Schniewind told me that when he was confronted with Goerdeler the latter withdrew some earlier statements, and saved his life. He gave long reports of his 1939-40 talks with Halder, and by stressing the generals' loyalty to Hitler helped rather than damaged him.

were free men again. He thought a few weeks would be sufficient, at the longest two or three months. After all, from what he had heard about the Eastern front from Tresckow and about the Western front from Rommel, Kluge, Hofacker and Speidel, that is, from the best of the professional soldiers, he could hardly expect that a whole winter would pass before the Anglo-Americans invaded Germany. None of us prisoners could comprehend the enemy's endless delays least of all those who like myself had seen the almost complete defencelessness of the so-called 'Rhine front' in the late summer and early autumn of 1944.

From the Gestapo reports it is not possible to determine who was the first to be adversely affected by a Goerdeler statement; as the heads of the conspiracy were all dead or in prison, probably only minor figures were concerned. One feels a certain shock to read that, as a result of his first interrogation (August 14th), 'many people in important public positions have been accused'.<sup>1</sup> But a document of Speer's dated August 20th gives their names; they are those of members of the so-called 'Reusch circle' who met regularly to discuss economic questions and whom Goerdeler often addressed. He described the circle as a club purely concerned with economic discussions and added that they knew his attitude to Hitler, but that he had always carefully avoided telling any more people than he could help about his more secret plans. Speer appeared as the protector of some of them and successfully, for most of them got off with temporary detention or were discharged altogether as 'indispensable' to the armaments drive.<sup>2</sup> According to the lawyer Lutz,<sup>3</sup> Goerdeler gave the names of 'accomplices' even after he was condemned which led to numerous arrests, but only in a few cases were the subsequent proceedings fully completed.

If it was Goerdeler's intention to complicate and delay proceedings he succeeded. It appears that the ever widening range of the prosecutions and the constant emergence of new and well-known names began to embarrass Hitler's officials and that they finally gave up following up every new bit of evidence.<sup>4</sup> About 400 officials were engaged in the investigations and about 7000 persons were arrested.

<sup>1</sup> *KB*, 15, viii.

<sup>2</sup> An incomplete story of the Speer document is in War Department Archives. *KB*, 4, ix gives the names as given by Goerdeler cf. also *Norddeutsche Hefte*, p. 20 where it is said rightly that no real Resistance man was named.

<sup>3</sup> Interrogation of Lutz in War Department Archives.

<sup>4</sup> We were all astonished when the proceedings against our own Freiburg circle ended with my arrest on November 1st although the Gestapo knew that people as well known as Walter Eucken, Erik Wolf and Bishops Dibelius and Wurm had taken part in it.

In mid-September Kaltenbrunner reported that the investigation was virtually over and that new developments were not to be expected. Eight days later the Gestapo seized an immense quantity of papers at Army Headquarters in Zossen which included Beck's carefully assembled materials on the military conspiracy from 1938 to 1940, and also parts of Canaris's diary from which Hitler learned that the conspiracy against him went back to the 'Fritsch Crisis' of 1938, and that the 'small clique' of officers of July 20th had its members even in the highest ranks of his Wehrmacht. So staggered was he that he forbade these documents to be produced in court without his special permission and ordered a separate investigation of them. Hitler put off any trial until the end of the war; those most heavily involved — Oster, Canaris, Dohnanyi, Sack and Dietrich Bonhoeffer — were shot out of hand at Flossenburg at the last moments of the war by the sentence of a hastily improvised S.S. field court-martial.<sup>1</sup>

Goerdeler's statements cannot have counted for very much; they cleared up details; they involved some minor figures; that was all. But the mystery of them still remains. It may lead us to an explanation if we examine the record of that first interrogation. Why did he involve so many economic leaders? From a desire to prove that his movement was not just a hopeless adventure undertaken by stupid and ambitious officers and 'defeatists', but had behind it the most notable leaders of agriculture and industry? Soon he was revealing the names of his friends, the trade union leaders and later those with Church connections. Why? It seems to me scarcely to be doubted that rather than belittle his action, he wanted to make it appear to be as important, as significant and as dangerous to Hitler's régime as possible. For him it was not just an officer's 'putsch'; it was an attempt at revolution on the part of a whole nation, represented by the best and noblest in all its strata. As he himself stood courageously by it, so he expected his friends to stand. With the gallows before him he wished only to bring the whole truth to light, to throw it in the face of the régime, and to make heard the voice of oppressed conscience; in the staged trials in public that was not possible as the shameful conduct of Witzleben's trial had shown.

In a curious way Goerdeler seems to have had in his mind the

<sup>1</sup> As revealed in the Huppenkothen trial of 1951. Who was responsible for the failure to destroy this mass of paper immediately on Dohnanyi's arrest in the spring of 1943 is still a mystery. It may possibly be laid to the door of Beck's pedantic desire to preserve for history a full documentation. Halder told me that he was confronted with a complete and carefully arranged file of Beck's letters and reports. According to Sonderegger the Flossenburg shootings were the result of Hitler's fury when he read the complete Canaris diary which had been discovered in April 1945.

same intention as Kaltenbrunner had. Kaltenbrunner gave as directive to his officials that 'Hitler must be presented with a plain statement of the reasons which led to the attempt. That was not to be attained simply by a statement of a legal case, but by the dragging to light of the true motives. If he is shown that so many men of the highest professional and personal standing were involved in the conspiracy the revelation may be just what is needed to make him see the necessity of making changes.'<sup>1</sup> That may be exaggerated but it is in consonance with the tone of the daily reports from which one gets the impression that Hitler who read them each evening, was to be convinced that it was an intellectual and spiritual *élite* that the investigators were dealing with. There were added disquisitions on the motives of the conspirators, on the attitude of the officers, on the reasons for the revolt of so many disillusioned National Socialists and even on the patriotic intention behind most of the negotiations with foreign countries. A high official is credited with having said: 'There is no doubt that you and your friends are good Germans, but you are enemies of the system and we must destroy you'.<sup>2</sup>

Goerdeler more than suspected this. It is significant that in his prison writings the emphasis is on showing that on his side was the true patriotism and that he acted not for himself or for his reputation in history but for Germany. The fate of his country caused him from the beginning more concern than his own. He had seen the conspiracy, the work of four years of such endless toil and danger, smashed at a blow. Now he stood amid the wreckage of his hopes. Worse still Germany herself was like to become just wreckage. The bombing had begun to destroy the great cities and the industrial areas, the costly treasures of our old art of building; in a few weeks, at the best only a few months, the Red Army would be in Berlin and that probably would mean the end of Western civilization. Would the appeal to reason go absolutely unheard? Must not even Hitler realize that an end must be made, that his régime stood before the abyss? The more revelations of the universality of the opposition to him in all classes and in the highest posts in the Army and the State, the better chance that his eyes would be opened. What now did the fate of individuals matter? They were all doomed if Germany fell.

Four weeks after his capture, Goerdeler was condemned to death by the People's Court and his property confiscated; he was described as an 'ambitiously corrupt, infamous and cowardly traitor', and a political spy in enemy pay. The two days' public trial offered the usual spectacle of the shouting down and the sneering, gutter-

<sup>1</sup> *Nordwestdeutsche Hefte*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Dr G. Wolf.

snipe insulting of the accused — Hassell, Leuschner, Wirmer and Lejeune-Jung were with Goerdeler in the dock — by the president. There were shameful scenes of which even the Minister of Justice, Thierack, complained in his reports to Hitler. Goerdeler himself had relatively least to suffer from such obscenities, but he had never been allowed to utter three consecutive sentences and not once to expound his motives. His official defender, Weimann, who spoke with him only on the evening before the trial opened and then but for forty minutes, not merely left him undefended but himself attacked him. When Goerdeler wanted to mention Kluge's name Freisler, shrieking, cut him short, nor was he allowed to make any answer to the charge of being a spy. In a final sentence he declared in a loud voice that he stood by what he had done but called the failure of July 20th a judgement of God — this the president sneered at as 'sham saintliness' — and expressly defended himself against the reproach that he was a reactionary or hostile to Labour, and refused to be identified without more ado with the appeals of the Stauffenberg group. His bearing throughout was frank and dignified but he was not allowed to make any comprehensive and impressive final declaration.<sup>1</sup>

Astonishingly enough his fate was not sealed with the passing of the sentence of death on September 8th. While, as was usual in these cases, Hassell, Wirmer and Lejeune-Jung were hanged that day and Leuschner two weeks later, Goerdeler, the arch-criminal, was spared for many weary months. It is possible that this was at the wish of the Gestapo who wanted still more information from him, but that cannot have been the only reason. Popitz who was condemned on October 3rd was also reprieved until February 2nd, when Goerdeler was executed, and reprieved again after that. A questionnaire of thirty-nine questions was drawn up by an acknowledged expert, Dr Mading — these concerned a great variety of problems of reconstruction after the war and the share to be taken in it by the state, resettlement and the creation of employment etc. — and submitted to Goerdeler and Popitz as experts and both fell on it eagerly. Goerdeler was finished by January 3rd with a document of eighty-seven pages of narrow-spaced typescript; Popitz took only sixty-six. A technical assistant compared the answers point by point.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt at all of the interest which the relevant officials took in

<sup>1</sup> Two reports by Thierack September 8th; the first was written on Hitler's order on the night of the 7th/8th and telegraphed at once to Hitler's Headquarters.

<sup>2</sup> The comparison is a thirty-eight page document. All these documents were kindly sent to me by Dr Mading who after much search obtained them from the lady who had been the 'technical assistant'.

them as may be seen from the fact that the two were promptly set to other tasks. They were asked to give their views on the reform of the Reich and on the relations of national, state and local government, to work out a policy for the transition from war-time to peacetime economy and to write in illustration notes on their professional careers to serve as material for the history of administration. Goerdeler was asked to describe his work as Price Commissioner and to give his views on administrative reform.<sup>1</sup>

Goerdeler delivered a document on price control of eighty-six pages on January 9th, describing his own experiences and adding proposals suitable for war-time conditions. Another document on administrative reform, containing a criticism of the Communal Act of 1935 and suggestions for its amendment, breaks off on page 61 and was never finished. In this paper it is more evident than in the one on price control that he tries to defend the positive achievements of the Hitler state and to make his proposals palatable to National Socialist readers.

Are we to take this to imply that Goerdeler might be spared because his expert knowledge was needed by his enemies? The Security Ministry had long been interested in his views. They had been discussed at meetings of officials and a comment made on them was to the effect that the two prisoners had delivered very remarkable material.<sup>2</sup>

Among these officials was S.S. Senior Group Leader Ohlendorf, a pupil of Prof. Jensen, in whose circle there was a good deal of criticism of the internal conditions in the Hitler Reich. He was an intellectual and had not lost contact with his old teacher who liked to be kept informed of the attitude of the S.S.; there were in their ranks young intellectuals who thought of themselves as an *élite* and as the pioneers of a genuine revolution, and who regarded Hitler and his personal following as corrupt. Jensen was Popitz's trusted friend and brought the latter into contact with Ohlendorf; this personal connection may have played its part in the giving of these commissions to Popitz and Goerdeler; there was certainly a group of S.S. leaders who did want to use their talents for the period after the collapse which was inevitable.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing could have been done without the knowledge and consent

<sup>1</sup> From notes made by Dr Mading while in civil internment in 1947; both documents are in the War Department Archives.

<sup>2</sup> From a letter from Dr E. Kessler now of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. V. Zeller, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> V. Muenchheimer, *Europa-archiv*, v, part 14, p. 3195; communications from Frau Jensen give an account of Jensen's relations with Ohlendorf and of his conspiratorial activities in the Pass Department of the Quartermaster-General's Office.

of Ohlendorf's chief Himmler and he had reasons of his own for wishing to keep the two alive as long as possible. It is known that Himmler, the oddest of the odd figures of the Third Reich, had long been toying with the idea of deserting his Fuehrer or rather with the thought that, if the hands of the helmsman failed and the ship was being steered on to the rocks, he himself might be called to save the sinking ship. A blind fanatic of the race myth he had long seen himself as the hero founder of the coming Germanic empire.<sup>1</sup> He had looked on the Fuehrer who gave him the chance to become that as a worshipper looks on his idol, but he interpreted his role as that of high priest and with a certain independence of mind. He was intellectually quite incapable of finding a clear political path by himself and too lacking in character. He had nearly to the end surpassed all his colleagues in loud assurance of Hitler's final victory. But, at the start of the Russian gamble, it seems he had begun to wonder whether, where Hitler had failed, he might succeed in uniting the whole Germanic world, including Britain, for the great struggle of the noble Northern race against the Slav 'sub-humans' as Hitler in his book had taught was the mission of National Socialism. Later, he began to fear that the great dream might dissolve. As early as the May of 1941, Hassell had noted in his diary that Carl Burckhardt had told him that 'a confidant of Himmler had been to see him to ask if he thought Britain would make peace with Himmler, if not with Hitler'. In September he had been visited by a young Security Police official named Danfeld who had indicated to him that in Himmler's entourage there was much anxiety and much pondering over a way out.<sup>2</sup> This official may have come from Schellenberg's department who, as head of an S.S. Information Office of his own, had the ambition of conducting an independent foreign policy, and was constantly urging Himmler to free himself from Ribbentrop and obtain connections of his own with foreign statesmen.<sup>3</sup> Such attempts had been made from 1941 onwards and the Hassell-Popitz-Goerdeler group were well enough informed about them. From 1943 they got their information mainly from Langbehn who used Himmler's confidence in him to try to get such connections in Switzerland and Sweden, while at the same time he placed himself at the service of the conspirators. In May he told Hassell that the seriousness of the situation was recognized among the high ranking members of the S.S. and the

<sup>1</sup> V. my article in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 1945, part 3, and also *Vierteljahrheften für Zeitgeschichte*, 1953, p. 368 (Himmler's speech of August 3, 1944) and H. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*, 1947, Chap. 1.

<sup>2</sup> V. Hassell, pp. 205, 223.

<sup>3</sup> Trevor-Roper, *op. cit.*; Huppenkothen mentioned such manoeuvrings at his interrogation and trial.



necessity of getting rid of Hitler.<sup>1</sup> Popitz built on this and was not fully disillusioned even after his talk with Himmler on August 26th; then, it appears, Himmler talked of the possibility of a separate peace.<sup>2</sup>

The same question, though a little more plainly put, he addressed to Jakob Wallenberg through the banker Rasche. In Wallenberg's notes it is phrased: 'Do you think that the West would make peace if Hitler were no longer there?' The Swede gave no answer, but told Goerdeler. They discussed several times what could be expected of Himmler. Goerdeler said that Himmler had put out several feelers to the Opposition — this was at the time of the Popitz-Langbehn conversations — that he himself did not quite know what to think, but feared that there might be behind it some intention of sounding out the 'Anti-Nazis'. In any case it was the Opposition's intention to arrest Himmler along with his master, 'Does Himmler know what you're up to?' asked Wallenberg. 'I don't know', answered Goerdeler. 'After the failures of March, things were in a bad way but they struck a false trail and that saved us.' 'Perhaps Himmler will let you go ahead, let Hitler fall but save himself.' In November Wallenberg heard of the failure of the September attempt because Himmler, Hitler and Goering were not present together. 'Leave Himmler out of your plans' he counselled, 'he won't stand in your way if you go out against Hitler only'. Goerdeler said he agreed, provided there was no danger of a civil war with the S.S.<sup>3</sup>

Goerdeler was always well informed about Himmler's dubious attitude and his attempts to negotiate peace with the West through Sweden; these attempts went on in 1944 and even after July 20th.<sup>4</sup> In August, while Goerdeler was being interrogated, the long existing tension between Himmler and Bormann had risen to a new high point; they were deadly rivals and that rivalry spread to the S.S. and the Nazi Party organization of which Bormann was head; they had also disagreements over Freisler's conduct of the treason trials. For months Himmler had been thinking of 'arresting Bormann and eliminating Hitler'.<sup>5</sup> In October or November the S.S. leader had invited Wallenberg through Schellenberg and with the help of the Swedish

<sup>1</sup> V. Hassell, p. 311; v. too, p. 274, and p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> V. *supra* p. 244. According to Gustav Dahrendorf to whom Popitz related this Himmler asked Burckhardt if a separate peace with Britain and the U.S. was possible and was answered never with Hitler though Himmler might be thought of. Dahrendorf like Dulles (p. 151) had consulted the official police documents on Popitz and Langbehn.

<sup>3</sup> Told me by Wallenberg himself, cf. Dulles, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Hassell, p. 350; Huppenkothen on February 6, 1951 said Kaltenbrunner after July 20th had spoken widely and very positively about conversation with the West.

<sup>5</sup> *Norddeutsche Hefte*, p. 32.

embassy to come to Berlin for confidential discussions; the ostensible reason was to discuss the release of Swedes who had been arrested. Wallenberg — and surely rightly — concluded that Himmler had been informed of Goerdeler's successful efforts to get in touch with the West through him and his brother Markus, and now wished to use him for the same purpose. He finally refused to accept the invitation since he did not want to have to shake hands with 'Hitler's hangman', but he also feared to make an enemy of him, and perhaps thereby harm his friend Goerdeler; it was not an easy decision to make because he was not sure that he might not have been able to be of service to the prisoners.

Wallenberg's refusal did not stop Himmler going on with his mad scheme. In December he managed to send via Sweden a message to London and Washington in which he offered to send an Army officer and a party official to negotiate with British representatives so that some definiteness might be obtained on the precise meaning of 'unconditional surrender'.<sup>1</sup> Naturally the offer was rejected. Yet he went on trying to find people to act as intermediaries. In March 1945 he seems to have had hopes of Haushofer and of Dohnanyi who was then under sentence of death — he knew of his success in this field in 1938-40<sup>2</sup> — and in April, when the end was very near, he tried to win over Count Bernadotte.<sup>3</sup>

Goerdeler's attitude in prison must be considered against this background. He knew well enough Himmler's views on Hitler's war policy and his efforts to get in touch with Britain, efforts which in his case had been described in court as political espionage for the enemy. He cannot have long been in doubt why he, the friend of Wallenberg, and Popitz, the friend of Langbehn and the intimate acquaintance of Burckhardt, had not been at once handed over to the hangman. He would have indeed been no politician had he not tried to turn such a position to the advantage of himself and his friends and above all of Germany. Who could say whether at the end Hitler, shattered by the experience of July 20th and the inevitability of catastrophe — we know now that from the late summer of 1944 he was a very sick man — would become accessible and listen to the representations of his former Price Commissioner? When he held that post he had gained the impression that the Fuehrer must be told frankly just what could be obtained, and not always, as his ministers were wont to do, answered simply with an obsequious nod

<sup>1</sup> Hull, p. 1573.

<sup>2</sup> According to Huppenkothen (January 5, 1951) Dohnanyi offered his services to Himmler and tried to get an interview with him.

<sup>3</sup> V. Count Folke Bernadotte, *Das Ende* (Zurich, 1945).

of acquiescence.<sup>1</sup> He had constantly striven during the war, even up to July 20th, to be allowed to talk directly to him. If Hitler like the Gestapo chief, was now thinking of negotiation with the West before the Russians broke in, he would have to have a representative who had some credit abroad. What if he offered himself as that representative naturally on condition that he and his friends who had had no direct part in the attempt be immediately released? It sounds fantastic but, in the nightmare that was Hitler's Reich, dream could at any moment become reality. At any rate he risked it and, at the end of August, that is, soon after he was gaoled, he sent a petition to the Fuehrer.

'If we put the Fatherland above everything,' it began, 'as we believe we should, then we must consider July 20th as a final judgement of God. The Fuehrer has been saved from almost certain death. God had not desired that the preservation of Germany should be bought by an act of blood; he has given that task once again to the Fuehrer. That is old German tradition. Every German who was a member of the Opposition is now obliged to stand behind the Fuehrer whom God has preserved and to hand over to him all that was prepared for a new government; he will decide whether or not he will use it.' At this sentence the Kaltenbrunner report<sup>2</sup> breaks off. How the petition went on we can gather from later notes which Goerdeler made; there were appeals to consider the misery which the continuance of the war would entail for Germany, allusions to his own connections abroad and an offer to negotiate for Hitler with Western diplomacy.

No one who knew Goerdeler will believe that this was but hypothetical calculation. Did he really believe that he would anywhere be taken seriously as Hitler's representative? Or was he just trying to save himself and his friends? What he thought really is made clearer in those last notes of his written, it seems, for posterity. In them he describes what peace conditions he could have obtained up to the end of 1944. Here are all the illusions again; only Alsace and Lorraine are written off when it comes to frontiers. Then he goes on: 'At the end of August and in prison I did offer, for the sake of the Fatherland and of humanity, but most of all for the sake of the young, to gain these terms for Hitler for, since July, there was no chance of removing him and the catastrophe threatening all peoples had to be avoided. My offer was not accepted.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was expressly said in his reminiscences written in prison.

<sup>2</sup> *KB*, 4, xii.

<sup>3</sup> Note without heading or date but not before January 1945. An earlier note says that he gave up Alsace and Lorraine, as these were already lost, in the peace terms which he was willing to negotiate even for 'this government'. 'My offer will be rejected for there is here arrogance and narrowness of mind'.

The contrast between 'no longer a chance of removing him' and 'every German's duty is to rally behind the Fuehrer who God has preserved' would be painful if it were anything but a question of tactics in a life and death struggle. Goerdeler's fundamental attitude to Hitler the tyrant was actually quite unchanged as the notes show; in a January note he called him 'a vampire' and 'a violator of humanity'. It may certainly be supposed that if it ever had come to negotiation with the West he would, despite the 'judgement of God', have sought to get rid of him. Perhaps negotiations would have given him the chance. Perhaps the liberation of the prisoners of July 20th would be the beginning of a new 'renewal' of Germany. But the mere evocation of such possibilities show in what an unreal world one finds oneself if one takes Goerdeler's offer seriously. None the less it also makes clear his tendency to optimistic illusions and to exaggeration of his 'mission'.

Immediately after his condemnation he began to write a long paper entitled 'Thoughts of one condemned to death', the purpose of which was to bring together, his political experiences, his economic doctrine, and especially his plans for the future.<sup>1</sup> It is a sort of 'political testament' and at the end is dedicated to his wife, their children, his friends and to all 'striving men'. But there is a good deal in it to make one think that he was also thinking of the Gestapo and even Hitler or Himmler as readers — he was at least ready to produce his writing on demand — and that he framed his sentences accordingly.

He began with an elaborate refutation of the charge of espionage, describing his journeys abroad and his talks with foreigners from 1938 to 1943. He formally admitted that he was guilty of treason legally but he committed treason to save Germany. The British had no right to speak scornfully of the men of July 20th for — he underlined this — during the war they had demanded such a deed as an 'honourable necessity'. Bismarck himself in 1862 had carried through a *coup d'état* and had not Hitler claimed that 'the salvation of the Fatherland was justification for his rebellion in 1923'. He criticized the conduct of his case in the People's Court in that he was not allowed to produce Kluge, Choltitz and Jaenecke as witnesses to testify that he had never planned assassination, but had thought only of joint representations to Hitler by the generals. He asked for 'the re-establishment of his honour and of the rights of his family'. He hoped that, later on, the German people would be proud of the fact that 'there were Germans who risked all to save their own and other peoples from further sacrifice and misery'.

<sup>1</sup> Forty-two pages of narrow-spaced typescript.

After this apologia he explained his own aims in home and foreign policy. He thought it might still be possible for Hitler to find ways to a conference with the enemy, 'if he finds the right negotiator and consents to minor internal reforms. If time is given me I shall explain these. But I fear that will not happen. Yet even if Germany loses the war and is occupied, the same way of salvation remains for the issue will be determined by the interests of Britain, Germany and the United States.' The programme for the future which he develops is dictated by true reasons of state; it outlines the principles of his economic policy and refers to his 'economic ABC' which he was still working at in his cell; he added a short plan for post-war reconstruction.

Finally he discusses his foreign contacts and carefully enumerates the long list of friends and acquaintances abroad, including men in the highest political positions. Hitler's foreign policy is criticized, but he avoids expressions that might irritate and is content to show that it has, in spite of the warnings of the Opposition, led to great 'misfortune' as the war had revealed, though the burden of guilt lies more with Ribbentrop than with his master. Still convinced of his mission, he appeals to his friends abroad to publish after his death his reports on his travels and his memoranda. The war certainly could have been 'avoided', but its real roots lay in the Versailles settlement and there was guilt on the other side as well. May a new spirit of reconciliation, justice and peace instead of hate and desire for revenge rule in the future.

Whether and to what extent this was brought to Himmler's notice remains obscure. It is certain that, soon afterwards, he got into touch with Goerdeler. Schellenberg may have been the one who advised him and even, as his emissary, discussed things with the prisoner. I consider it most improbable that Himmler was ever so lacking in caution as himself to talk with him. In Brandenburg's account<sup>1</sup> we find: 'One day an offer came to Dr Goerdeler from the highest quarters — Himmler — which can almost be called a commission to make use of his close personal and political connections and friendships with Wallenberg and the Zionist leader Weizmann, and through them to approach the King of Sweden, who knew Goerdeler personally, and to do what Goerdeler most probably would have done had a *coup d'état* succeeded, get in touch with Churchill through the King and Swedish politicians and Weizmann and so arrive at a swift and tolerable end to the war. This commission Goerdeler under-

<sup>1</sup> Brandenburg wrote this in 1950 and placed it at my disposal. It is headed 'The men of July 20th during their imprisonment in the Security Ministry. A short survey on the sixth anniversary of July 20th.'

took in the hope, too, of saving his own life. A condition of success was his personal negotiation with these persons. He would have to go to Sweden himself — which meant his unconditional release for it was highly unlikely that either the Swedes or any other neutral would negotiate with Hitler in person or with Himmler or any other of the Fuehrer's minions. Equally unlikely was it that any of Goerdeler's Swedish friends would come to Berlin on his invitation without assurance that he would be released. I know that Goerdeler refused to do anything except on this condition; he made it clear to Himmler personally that his release was necessary if he was to have any success at all. Himmler, alas, could not be persuaded. Dr Goerdeler then had the idea of going behind Himmler's back straight to Hitler and try to convince the Fuehrer of the possibilities.' That, as Brandenburg says further on, was impossible. Even had it been possible to sidetrack Himmler and get to Hitler, Himmler would soon have ferreted that out, punished heavily the officials concerned and sent Goerdeler to instant execution. It was all absurd; indeed the whole story of Himmler's and Schellenberg's attempts to desert their Fuehrer reads like a second-rate adventure novel.

Brandenburg was not a professional policeman, but one of those S.S. men who had been drafted to police service because there were now so many prisoners that the regular personnel could not cope with them. He was also one of those who treated his charges with some humanity. His own account shows him trying to lighten their lot as much as he could, letting them have some contact with the outer world, making their shackles looser and getting them food, tobacco and the like. In the terrible loneliness of the cells the prisoners craved for any sort of talk with a human being. In this respect Goerdeler was better off than many for his cell door — apparently a suicide attempt was feared — stood permanently open. As a result there were long conversations at night in which Goerdeler sufficiently trusted his gaoler to tell him the whole story of the conspiracy as he had told it at the interrogation, for each night he told Brandenburg in detail what had happened in the day's session. His trust in Brandenburg was not misplaced, for the latter took it on himself to smuggle out Goerdeler's writings<sup>1</sup> and at a good deal of risk got them to friends and later unharmed to Goerdeler's family; clearly he was under the spell of his prisoner's impressive yet kindly personality. Goerdeler, he wrote, radiated calm peacefulness of mind as none of the other prisoners did; he never made useless moan about his misfortunes; he 'had no hate — except for Hitler and his deeds of shame'. On his side Goerdeler was very grateful for the 'noble humanity and

<sup>1</sup> Written in pencil on quarto paper which Brandenburg got for him.

Christian charity' of his gaoler and treated him as the executor of his political testament.<sup>1</sup>

We may accept what Brandenburg says about Himmler's 'commission'. What excited hopes it must have raised! And what disillusionment when week after week nothing more was heard of it and he had to admit that it was only a *fata morgana* which for a moment had lightened the darkness of his cell. Could not this deadly silence be broken? If he could not reach Hitler, perhaps he could bring in Wallenberg again even behind Himmler's back. A letter to Wallenberg of November 8th shows him helpless and bewildered, yet still thinking of his talk with Himmler — or his emissary. He proposed that Wallenberg should ask the Swedish Government to act as intermediary between Hitler and Goerdeler and the West so as to put a swift end to the war and save Europe from Bolshevism. As the British cannot now count on the fall of National Socialism, they must negotiate with Germany as she is, otherwise they will sacrifice all their future to the war against her. . . . If the war goes on, universal catastrophe is inevitable; Britain must just put up with the Nazis. Then the Polish difficulty can be solved. I have already a peace plan acceptable to Britain and the United States'. What follows shows that a sort of prison psychosis was affecting him. 'I know that the Nazis will co-operate. They have already, under my influence exercised from prison, begun to limit their war aims; the necessary domestic reforms will follow automatically if my friends and I survive. As we are now condemned to death the business must be put in hand very quickly. . . . Above all everything must be done secretly without Russia's knowledge. I beg of you to take the initiative at once. Your government must tell the German government that it will act on two conditions: 1. Complete secrecy; 2. Pardoning of myself and my friends for this — and our co-operation — is indispensable for negotiation with Britain and the United States. I mean Schacht, Popitz, Halder, Bismarck, leading Socialists and Catholics and myself. If their régime holds out, the National Socialists will agree and Sweden will save Europe and the world, humanity and civilization. But act at once. Everything is at stake, the future of your own land as well. Everything can be saved if you do as I ask. Otherwise everything will be lost.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the letter to Brandenburg accompanying the MSS of 'Our Ideal' handed him in November 1944.

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of this letter Goerdeler asked Wallenberg to help his family who had been arrested as hostages and to try and get them to Sweden; also to get his *Economic ABC* to Sweden; he thought in terms of a best-seller and translations into 'all languages'. At the Huppenkothen trial (February 2, 1951) Dr Mueller spoke of a letter to the Pope which was never sent asking his Holiness to intervene for peace.

It is evident that Goerdeler believed that Himmler's approach was the result of his own representations in speech and writing, that in their talks there had at least been reference to moderate war aims and to the 'pardon' of the prisoners and that he did not know that of 'leading Socialist and Catholic leaders' nearly all had already been executed. One shudders as one reads this letter — the Hitler government influenced by his arguments, his peace plan for Europe a sort of magical formula, the antagonism between Europe and Bolshevism, between the British Empire and Russia as stronger than any war-time alliance, stronger even than fear of the Nazis whose fall is 'automatic' once its opponents are free, the old over-estimation of his own 'mission' and of the force of reason. It is all now an *idée fixe*. Yet it seems that Goerdeler soon realized that his imagination had led him astray. He asked Brandenburg to hold the letter back — getting it to the Swedish Embassy seemed to be too dangerous — and so himself buried his last hope.

It appears to have been Hitler's proclamation of November 9th that first opened his eyes to the fact that his hope that the catastrophe of July 20th would shake the tyrant's belief in his divinity had failed. His anger found expression in another long memorandum entitled 'Our Ideal', which he handed to Brandenburg as his 'political testament'.<sup>1</sup> It sets out to prove that this man who in his lifetime had called himself 'the Great' was really the destroyer of Germany and of Europe. He contrasted the achievements of Hitler and his party with what he and his friends had striven for and could have accomplished had they been in power. He pursues this theme in other papers with ever greater bitterness in refutation of the insults hurled at the 'traitors and cowards' of July 20th in the Party press.<sup>2</sup> He does not mince his words. He speaks of 'the slaughter like cattle of a million Jews' and of the cowardliness of the German citizenry who let such atrocities happen 'partly in ignorance, partly in despair'. The failure of the German adventure in the Ardennes now convinced him that the final defeat of the German Army which he had so often prophesied was at hand.

Now in his lonely cell his thought begins to go round in circles. In endless monotone he repeats himself, in long historical disquisitions, political reminiscence, warnings, appeals to posterity, to his family, to his friends in Germany and abroad, to the youth of the

<sup>1</sup> MSS of 168 quarto pages.

<sup>2</sup> In the MS 'In prison, Christmas 1944' six pages narrow-spaced typescript, it ends: 'In prison Jan. 1945, face to face with death and in affection to the youth of all nations'.



world, to all men of goodwill.<sup>1</sup> He was never able to revise what he wrote for what he wrote had to be got out of his cell page by page and as quickly as possible. Soon but one hope is left to him that after his death a younger generation will take up the task now so lamentably unachieved: all would not have been in vain if his thoughts and plans outlived him. May the wicked spirit of hate, lying and meanness now ruling be overcome and future generations be led by a new spirit, that of Christian charity, reconciliation, justice, truth and self-discipline. That was why his writings must have readers, especially readers abroad, whom he besought to co-operate in preventing a new and more terrible Versailles settlement succeeding the war.

When I saw him in January I was, as I have already told, astonished at his undiminished intellectual power, but at the same time I was shocked by his outward appearance. It was a man grown old who stood before me, shackled hand and foot, in the same light summer clothes as he had had on when he was captured, shabby and collarless, face thin and drawn, strangely different. But it was his eyes that shocked me most. They were once bright grey eyes and how they flashed beneath the heavy eyebrows; that had always been the most impressive thing about him. Now there was no light in them; they were like the eyes of a blind man yet like nothing I had ever seen before.<sup>2</sup> His intellectual power was as it always had been; his spiritual strength was not. His natural cheerfulness had gone; his look seemed turned inward. What I beheld was a man with the weariness of death in his soul.

So I thought then. Today I see it all again as I read the papers he left behind him. In his 'January Memorandum' which was obviously written about that time, he broke off the thread of his discourse to insert a long disquisition on God and human destiny, 'for I do not know whether I shall not be dead within a day or two. Unable to sleep I have asked myself whether there is a God who is interested in the fate of the individual. I find it hard to believe so, for this God has permitted a few hundred thousand men bestialized, insane or blinded to drown mankind in rivers of blood and agony and crush it under mountains of horror and despair. He lets millions of decent people suffer and die without raising a finger. Is this justice? Is not this sort of collective punishment the very reverse of justice? What a botcher of a God who knows the wrongdoers and the apostates and punishes the

<sup>1</sup> Document of thirty-four pages narrow typescript undated but not written before January 1945 referred to later as 'The January Memorandum'. Also 'Experiences and Deductions' thirteen pages narrow-spaced typescript and 'The True Peace' of seven pages.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. von Dietze had just the same experience when he was confronted with Goerdeler in September.

upright and the faithful. No, it is inconceivable. Did we sin because we were nationalists in that we claimed God for our 'nation', for our people? Was it here, he pondered, that I failed in that I grossly neglected my family to pursue restlessly only political goals, that I bowed down to idols instead of performing the human duties that lay to hand?

That did not solve the riddle. Have I not, he argued, devoted all my life to a good cause? Is that deserving of punishment? Did I not perhaps fail when I refused a post in which I could perhaps have prevented great evils; he is clearly alluding here to his refusal to enter the government in 1932. Where really have I gone astray? How, how have I merited my cruel fate? 'I wrestle with my conscience about this and this inner conflict brightens the walls of my tiny cell, fills this dreary space with visions of fantasy and of memory. It is hard to be torn from happiness with my family and people whom I love, to have once had the confidence of the nation, to have been held in esteem in the world and now be made to spend my days in want and in the agony of self-reproach which is the agony of Hell. Like the Psalmist, I argue with God because I do not understand Him. "Whom He loves, he takes early to Himself." No, that is not comfort; it is intolerable.' Why is life given if it is soon to be ended? Where is the answer? And in hours of crisis the world so desperately needs the good man. He tortures himself with the solution that Augustine found that the sinner too can become a saint, but cannot comprehend it for it is contrary to reason. There are, he sees, only three possibilities; either God is not all goodness and men are of no matter to him, or there is no God at all, or there is a just God who himself obeys the laws he has given to man and beast but leaves it to ourselves to carry them out — the stern, unbending, avenging God of the Jews. Perhaps He is now punishing the whole German nation, even innocent children, because it let Jews be exterminated without lifting a finger. But is He then a loving merciful God or just a metaphysical force which seeks to compel to moral progress through suffering and death? 'No reason can find a solution. Today reason must cry to God with the Psalmist. Stay, do you not see that this torture of the innocent can no longer be understood, that it must produce dumb resignation, rebellious anger or dull hardening of the heart? That this too heavy punishment is a stumbling block to man as he strives toward You? You have forbidden murder and used it to teach us. You have forbidden it and let the attempt fail but thereby have condemned to death millions of innocent folk! Reason helps only to the recognition that our fates are not in the stars but in ourselves, and to take goodness as both end and means since otherwise life would be unbearable,

and to realize in failure or in success where the causes lie, finding success to be due to the work of others and ascribing failure to our own faults. Hard and bitter that may be, but it is at least honest and profitable to the living — such as I am thus far. And I still seek through Christ this merciful God. I have not found him. O Christ, where lies the truth, where is the consolation?"

Not without hesitation have I given these very personal things a publicity they were never intended to have. But I thought that they were of extreme personal significance. What they reveal is the awesome picture of the loneliness of soul of a man devoted to death, an experience which numberless other victims of the Third Reich must also have faced. Not a sign of life from his loved ones nor news of their fate had reached him since the prison gates had closed behind him. He knew that they had all been arrested as hostages and were in prison somewhere or in some concentration camp, his wife and their four children, both his brothers and their families. The grandchildren had been torn from their parents and under other names been placed in a Nazi children's home.<sup>1</sup> His much loved brother Fritz had been condemned by the People's Court as his accomplice; he was for a time my neighbour in the prison cells of the Lehrterstrasse, and I shall never forget the cold horror that overcame me when in March he was taken away to be executed. The farewell letter to his children which he left in his cell is one of the most poignant documents of its poignant kind; it is the witness to the writer's courage and unselfishness and to the strength of soul that submission to God's will gives to a man. The news of his brother's condemnation drove Goerdeler half-mad with despair.<sup>2</sup>

His was ever-deepening loneliness. He was not just abandoned by men; he was abandoned of God. What is heard so loudly and so clearly from these terrible documents of spiritual agony is the asking of the fundamental religious question of our times, the question of the reality of God. Goerdeler all his life was a devout Christian. Now in the decisive hour it was plainly seen that the Christianity in which he had been brought up was the Christianity of nineteenth-century liberalism. It is extraordinary with what relentless and absolutely un sentimental honesty he was aware of the nature of this Christianity of his. It was in essence little more than belief in Christ's command to love one's neighbour, an ethic so noble as itself to be religious. How closely it corresponded to his unshakeable belief in the power of reason over men — and over history. We have seen how that belief was the source of innumerable illusions but was also the sharp spur

<sup>1</sup> They were found and recovered with the greatest difficulty in 1945.

<sup>2</sup> As Dr Mueller revealed in the Huppenkothen trial February 2, 1951.

to his restless activity. His ethic is expressed with wonderful clarity in that last writing of his: 'to seek our fate not in the stars but in ourselves, to take goodness as both end and means since otherwise life would be intolerable and to realize in failure or in success where the causes lie, finding success to be due to the efforts of others and ascribing failure to our own faults', that is, stand without thought of self in the service of the community. From that point of view there was no approach to Augustine, or to the teaching of Luther about 'the hidden God' whose mystery no mortal can penetrate, to that hard saying of St Paul: 'Who, O man, art thou who would reckon with God?' and to the apostle's belief in the absolute sinfulness of all creatures, even of the man striving toward goodness. And so he had no direct access to that consolation which Luther knew, to that strangely paradoxical, strangely daring 'assurance', when all men forsake me, of the love of the Son of God himself abandoned on the Cross in whose fellowship all fear is forgotten and all human frailties made good. No one will dare to say whether anyone could have afforded him that consolation even if the inhuman isolation of a condemned man had been less complete.

It is a terrible thing that in his last hours, so far as we know, no consolation came to him from any compassionate soul. Thierack, they say, had under the ever fiercer bombing of Berlin long become nervous because Goerdeler and Popitz were still alive.<sup>1</sup> One day before the People's Court was bombed to bits, its president Freisler killed and innumerable documents destroyed, the execution of these two 'chief criminals' was carried out, probably on direct orders from Hitler on February 2nd. Goerdeler's neighbour in the cells, Dr Mueller,<sup>2</sup> has given an account of the terrible moment when they were taken from their cells. In the morning Goerdeler had had a visit from an inquisitive Gestapo official called Stavitzky who in simulated friendliness had enquired about his present activities and received the answer: 'They will still need both of us', referring to the services which he could still do the rulers of Germany. About midday there was suddenly heard the familiar cry of the executioner urging haste, 'Come on! Come on! Come on!' Of what happened thereafter and what at this last moment Goerdeler felt there is no recorder.<sup>3</sup> Nor is there any last word; he was not granted the favour accorded to others of writing a farewell letter to his family. I can never remember without

<sup>1</sup> Munchheimer, p. 3195; Lautz says Thierack protested to Hitler against any further delay and thinks he signed the order for execution (communicated by him to the author).

<sup>2</sup> At the Huppenkothen trial February 2, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> 20 Juli, 1944, eye witness reports suggest his death was a mercifully quick one.

deep pain the moment when I saw him for the last time and was prevented from pressing this noble-minded man's hand and saying to him '*Auf wiedersehen* — in eternity'.

The history of the Resistance movement is the history of a failure. It failed finally because no political power came to its aid from either within or without. It was a revolt simply of conscience. Under the system of totalitarian tyranny there was no chance of organizing a political popular movement of real revolutionary force and from foreign governments there did not come any pledge for the future for, in the West also, the war fever burned in all its madness. The political ideals of the movement, seen in their purest and fullest in Goerdeler, have since been found to be sound and useful for Germany and for Europe and for the world, and the vision of the European catastrophe which had to follow the total collapse of German power if the war was fought out to the bitter end was confirmed just as Goerdeler saw it.

But there was also confirmation of the old lesson of history, that political ideals remain impotent in a world of conflicting interests in so far as they do not correspond to strong, intelligible and even obvious political ends. The mass of the German people realized that Hitler's power policies would lead not to new heights of political glory but to the abyss — when they were already on its edge. It is not very probable that any other people would have withstood any better the glittering lure of political and military triumphs. And if Goerdeler set his hopes on the reason and farsightedness of foreign statesmen, disillusion set in in this sphere also, for in the West it was not true statesmanship that reigned but 'militarism' that is, a will to war and destruction which had no regard for the future and which the appeal to 'public opinion' only inflamed the more.

For the world of politics is now so constructed that in it the pure idealists are bound to fail. That may be a tragedy. But it is only one phase of that experience of human frailty, of helpless entanglement in guilt and in a fate which, broken only by an occasional triumph of genius, makes the content of world history.

Does that drive us to gloomy resignation? Are we compelled to write off Goerdeler and his friends as pure utopianists, as men who lacked the true demonic will to power and whose life struggle was historically irrelevant. To those to whom world history is the eternal strife between good and evil, between God and Satan, no single fighter on God's side, no true idealist can be written off. If to all appearances his battle ends in defeat it is never a battle fought in vain. To fail is human and there is no assurance of victory to anyone.

But what matters in the end is that the battle for good was fought whatever the dangers, and even in situations in which to worldly wisdom failure is certain, simply because conscience, the consciousness of one's duty, has said: 'None the less — fight'. Where there is no such will to fight, the will that thinks no longer of life and will hear nothing of 'failure', there Satan has definitely won.

We Germans have much to be ashamed of in our latest past, but we should avoid making saints or heroes of the men of the Resistance. They too were men lacking in insight and will and no more than any other free of all selfish ambition. Yet it gives us courage to know that there was such a revolt of conscience among our people, a revolt of true moral anger against the triumph of the power of evil men, and without regard to what is called 'the national interest'.

Is there in the latest history of Europe any second instance of the kind?

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IN HIS introduction (the conclusion of which appears as the Foreword) Prof. Ritter wrote:

“The collection of material cost much time and trouble. Written documents, apart from the Goerdeler papers are still scanty. Most either fell into the hands of the Gestapo or were destroyed from fear of seizure; many were concealed and have not been recovered. Only a relatively small number of the members of the Opposition committed their plans, agreements or experiences to paper. As a result, I had to rely in the main on information got from conversation with or letters from survivors or relatives of those who did not survive, material of very varied value and most of it needing critical caution in its use. From near relatives or friends there was in most cases nothing to be got except general descriptions of the people concerned and their political attitudes. Letters with real political content were rare.

“In gathering such material I found my best ally in my former pupil Dr. Heinrich von zut Muehlen. He had been earlier commissioned and financially supported by a circle of friends in Berlin to gather documents and add to them the results of enquiry from survivors. The currency reform of 1948 put an end to this useful enterprise. I have been able to continue it by other means — a very extensive correspondence, many visits and personal conversations and not least by an exploration of the documents preserved in Nuremberg and Berlin. The most important discoveries were made in the American Document Centre in Berlin-Zehlendorf; I reported on these in *Der Archivist* (4th year, part 2, May 1954). In the inspection of Goerdeler's papers I have to thank Federal Minister Jakob Kaiser and Dr. Stroelin of Stuttgart for their help. The latter obtained for me access to the important documents which had been preserved by one of Goerdeler's Leipzig friends, the publisher Gotthold Mueller.

“Another important discovery of material was made in the spring of 1953 when I was able with the kind help of the State Department in Washington to examine the captured German documents in the War Department's Departmental Record Branch, Alexandria, Va., dealing with the attempt of July 20, 1944. These included the reports which the head of the Gestapo, Kaltenbrunner, sent daily from July 25 to December 15 to Hitler through Bormann of the results of the investigation of the arrested. These reports, according to the “Kiesel report” were not written by Kaltenbrunner but by Obersturmbann-

fuehrer von Kielpinski. As was the case with all documents sent to Hitler they were typed on a large letter machine so that they could be read without glasses. These reports have added to them many annexes which greatly increase their value.'

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The Kaltenbrunner reports which 'read critically give a true picture of the various groups and their agreements'. These are cited in the notes as 'KB' with the date of each (e.g. 'KB 6.xi').

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- ADAP *Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik*; the German edition of the publication by Allied scholars of *Documents of German Foreign Policy* published by H.M. Stationery Office.
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