

STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE WAR

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# “Germany above all”

*The German mental attitude and the war*

by

É. DURKHEIM

Professor at the University of Paris

*Der Staat ist Macht*

TREITSCHKE (*Politik*)

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*Translated by J. S.*

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by

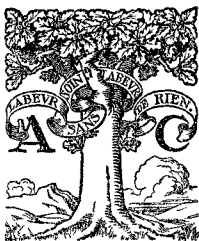
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# “ GERMANY ABOVE ALL ”

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## INTRODUCTION

**The conduct of Germany during the war springs from a certain mental attitude.**--- The principal object of the analytic studies, which form our series is to depict Germany as the war has revealed her to us. We have spoken already of her aggressive temper, her bellicose disposition, her contempt of international laws, of her systematic savagery, and her deliberate cruelties. But these various demonstrations of the German spirit, however distinct each of their characteristics may be, are all subservient to one and the same basic condition, which establishes their unity. They are only varying expressions of one and the same condition of mentality, which, in the present work, we would wish to examine, in order to comprehend, and to determine, its essential elements.

This analysis is so much the more necessary, because only by its aid can an answer be found to the question which a certain number of well meaning people abroad are still asking themselves. The cumulative proofs which show what Germany has become, and which justify in this way the charges brought against her, have brought about, even in quarters which were most favourable to her, a definite shifting of opinion. None the less, an objection is often made against us, under shelter of which certain inveterate sympathies still try to assert themselves. The facts that we have alleged, authoritative as they are, are challenged upon the ground that they are *a priori* improbable. It is beyond

belief, they say, that Germany, which yesterday was a member of the great family of civilized peoples, which even played amongst them a part of the first importance, has been capable of giving so completely the lie to the principles of human civilization. It is not possible that those men, with whom we used to consort, whom we held in high regard, who belonged without any reservation to the same moral community as we ourselves, have been capable of becoming those savage creatures, aggressive and unconscionable, whom we hold up to public indignation. They believe that the fury we feel as belligerents leads us astray, and prevents us from seeing things as they really are.

Now those very acts which are so baffling and which, for that reason, people would desire to deny, are exactly those which are found to have their origin in that totality of ideas and sentiments, which we propose to analyse : they spring from it just as a conclusion springs from its premises. We find there in its entirety a mental and moral system, which, elaborated especially with a view to war, remained in the back-ground during peace. Its existence was known, and the danger involved in it was to some degree suspected ; but only during the war, has it been possible to appreciate the extent of its influence in the light of the extent of its activity.

It is the system summed up in the famous formula, which appears as the heading of these pages.

**This mentality will be studied as presented by Treitschke.** — To describe this system it will not be necessary that we should set out to seek on this side and on that its constituent elements, and then to group and to correlate them one with another in a more or less artificial manner. It is a German writer, Heinrich Treitschke, who has set forth this system on his own responsibility, with a full and clear appreciation of the principles upon which it rests, and of the consequences which it implies. The system is deve-

loped throughout his works as but more particularly in his *Politik* (1).

We cannot then do better than take him for our guide : we will follow the lines of his exposition in making our own. We will do this so closely as even to let him use his own language; we will veil ourselves behind him. In that way we shall not be liable to change the German mode of thought by a biassed and hostile interpretation.

If we select Treitschke as the leading subject of our analysis, it is not by reason of the value which he can claim as a savant or philosopher. Quite the contrary, he interests us, because his mode of thought is less that of an individual than of a school. Treitschke is not an original thinker, who worked out, in the seclusion of his study, an individual system ; but he is a personality pre-eminently representative, and it is as such that he is instructive. Immersed in the life of his period, he expresses the mental attitude of his surroundings. A friend of Bismarck, who in 1874 invited him to the University of Berlin, a great admirer of William II, he was one of the first and most ardent apostles of the imperialist policy. He did not limit himself to translating into resounding phrases the ideas which prevailed around him ; he contributed, more than anyone, to the diffusion of them as much by his speeches as by his pen. That is the task to which as journalist, professor, and deputy in the Reichstag, he devoted himself. His eloquence, rugged and picturesque, careless and arresting in style, had a fascinating influence, especially upon the young students who crowded eagerly round his professorial chair. He has been one of the educators of modern Germany, and his authority has only grown the greater since his death (2).

(1) This book contains a course of lectures, which Treitschke gave every year at Berlin, during the winter session. Our quotations are taken from the second edition (Leipzig, 1899).

(2) Scarcely was he dead when "extravagant eulogies were raised on all sides. A Committee, of which Prince Bismarck was the president, was formed immediately to erect a monument to him. If we

But what best shows the impersonal character of his work, is that we shall find there, set forth with absolute and frank precision, all the principles which German diplomacy, and the German military staff, have put, and are daily putting, into practice. He has predicted, nay more has enjoined as a duty upon Germany, all that she has been doing for the last ten months, and he tells us what in his opinion are the reasons which impose that duty. All the theories, by which the German "intellectuals" have tried to justify the acts of their government, and the conduct of their armies, are found ready to hand in his teaching; but they are there co-ordinated, and made subordinate to a central idea, which reveals the unity underlying them. Bernhardt, of whom one hears so much, is only his disciple; he is even a disciple, who has limited himself to applying to the political questions of the day, the axioms of his master, without adding anything of substance to them(1); he has carried them to extreme limits in the attempt to popularise them.

At the same time, because the work of Treitschke has been published for twenty years, his teaching, as there presented to us, is free from certain accretions which obscure it to-day, and cloud the essential lines of his argument. Upon these grounds we explain and justify our choice.

believe those persons, the Prussian historian outshone all the historians of his country." (A. Guillard, *L'Allemagne nouvelle et ses historiens*, p. 250).

(1) We shall refer to his views, when they seem usefully to supplement those of Treitschke.



## I

### THE STATE ABOVE INTERNATIONAL LAW,

**International treaties do not bind the State. Apology for war.** — The system rests entirely on a certain way of conceiving of the State, its nature and its function. It may be objected perhaps that such an idea is too abstract to have made any deep impression upon men's minds. But it will be seen that it is only apparently abstract, and in reality connotes a feeling altogether active and real.

We expect generally to see in the nature of its sovereignty the characteristic quality of the State. The State is sovereign in the sense that it is the source of all the juridical authorities, to which the citizens are subject, and that for itself it recognises no authority of the same kind which is superior to it, or upon which it depends. All law proceeds from it, while no authority exists which is competent to impose law upon it. But the sovereignty which, in the ordinary way, we attribute to the State, is always merely relative. We well know that in fact the State depends upon a multitude of moral forces which, though they may not have a form and organisation absolutely juridical, are none the less real and effective.

It depends upon treaties that it has signed, upon engagements that it has voluntarily made, upon moral principles which its duty is to see respected, principles which it must therefore itself respect. It depends upon the goodwill of its subjects, and the goodwill of foreign nationalities, which it is obliged to take into consideration.

Exaggerate, on the contrary, that independence, release it from all limitation and reserve, extend it to absolutism, and then you will have the idea which Treitschke makes of the

State(1). For him the State is *αυτάρκης*, in the sense which the Greek philosophers gave to that word; it must be completely self-sufficient; it has, and ought to have, need only of itself, to exist and to maintain itself; it is an absolutism. Made only to command, its will must never obey other than itself. "Above me", said Gustavus Adolphus, "I recognise no one but God, and the sword of the conqueror". That proud formula, says Treitschke, applies in exactly the same way to the State(2). Moreover the supremacy of God, is it not here reserved scarcely more than as a matter of form? To sum up, "it is of the very essence of the State that it cannot recognise any force above itself(3)".

All superiority is intolerable to it, were it only a superiority in appearance. It cannot even allow a contrary will to express itself in face of its own; for to attempt to exercise upon it any degree of pressure is to deny its sovereignty. It cannot even wear the appearance of yielding to any kind of constraint from the outside, without weakening and lowering itself. A concrete example, showing the application of these axioms, will make one better understand their meaning and bearing. It will be remembered how, at the time of the Moroccan affair, the Emperor William II sent one of his gunboats to Agadir; it was a menacing way of reminding France that Germany did not propose to stand aside from the Moroccan question. If at that moment France, in reply to that threat, had sent into the same port, alongside the *Panther*, one of its war vessels, that simple assertion of its right would have been considered by Germany as a defiance, and war probably would have broken out. The reason is that the State is a creature peculiarly susceptible, even morbidly prone to take offence; it cannot be too jealous of its prestige. However sacred in our eyes human personality may be, we do not admit that a man may avenge by

(1) *Politik*, vol. I, p. 41. (2) *Politik*, vol. I, p. 37.

(3) "Das Wesen des Staates besteht darin dass er keine höhere Gewalt über sich dulden kann" (*ibid.*).

bloodshed a simple default in the ordinary rules of etiquette. A State, on the contrary, must considerer as a grave insult the least slight to its *amour propre*. "It is to misunderstand", said Treitschke, "the morallaws of political conduct to reproach a State with a too lively sense of honour. A State must have a sentiment of honour developed to a very high degree, if it does not wish to be faithless to its own nature. The State is not a violet, which blooms in the shade; its power ought to be proudly displayed in the full glare of light, and the State must not allow it to be questioned, not even in a symbolical manner. Should its flag be insulted, the duty of the State is to demand satisfaction, and, if it fails to obtain it, *to declare war, however petty the cause may appear to be; for it must insist absolutely on preserving for itself the rank that it occupies in the community of nations*(1)".

The only possible limitations to the sovereignty of the State are those which it accepts itself, when it undertakes engagements towards other States. Then at least one might suppose that it is bound by the engagements which it has undertaken. Starting from that moment, it would seem, it has to reckon with another entity than itself; is it not subject to the terms of the treaty agreed upon? But in fact that subjection is only apparent; the bonds which it has thus fashioned are the work of its own will; they remain for that reason subordinate to its own will; they have no binding force, except in so far as they continue to be in harmony with that will. The contracts, in which these obligations have their origin, contemplated a definite state of facts; it is because of that state of facts that the State accepted those obligations; let the situation be changed, and the State is released. And since it is the State which decides in sovereign fashion, and without control, whether the situation has remained the same or not, the validity of the contracts, to which it has subscribed, depends wholly upon the judg-

(1) "Mag der Anlass noch so kleinlich erscheinen". II, p. 550.

ment it forms of the circumstances and its own interests at any particular moment. It can as a matter of right denounce them, cancel them, that is to say, violate them, when and how it pleases.

" All international contracts are entered into subject to the clause, *rebus sic stantibus*, (so long as the circumstances shall remain the same). *A State can in no way bind for the future its own will towards another State.* The State has no judge superior to itself, and consequently will conclude all its contracts with that tacit reservation. This is proved by the fact that, so long as international law shall endure, from the moment that a war has broken out, contracts between the belligerent States cease to exist; but every State, being sovereign, has an incontestable right to declare war when it pleases. Consequently every State is in a position to set aside contracts which it has entered into.... Thus it is clear that international contracts, which limit the freewill of a State, do not constitute absolute limitations(1).... "

Whilst in contracts between private persons there is at the base a moral power which controls the wills of the contracting parties, international contracts cannot be subject to this superior power, for there is nothing above the will of a State. This follows not only when the contract has been imposed by force, as the sequel of a war, but not less when it has been accepted by a free choice. In all cases, whatsoever they may be, " every State reserves to itself the right to determine the extent of its contractual obligations(2) ". This principle may shock the jurists, judges and advocates; but " History does not admit of being considered from the point of view adopted by judges in civil suits(3) ". That is a " philistine " point of view; neither the statesman nor the historian could accept it(4).

Much more therefore a State cannot accept the jurisdiction of any international tribunal, howsoever it may be consti-

(1) I, p. 37-38.

(2) I p. 102.

(3) II, p. 550.

(4) I, p. 102-103.

tuted. To submit itself to the verdict of a judge would be to place itself in a condition of dependence, irreconcilable with the notion of sovereignty. Besides, in vital questions, such as are those in which States find themselves in conflict, there is no neutral authority which could judge with impartiality. "If we were to commit the folly of treating the question of Alsace as an open question, and if we were to submit it to an arbitrator, who would seriously believe that such an arbitrator could be impartial" (1).

In the same way too, Bernhardt adds (2), what principle of right will the judge invoke in pronouncing his decision? Will he invoke that sense of justice that each of us finds in his own conscience? But we know how vague, uncertain, and elusive that sense is; it varies from man to man, from people to people. Are we to rely on conventional international law? But we have just seen that that law itself rests on agreements peculiarly precarious, which each State can legitimately denounce at its pleasure. It is the expression of the respective position of States; and their position is perpetually changing. The law, then, opens the door to prejudices, individual and national. In a word an international tribunal presupposes an international law, firmly established, composed of rules impersonal and imperative, imposed on all alike and not contested by any law abiding conscience; but an international law of that kind does not exist.

A State owes it to itself to solve by its own powers questions wherein it judges that its essential interests are involved. War then is the only form of procedure which it can recognise, and "the proofs which are unrolled in those terrible cases between nations have a binding force such as cannot be attained by any proofs' in civil proceedings (3)".

(1) I, p. 38.

(2) *Unsere Zukunft* (our Future), ch. v. An English translation of this book is published by Messrs. Wm. Dawson and Sons Ltd (London) under the title: "Britain as Germany's Vassal."

(3) I, p. 73.

That is why so long as there shall be competition, rivalry, and antagonism amongst States, war is inevitable. Now competition is the law of States still more than of individuals; for between nations it is mitigated neither by mutual sympathy, nor by the influence of a culture common to both, nor by attachment to the same ideal. Without war, the State is not even conceivable. Again the right of making war at its own will constitutes the essential quality of sovereignty. It is by this right that it is distinguished from all other human associations. When the State is no longer in a position to draw the sword at its will, it no longer deserves the name of State. "One may still, by way of politeness or of courtly flattery, call such a State a Kingdom, but science, whose first duty is to speak the truth, must declare without circumlocution that such a country is no longer a State.... In this fact alone appears the difference between the crown of Prussia and the other German States, that the King of Prussia is himself the War-Lord, and that thus Prussia has not lost her sovereignty as have the other States (1)".

War is not only inevitable, it is moral and sacred. It is sacred first because it represents a condition necessary to the existence of States, and without the State humanity cannot live. "Apart from the State, humanity cannot breathe" (2). But it is sacred also, because it is the source of the highest moral virtues. It is war which compels men to master their natural egoism; it is war which raises them to the majesty of the supreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of self. By it, individual wills, instead of dissipating themselves in the pursuit of sordid ends, are concentrated on great causes, and "the petty personality of the individual is effaced and disappears before the vast perspective envisaged by the aspirations of the State". By war, "man tastes the joy of sharing with all his compatriots, learned or simple, in one and the same feeling, and whosoever has tasted that happi-

(1) I, p. 39-40

(2) I, p. 115.

ness never forgets all the sweetness and comfort that it yields ". In a word, war connotes " a political idealism ", which leads a man forward to surpass himself. Peace, on the contrary, is " the reign of materialism "; it is the triumph of personal interest over the spirit of devotion and sacrifice, of the mediocre and sordid over the noble life. It is the " indolent " (1) renunciation, of great aims and great ambitions. The ideal of perpetual peace is not only incapable of realization : it is a moral scandal (2), a veritable curse (3). " In effect is not the wish to exclude heroism from human life the subversion of morality? " It is a misconception to invoke against war the principles of Christianity; the Bible says expressly that authority has the duty to draw the sword. Again " it is always periods of weariness, without vigour and without enthusiasm, which have comforted themselves with the dream of eternal peace ". This was the case after the Treaty of Utrecht, and also after the Congress of Vienna. According to Treitschke, at the moment when he was writing, Germany was passing through a period of the same kind. But, he adds, one can be assured that it will not last. " The living God will see to it that war will always recur, as a drastic medicine for the human race (4) ".

**The state is power. Suppression of small States. —**  
To sum up, the State is a personality, imperious and ambitious, impatient of all subjection, even of the appearance of subjection : it is only really itself in proportion to the measure in which it belongs completely to itself. But to be able to play that part, to check the irresponsibilities of ambition, to impose its own law without submitting to any law of another, it is necessary that it should have powerful

(1) " Der faule Friedenszustand " (I, p. 59).

(2) " Dass der Gedanke des ewigen Friedens... ein unsittliches Ideal ist, haben wir schon erkannt " (II, p. 553).

(3) " Der Unsegen des Friedens " (I, p. 59).

(4) I, p. 76. — All the passages quoted, without being accompanied by a special reference are taken from pages 72-76 of Volume I.

means of action. A weak State naturally falls into dependence on another, and, in proportion as its sovereignty ceases to be complete, it ceases itself to be a State. Whence it follows that the element, which essentially constitutes a State, is Power. *Der Staat ist Macht* — this axiom, which constantly falls from the pen of Treitschke, dominates all his teaching.

What constitutes first and above all this power, is the physical strength of the nation, it is the army. Thus the army, in the totality of social institutions, is found to occupy a place altogether apart. It is not only a public service of the first importance, it is the corner stone of the community; it is the "incarnation of the State" (1).

When, in company with Treitschke and modern Germany, men make of war a thing most sacred, the army as the agent of war cannot but share in that sanctity. Of course an army, even numerous and strongly organised, does not suffice to assure the power of the State. It is further necessary that the statecraft, "of which war is only the forcible expression", should be managed by intellects clear and well balanced, by energetic will power, conscious of the end at which they must aim, and persistent in their efforts. It is necessary also that the soldiers should have moral enthusiasm, and those military virtues without which numbers and the most skilful strategy are of no avail. The power of the State then presupposes serious moral qualities. But those qualities are not sought after for their own sakes; they are only means to be employed to give to the army its maximum of efficiency; for it is in the army that the State realises its essential nature; this is the very root principle of militarism (2).

There have been, it is true, some States which by preference have sought their greatness and their glory in the arts, in literature, or in science, but in so doing they were false

(1) II, p. 361. (2) II, p. 354-363.



to the fundamental laws of their nature, and for that default they have paid dearly. "In this respect, the world's history offers to the thoughtful researcher the spectacle of an implacable justice. The dreamer may deplore that Athens, with her refined culture, should have succumbed to Sparta, Greece to Rome; that similarly Florence, in spite of her lofty moral sense, should not have been able to maintain the struggle against Venice. The serious thinker recognises that it was bound to be so. Behind it all, stands an inherent necessity. The State is not an Academy of Arts. When it sacrifices its power to the idealistic aspirations of humanity, it contradicts its own underlying principle and perishes" (1). A State is not made for thinking, for finding out new ideas, but for action. "Most certainly the Emperor William I and Bismarck were the true founders of the German Empire, not Fichte, Paul Pfizer or any other pioneers. The great political thinkers have their own glory, but not they are the true heroes of history; these are the men of action". The founders of States are not men of genius, in the intellectual sense of the word. The Emperor William had nothing of the genius in him, but he was a man of calm and firm will. It was the force of character that was his strength (2).

But if the State is defined as Power, States cannot claim to be so called, except in proportion as they are really powerful. The small countries, that is those which cannot defend and maintain themselves by their own strength alone, are not true States, since they exist only by the goodwill of the great Powers. They have, and can have only a nominal sovereignty. That is the case notably with the neutral States, such as Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. Their independence, in reality, is guaranteed only by international conventions, the fragile character of which we well know. Given that one of the contracting parties comes to the conclusion that those conventions are no longer in accord

(1) I, p. 34.      (2) I, p. 34.

with the respective positions of the Powers, and he has the right to release himself. Treitschke even shows us, by a casual omission, that in his eyes the autonomy of Belgium, and of Holland no longer fits in with the present condition of Europe; for he says of Switzerland, but of Switzerland alone: "So long as there shall come about no material change in the existing relations between the States themselves, Switzerland can count upon a long existence" (1). The silence which he observes about the two other neutral States is significant. There are furthermore, other passages in which he expressly says about Holland that, if the natural law be followed, she must re-enter the "old German Fatherland", and that this return is "highly desirable" (2). And as for Switzerland herself, she is warned that the right of existence, which is conceded to her, is wholly conditional, and consequently provisional; it only holds good *rebus sic stantibus*; the menace is only deferred.

In a general way he speaks only with contempt of the small State, of that which he calls, by an untranslatable word, the *Kleinstaaterei*. "The very existence of the small State", he says, "contains something which is undeniably ridiculous. In itself, weakness is in no way ridiculous; but the weakness which puts on the mask of strength, is so" (3). The idea of a State evokes that of Power; a weak State then brings about a contradiction in terms. Dignity and a boundless and haughty self-confidence, in these qualities we see *par excellence* the virtues of the State. Now "it is only in great States that it is possible to develop a true national pride, the mark of the moral value of a people" (4). The wide ranges of vision which are thus opened up to individuals develop in them a "world sense" (*Weltsinn*). No longer can they let themselves be shut in within limits

(1) I, p. 42.

(2) "Dass aber wenigstens Holland noch einmal zum alten Vaterland zurückkehrt ist... dringend zu wünschen" (I, p. 128)

(3) I, p. 43. (4) I, p. 44-45.

which are too closely confined; they have need of space. This sense is particularly active as regards the domination of the sea. "The free sea sets free the mind". The petty State, on the other hand, dwarfs everything to its own proportions. It develops the mentality of the beggar (*eine bettelhafte Gesinnung*); its people get into the way of estimating the State only according to the taxes that it imposes. "From that results a materialism, which has the most deplorable influence upon the sentiments of the citizens" (1).

From this representation of the case Treitschke concludes that the existence of the small States to-day is no more than a mere survival, without *raison d'être*. According to him, it is in the nature of things that they should disappear; they are destined by fate to be absorbed by the great States. And as the dignity of a great State is fully recognised as belonging only to five Powers, (Italy is presented to us as only on the eve of being admitted into the aristocracy of the peoples of Europe) (2) we divine what the map of Europe would become, if the conceptions of Treitschke, which are those of contemporary Germany, were ever realised.

(1) I, p. 45. Treitschke means to say that, in the small countries, people consider as the best government that which costs the least, and, for that reason, imposes the lowest taxes. That, he adds, is to lose the point of view "that the State, like the egg-shell, does not protect except at some cost of compression".

(2) "Italien ist nahe daran in ihn hineinzukommen": *Italy is ready to enter it* (i. e. the circle of the great States) (I, p. 42).

## II

### THE STATE ABOVE MORALITY

But there is something which is generally accepted as superior to the State; this is morality. Morality is no doubt merely a matter of ideas; but these ideas are forces which move and dominate men. Is the State, too, subject to their action, or may it legitimately claim immunity therefrom? If it is under their authority, its sovereignty has limits which it is not within its competence to transgress at will. If morality has no power over it, it must be admitted that it is not human.

Treitschke approaches and treats this question with a curious mixture of embarrassment and audacity, but in the end audacity gains the day.

**For the State Morality is a means.** — A thinker of the sixteenth century did not hesitate to maintain that the State is not under the jurisdiction of the moral conscience, and should recognise no law but its own interest. This was Machiavelli. His work, the expression of a thoroughly corrupt age and society, had been universally reprobated for centuries. His name had become a synonym for political dishonesty. Frederick II himself, who cannot be described as over-scrupulous, wrote an *Anti-Machiavelli* in his youth. This reprobation seems to Treitschke undeserved, and he openly undertakes to rehabilitate Machiavelli.†

It was natural enough that Machiavelli should not have enjoyed the odour of sanctity among the dreamers of the eighteenth century, those “professional humanitarians”, whose highest pleasure was “to smoke the pipe of peace(1)”;

(1) I, p. 93.

and this explains, to some extent, the injustice of Frederick the Great to the famous Florentine. But, as a fact, he was one of the precursors of modern times. "It was he who formulated the idea that, when the salvation of the State is concerned, no question ought to arise concerning the purity of the means employed. Save the State first, and afterwards everyone will approve the means used" (1). It was he who delivered the State from the Church and who was the first to proclaim this fundamental principle of all political life : *Der Staat ist Macht*, the State is Power (2).

Treitschke, however, though he makes profession of Machiavellism, seeks to render it more acceptable to the contemporary moral conscience by certain apparent concessions.

He does not allow that, in a general way, the State may disregard morality altogether. "It is evident" he says, "that the State, whose function it is to further the education of humanity, is necessarily subject to the moral law". Reading these lines, we might take them to imply the abandonment of the principle of political immorality. But the proposition has really a very different bearing, as we find when we continue.

"To maintain absolutely that gratitude and generosity are not political virtues is to speak unadvisedly.... Take the treaty of peace of 1866 (with Austria). It is the most generous treaty ever concluded by a State after a signal victory. We did not take a single village from Austria, though our compatriots in Silesia would have liked at least to have had Cracow, an important junction of roads. ... But to make a future alliance between the two States possible, it was necessary not to add fresh mortifications to that of defeats suffered on the field of battle. It was a stroke of diplomacy as well as an act of generosity (3)".

If then the State is to respect morality, it is not because

(1) I, p. 89.      (2) I, p. 90.      (3) I, p. 95-96.

it considers morality respectable in and for itself, but because there are advantages to be gained from respecting it. If political immorality is generally reprehensible, it is not because it is immoral, but because it is "impolitic" (1). If generosity and gratitude are virtues which the State should cultivate upon occasion, "it must be only when they are not contrary to the essential ends of Policy". They may indeed be faults. "In 1849, the thrones of different small German princes were shaking. Frederick William IV marched his troops into Saxony and Bavaria (2) and re-established order, which was commendable. But hereupon he committed a mortal sin. Were the Prussians there merely to shed their blood for the kings of Saxony and Bavaria? Prussia should have derived some durable benefit from this campaign. She held the small princes in the hollow of her hand; all she had to do was to leave her troops in the countries they had occupied, until these princes had submitted to the new German Empire. Instead of this, the King simply withdrew his troops, and then the minor sovereigns, feeling themselves safe, laughed at him.... The blood of the Prussian people had been shed in vain (3)".

The remarkable frankness of great statesmen is also generally a matter of calculation. "When Frederick the Great entered upon a war, he always stated the object he had in view with the utmost precision. Although he was not in the least ashamed to resort to cunning upon occasion, veracity was as a rule one of the dominant traits of his character. And although Bismarck displayed a subtle craftiness in the details of affairs, his diplomacy as a whole was marked by a solid frankness (*massive Offenheit*) which was a most

(1) I, p. 103.

(2) Insurrections had broken out in these states. It was after the dissolution of the Diet of Frankfort, which had offered the Imperial crown to Frederick William IV. He refused it, desiring to receive it, not from a parliament, but from the German Princes, who were not inclined to offer it to him.

(3) I, p. 101.

effective weapon in his hands. For inferior diplomatists always believed the opposite of what he said when he candidly told them what he wanted" (1).

**The sole duty of the State is to be strong.** — But though this happy harmony of moral exigency and State interests frequently occurs, it is not invariable. They may conflict. What is to be done then?

The antinomy would be insoluble, replies Treitschke, if Christian morality were a kind of fixed code, made up of inflexible precepts, uniformly incumbent on all. But if we are to believe him, Christianity has no such code; unlike the Oriental creeds, it does not allow that human actions can be classified once for all as good or bad, and its superiority and its true originality lie in its having proclaimed that each individual must make his morality to his own measure. "Everyone must feel that for the Christian the rule is to develop his personality, thoroughly to know himself, and to act upon that knowledge. True Christian morality has no uniform standard applicable to everyone; it teaches the principle *si duo faciunt idem, non est idem* (2). Suppose that the grace of God has made you an artist. When once you are assured of this, it is your duty to develop the qualities with which you are gifted in this respect, and your other duties become secondary. Doubtless it is not possible in such cases to avoid moral conflicts and tragic shortcoming (*tragische Schuld*), the cause of which is human weakness.... But in the end all that matters is to know, if each individual has recognised his true nature, and brought it to the highest degree of perfection attainable" (3).

This is certainly a somewhat surprising interpretation of Christian morality! To say that for Christianity there are

(1) I, p. 96.

(2) "The same act done by two different persons is not the same in both cases."

(3) I, p. 99-100.

no objectively good or evil actions is to revert to the theory so often made a reproach to the Jesuits — that all the moral value of an act depends on the intention of the agent. To say that the prime virtue of the Christian is to develop his personality is a negation of the principle that the Christian's supreme duty is to put self aside, to forget self, and to sacrifice oneself for some higher end. It is evident that this very summary exegesis is only introduced to make a show of argument. The prime object was to make morality pliable, and thus enable the State to adopt it to its own ends. And indeed, if this principle be accepted, all the rest follows.

Between the individual and the State there is no common measure; there is a difference of nature between these two entities. The morality of the one cannot therefore be the morality of the other. "We must be careful to distinguish between private and public morality. The hierarchy of duties cannot be the same for the State and for individuals. There is a whole series of duties which are incumbent upon the individual, but of which the State takes no cognizance". It is essentially Power; its duty therefore is to develop its quality of Power. "To assert itself is its supreme duty in all circumstances; this is its absolute good. For the same reason, it should be expressly said that of political sins the worst, the most despicable of all, is weakness(1). In private life there are sentimental weaknesses which are excusable. But in connection with the State, there is no excuse in such cases; the State is Power, and when it is false to its essential quality, it cannot be blamed too severely"(2). "The individual", says Treitschke elsewhere, "ought to sacrifice himself to a higher community of which he is a member.. *The State however is itself the highest external*

(1) The facility with which Treitschke applies religious terms to political errors is noteworthy; he calls them sins, mortal sins, sins against the Holy Ghost. This is the more remarkable in that Treitschke inclined to freethought, and was indeed for a considerable time a *Freisinnige*.

(2) I, p. 101.



*human community.... Consequently, the Christian duty of self-sacrifice for some higher end does not exist for the State; for in the whole course of the world's history we can find nothing superior to the State" (1).*

Accordingly, not a word of humanity, of the duties the State has towards it! It is of no account to the State; for the State is its own end, and outside it there is nothing to which it owes allegiance. Here we have a logical demonstration of the famous formula the German learns to repeat from his earliest childhood : *Deutschland über alles*; for the German there is nothing above the German State. The State has but one duty : to get as large a place in the sun as possible, trampling its rivals under foot in the process. The radical exclusion of all other ideals will rightly be regarded as monstrous. And indeed none will deny that the morality of the State is not always a simple matter; that the State often finds itself confronted by contradictory duties, between which it is impossible to choose without painful conflicts. But that humanity should be simply obliterated from the moral values it has to take into account, that all the efforts made for twenty centuries by Christian societies to mingle a little idealism with realities should be treated as non-existent, constitutes a moral as well as a historical scandal. It is a return to pagan morality. This indeed is to understate the case, for the thinkers of Greece had risen far above this conception; it is a return to the ancient Roman morality, to the tribal morality according to which humanity was confined to the tribe or the city (2).

In this morality we cannot recognise that which we practise. For morality to us, that is to say to all civilised nations, to all those who have been formed in the school of Christianity, has for its primary object the realisation of humanity, its liberation from the servitudes that belittle it, its growth

(1) I, p. 400.

(2) The Emperor William II has been credited with this dictum : " For me humanity ends at the Vosges. "

in loving-kindness and fraternity. To say that the State should be deaf to the great human interests is therefore to put it outside and above morality. And indeed Treitschke himself recognises that politics, as he understands them, can only become moral if morality changes its nature. "Morality" he says, "must become more political, if politics are to become more moral" (1).

This is why we could say (2) that when he seemed to allow God a certain superiority over the State, Treitschke was but making a formal reservation. For the only God the great religions of to-day recognise (3) is not the god of such and such a city, or such and such a State, but the God of the human race, God the Father, lawgiver, and guardian of a morality which has all humanity as its object. Now the very idea of this God is alien to the mentality which we are studying.

**The end justifies the means.** — But let us admit that the aggrandisement of its power is the sole end the State should pursue. On what principle should it choose the means necessary to attain this end? Are all those which tend to achieve its object lawful, or does ordinary morality here resume its sway?

To this question Treitschke replies by the famous aphorism: *the end justifies the means*. He is content to modify it slightly: "No doubt" he says "this wellknown maxim of the Jesuits is brutal and sweeping in its abruptness, but no one can deny that it contains a certain amount of truth. There are unfortunately innumerable cases in the life of the State, as in that of the individual, where the use of perfectly pure methods is impossible. Assuredly, when, to attain a moral end, means equally moral may be employed, they are

(1) I, p. 105. (2) See *supra*, p. 8.

(3) There are in fact but few societies where the gods have such a strictly national character. There are hardly any great divinities who are not to some extent international.

to be preferred, even if they are slower and less convenient for achieving the aim" (1). But in the opposite case, recourse must be had to others; it is a question of kinds, and even of circumstances.

Thus straightforwardness is often in politics a force and a clever move. But the remark remains true only on condition that it is not turned into an absolute rule. "In dealing with people who are still in an inferior stage of civilisation, it is evident that policy must adapt the means it employs to their feelings and mentality. It would be folly for an historian to judge European policy in Africa or the East by the principles applied in Europe. In those countries, *he who knows not how to terrorise is lost*". Treitschke goes on to quote the example of the English, who, over half a century ago, bound the rebel Sepoys to the mouths of the guns and blew their bodies into fragments that were scattered to all the winds of heaven. These terrible measures of repression which the manners of the time tolerated, but which those of to-day condemn, and which would certainly be unanimously condemned by contemporary England, are pronounced natural and legitimate by Treitschke. "If we admit—as the English would naturally maintain — that their domination of India was moral and necessary", he says, "we cannot condemn the methods employed" (2). This is almost the only instance in which Treitschke expressed an opinion favourable to the English.

In Europe also it may happen that the statesman is obliged to subordinate morality to the necessities of time and circumstance. Very often there are nations officially at peace with each other who are as a matter of fact in a state of "veiled warfare". By this we are to understand that, under an apparent peace, latent war is growling and muttering; and this situation may last for a long time, "even for decades". "It is perfectly evident that many diplomatic stra

(1) p. 105-106. (2) I, p. 106.

tagements are justified by this state of latent war. Let us, for instance, recall the negotiations between Bismarck and Benedetti. When Bismarck was hoping that it might yet be possible to avoid a great war, Benedetti arrived with his list of impudent demands. Was it not perfectly moral of Bismarck to amuse him with half promises, making him believe that Germany might grant all he asked?(1). The same may be said of the methods of corruption used in similar circumstances against another State. It is absurd to declaim against these practices in the name of morality, and to ask the State to act only catechism in hand " (2).

To sum up, politics is a strenuous business in which it is not always possible to act " with perfectly clean hands(3) ". There are certain scruples, a certain sensitiveness of the moral conscience which it must inevitably disregard. " The statesman has no right to warm his hands comfortably at the smoking ruins of his country, content that he is able to say : ' I have never lied '. This is the virtue of a monk " (4). Morality is only for small people occupied with small things. But those who are ambitious of doing great things are obliged to over-step the narrow limits it lays down; far reaching action cannot be cast in the conventional mould that suits the world in general. And the State is bound by its very nature to act on a large scale.

(1) The reference is to the negotiations which took place after Sadowa. Bismarck led Benedetti to believe that he would not oppose the annexation of Belgium by France, and caused a written proposal to this effect to be handed to him. When once he had secured the document, he said no more about the project, but held the paper in reserve in order to compromise the French government. This plan he carried out in 1870.

(2) I, p. 107.

(3) " Mit ganz reinen Händen ".

(4) I, p. 110.

### III

#### THE STATE ABOVE CIVIL SOCIETY

Hitherto we have considered the State mainly in its relation to foreign states. But in addition to its international functions, the State has a part to play in the internal life of society. It will be well to see how, according to Treitschke, this part should be interpreted; incidentally, an essential trait of German psychology will be revealed.

**The antagonism between the State and civil society.**

— In our ordinary terminology, the question may be put as follows : what are the relations of the State to the general body of its citizens, or, as we still say, to the people?

In a democratic society, the People and the State are merely two aspects of a single reality. The State is the people awakened to a consciousness of itself, of its needs and its aspirations—a more complete and definite consciousness. To Germany, however, there is between these two necessary elements of all national life a radical distinction, and even a sort of contradiction.

To designate what we call the People as distinguished from the State, Treitschke and a number of other German theorists prefer the term Civil Society (*die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*). Civil Society includes everything in the nation which is not immediately connected with the State, the family, trade and industry, religion (when this is not a department of the State), science, art. All these forms of activity have this characteristic in common, that we embrace them voluntarily and spontaneously. They have their origin in the natural inclinations of man. Of our own free will we found a family, love our children, work to satisfy their mate-

rial wants and our own, seek after truth, and enjoy aesthetic pleasures. Here we have a whole life which develops without the intervention of the State.

But the very fact that all these activities are determined by private motives prevents them from being directed towards one and the same end. Each family, each industry, each religious confession, each scientific, philosophic or artistic school, each man of business, scientist, philosopher or artist has his individual interests and his individual method of seeking to promote them. Civil Society is therefore a mosaic of individuals and of separate groups pursuing divergent aims, and the whole formed by their agglomeration consequently lacks unity. The multiplicity of relations that connect individual with individual, or group with group do not constitute a naturally organised system. The resulting aggregate is not a personality; it is but an incoherent mass of dissimilar elements. "Where is the common organ of Civil Society? There is none. It is obvious to everyone that Civil Society is not a precise and tangible thing like the State. A State has unity; we know it as such; it is not a mystic personality. Civil Society has no unity of will" (1).

Many Schools of German scientists (Niebuhr, Savigny, Latzarus and Steinthal) have, it is true, attributed to the nation, as distinguished from the State, a kind of soul (*die Volksseele*) and consequently, a personality. A people, from the mere fact that it is a people, will have an intellectual and moral temperament, a character which will assert itself in every detail of its thoughts and acts, but in the formation of which the State will bear no part. This popular soul will find expression in literary monuments, epics, myths, legends, etc., which, without being referable to any particular author will have a kind of internal unity like the works of individuals. It is from the same source that we derive those bodies of juridical customs, the first forms of law, which the

(1) I, p. 54.

State may codify later on, but does not create. It was indeed one of the services rendered to the world by German science of the past to have called attention to these impersonal, anonymous and obscure forces which are not the least important factors in history. But to Treitschke, all these conceptions are but abstract constructions, "mere fashions of a day, destined to pass away like the snows of winter. How can one say that at any given moment the soul of the people decided something?" (1).

Not only has civil society no natural unity, but it is big with internal conflict; for all these individuals and groups are pursuing opposing interests, which necessarily come into collision. Each one tends to expand and develop at the expense of the others. Competition is not only the law of commercial life, but also of religious life, of scientific life, or artistic life etc. Each industrial or commercial enterprise struggles against rival enterprises; each religious confession, each school of art or philosophy, strives to get the better of other schools or confessions. The optimistic thesis, according to which individual interests will harmonise automatically, by means of a kind of spontaneous agreement, due to a clear perception of their solidarity, is a theoretical proposition unsupported by facts. Between public interest and private interest, there is a gulf fixed; the first is quite a different thing from the second, duly gauged and understood. Where private interests alone govern, there can be nothing but disorderly antagonisms. "Civil Society is the theatre of a confused medley of all imaginable interests in conflict one with another. Were they left to themselves, the result would be a war of all against all, *bellum omnium contra omnes* (2).

Very different are the requirements of the State. What it demands above all is unity, order, organisation. The State is a person conscious of itself; it says *I, I will*. And this *I*

(1) 1, p. 65. (2) I. p. 54.

does not vary from moment to moment; it develops, identical with itself in its essential traits, through successive generations. The State is stability as opposed to the shifting kaleidoscope of civil society. Its activity is of a similar character. It is made up of coherent and persevering efforts directed to enduring, lofty and distant ends, and here it is in strong contrast with the dissipation of private energies, all occupied in the pursuit of immediate, variable, and often opposed interests. Society therefore consists of two kinds of forces, set in a different direction. It reveals a veritable antinomy.

**The duty of citizens is to obey.** — In reality there is no such antinomy in practice. If it be true that there is a gulf between public and private interests, it is false that individuals care only for their personal interests. By uniting, by linking themselves one with another, they become conscious of the groups they form, from the simplest to the most elevated, and thus those social sentiments which the State expresses, defines, and regulates, but which it assumes to exist, come spontaneously into being. The action of the State, far from meeting with nothing but opposition in individual consciousness, finds support here. But to Treitschke who on this point merely adopts an old German tradition (1), between the individual and the State there is a veritable antithesis; the State alone has a sense of the common good. Under these conditions, the only way to make these two forces, so manifestly antagonistic, unite and form a whole, is to place one in subjection to the other. Naturally, the State is the agent to whom Treitschke assigns the predominant part, for, according to him, the State is the vital principle of society.

It is true that in these days, a different conception tends more and more to gain ground. Many historians hold that

(1) This is not the only German conception of the subject, but it is the classical one.



the State is rather a result than a cause; that the events in which it plays the principal part, wars, diplomatic negotiations, treaties of all sorts, are the most superficial elements in social life; that the real factors of historic development are ideas and beliefs, commercial and technical life, art, etc. They say that the place of nations in the world depends, above all, on their degree of civilisation. But, according to Treitschke, this manner of interpreting history would be contrary to all that history itself teaches us; the greatness of nations in the past was the outcome of their political activity, of the manner in which the State performed its functions. "There is hardly a people in history whose acts have had a more lasting influence than those of the Romans, yet the Romans were never supreme either in art or literature, nor were they distinguished as inventors. Horace and Virgil merely wrote Greek poetry in the Latin language.... *And yet by their deeds the Romans were one of the most productive nations in the history of the world*" (1). On the other hand, when a nation makes commercial or artistic life its main preoccupation, "it falls under the domination of the inferior instincts of our nature". This was the case with Holland from the moment when she ceased to struggle against the world power of Spain (2). In like manner, when literary and artistic interests became preponderant in Germany, Germany "fell from heaven to earth" (3). "Statesmen and military commanders are the heroes of history. Scholars and artists too belong to history, but historic life cannot certainly be reduced to the proportions of their purely ideal productions. The farther one recedes from the State, the further one recedes also from the life of history" (4).

It is the State then that has the right to dictate its laws, and as it cannot dispense with unity, civil society must bow to its exigencies. This society is, in itself, antagonistic to

(1) I, p. 65.      2 I, p. 59.      (3) I, p. 60.      (4) I, p. 64.

order; but the State will impose order upon it. " Law, peace, and order cannot be evolved from the multiplicity of social interests that stand in an eternal conflict with one another, but solely from the power which dominates this society and which is armed with a force capable of controlling and subjugating the wild social passions "(1). It is therefore by coercive action that the State succeeds in establishing order; " it can only act by external pressure "(2). It commands and men obey; " obedience is the first of civic duties "(3). True, coercion has no effect upon the inner conscience; it can only produce actions, but the State asks for nothing more. What it insists upon is the material fact of obedience, not the manner in which it is obeyed. " It says : what you think is a matter of indifference to me; but you must obey.... Progress has been made when the silent obedience of citizens is reinforced by internal and well-considered acquiescence; but this acquiescence is not essential. Empires have existed for centuries as powerful and highly developed States without this internal acquiescence of their citizens. What the State demands above all, is action in its most external form.... *Its essence is to realise what it wishes.* The terrible principle *βία βία βιάζεται* (force is controlled by force) *dominates all the history of States* (4).

But if the State is to make itself obeyed in this fashion, it must be strong and powerful. With its own nationals then, as with foreign States, it is essentially Power. Its duty therefore, within as without, is to assert this Power. So when its decisions are once made, it must insist that they are inexorably carried out. It must show no trace of hesitation, for this is a sign of weakness. " At home as abroad, the essential is Power, the persistent assertion and the integral realisation of the will of the State. A State which permits the slightest doubt concerning the firmness of its

(1) I, p. 56.    (2) I, p. 62.    (3) I, p. 145.    (4) I, p. 32-33.

will and of its ordinances shakes the faith in law." (1) If it meets with resistance, let it strike, and strike hard; this is the only way to give a sense of its strength. "Consider the sentimentality with which German princes long exercised their prerogative of mercy. The philanthropists had made such a moan over the immorality of capital punishment that the princes were infected by a similar sentiment; things came to such a pitch that there were no more beheadings in Germany" (2). Politics cannot be carried on without harshness; that is why women understand nothing about them (3).

**The ideal Statesman.** — This analysis gives us the portrait of the ideal statesman, as Treitschke conceived him.

Above all, he must have a massive ambition (*massive Ehrgeiz*) (4). For, as the State is essentially ambitious, as it aspires to become ever greater and more powerful, a man too modest in his designs could not help it to fulfil its destiny.

To realise his ambitions, he must, of course, be intelligent, and his intelligence must be essentially practical, keeping him on his guard against "the intoxication of fine political ideas." For it is the result only that should have any value in his eyes; "in the result he finds his happiness."

But the most indispensable quality is an inflexible will. "The art of politics demands an iron character." A statesman's function is to dominate, to master, to coerce both his compatriots and foreign States; it might almost be said that his activity is exercised against the nature of things; on every hand he meets with resistance, the selfishness of individuals, the rival ambitions of other States, against which he has to struggle. To triumph over them, he needs indomitable energy. This is why, when he has once set an end before him, he goes towards it undeviatingly, "without

(1) I, p. 101.    (2) I, p. 102.    (3) I, p. 33.    (4) I, p. 66.

allowing himself to be arrested by scruples in the choice of means, and still less, of persons "(1). The idea of the State, always present to his mind, must prevent him from allowing himself to be softened by considerations of private morality, or by the suggestions of sensibility; philanthropy and humanitarianism are not his business. Of course it is inevitable that, under these conditions, his personality should be marked by something harsh, caustic, and more or less detestable(2). But this is of little moment to him : his task is none the less the noblest that can befall a human being(3).

That certain qualities of the heart might be useful to him, if but to enable him to understand what is going on in the hearts of others; that, if he would influence men, he must not be a stranger to the nobler human aspirations: that he should use a portion of the power he wields to promote a little justice between individuals and also between nations; that a little sympathy is an indispensable instrument of action — these are things Treitschke never admits for a moment. — In the ideal portrait he paints for us we easily recognise the historical personage who was his model : the Iron Chancellor.

(1) " Trotz seiner Rücksichtslosigkeit in der Wahl der Mittel und namentlich der Personen. " (I, p. 66).

(2) " Mit allem Groben und Herben was ihm anhaften muss. " (*Ibid.*).

(3) The elements of this portrait are taken from pp. 66 and 104-105 of Vol. I.

## IV

### THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR EXPLAINED BY THIS MENTALITY

We are now able to understand how Germany can have been guilty of the deeds laid to her charge. They are the logical application of the ideas set forth above.

**Violation of Belgian neutrality and of the Hague Conventions.** — If the strange conception of international law which we have now examined be accepted, the violation of Belgian neutrality appears perfectly legitimate and natural. How should Germany, when she has come to recognise no binding power in the international contracts to which she subscribes, feel any scruples in violating the treaty she has signed? This is the true meaning of the language of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg to the English ambassador, Sir E. Goschen, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1914, when he dared to say that Belgian neutrality was but “a word”, and that the treaties which guaranteed it were mere “scraps of paper”. These expressions were not merely irritable ejaculations, evoked by anger and chagrin; they were the outcome of a sentiment really felt, a truth the Chancellor looked upon as self-evident. When Germany treats with other States, she does not consider herself to be effectively bound by the undertakings she gives.

When once this principle is understood, it takes away all value from the pretext by which the German Government attempted later to justify its crime, the assertion that it had been obliged to invade Belgium, in order to forestall France, who was preparing to do the like(1). Indeed, for a long

(1) It is hardly necessary to refute this calumny once more. We need only to recall how on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1914, France, at the request of

time, it gave this excuse only as a supplementary and superfluous vindication. This was the period when the Imperial Chancellor, proudly confirming Treitschke's principle, declared at the tribune of the Reichstag that necessity knows no law, — *Not kennt kein Gebot*. And Harnack, the historian of Christianity, did not hesitate to improve upon this official cynicism when, addressing the leaders of Protestant thought in England, he wrote : " Our Chancellor, with that lofty conscientiousness which characterises him, has admitted that this was an unlawful act. But for my part, I cannot follow him here admitting a formal breach of law; for we were in a position in which forms no longer existed, and nothing but moral duties remained.... There is a law of necessity which breaks iron; how much more then will it break a contract " (1). Later, when the overwhelming success, on which Germany had counted to win pardon for her deed, had not come about, it was thought necessary to speak in rather less brutal terms, and to show a certain respect for the public conscience; but we must turn to these early confessions to find the true reasons which determined Germany's action.

The same principle of course explains the innumerable breaches of the Hague Conventions, which the German Government has committed without even deigning to excuse them (2).

**The existence of small States threatened.** — But, when she threw herself upon Belgium, Germany was not only bent

England, solemnly undertook to respect the neutrality of Belgium, and how Germany, when the same request was made to her, refused to give the same undertaking. Thus on the very eve of the war, the two States proclaimed their respective intentions in no uncertain terms.

(1) This translation is made from the French translation in the *Semaine littéraire*, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1914.

(2) Violation of the article forbidding collective penalties, of the article prohibiting the bombardment of open towns without previous warning, and of works of art without strategic necessity, the use of asphyxiating gases, the killing of the wounded, etc., etc.

upon securing in spite of treaties a more rapid route to Paris. Another reason, which Treitschke has also revealed to us, further explains this act of violence, and at the same time, makes more manifest its eventual gravity; it is that in the eyes of Germany, small States are not States in the true sense of the word. It is evident that their constitutional weakness does not allow them to assert themselves as Powers, that is to say as States; they have therefore no right to the respect which may be normally claimed by the great moral personalities, States properly so-called. Mere historical anachronisms, they are destined to be merged in vaster States, and the greater State which absorbs them merely reconstitutes their true nature. It executes the decree of the laws of history (1).

This thesis is so entirely that of the German Government that Herr von Jagow, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has not hesitated to uphold it personally. Talking one day with an Ambassador of the vast Colonial Empire owned by Belgium, he pointed out that Germany was in a much better position to turn this to account, and "going on to work out this proposition more fully, he attempted to make his interlocutor share his contempt for the rights of property of small States; according to him only the great Powers had the right and the power to colonise. He even disclosed his underlying thought : *in the transformation which is now taking place in Europe in favour of the stronger nationalities, the small States will no longer be able to enjoy the independence hitherto permitted to them; they are destined to disappear, or to gravitate into the orbit of the great Powers*" (2).

This conversation took place a few months before the war. Further, in a secret official report published in the Yellow Book and emanating beyond doubt from a German

(1) See *supra*, pp. 15-17.

(2) Beyens, *La famille impériale allemande*, in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, March 15, 1915, p. 264.

of high distinction, who most probably expresses the opinion of the Government, we read : " In the next European war, it will also be necessary that the small States should be forced to follow us or be subdued. In certain conditions their armies and their strong positions can be rapidly conquered or neutralised " (1).

When therefore the Germans invaded Belgium they did so under the impression that they were entering a territory which was a kind of *res nullius*, a territory they had every intention of making their own in some manner. True, they had promised to evacuate it as soon as hostilities were over; but we know what their promises are worth. Besides, there are various ways of reducing a State to vassalage. Luxemburg offered no resistance to the German occupation. But no one doubts that, should Germany be victorious, the Grand-Duchy would never recover its former autonomy.

**Systematically inhuman warfare.** — When we accumulate proofs to show that the war has been carried on by the German Staff with a barbarity unparalleled in history, we are often told that the facts adduced are after all only isolated individual instances, such as take place in every army in the field, and that we have no right to generalise. But as a fact these atrocities, examples of which are only too numerous, are but the practical application of ideas and sentiments long inculcated among the young in Germany.

We may, indeed, cite Treitschke's political morality. The State is above Morality; it knows no higher end than itself; it is in itself its own end. To work to make itself as powerful as possible, so that it may impose its will on other States, is its highest good, and all that serves to attain this end is legitimate and morally good. Apply these axioms to war, and you get the maxims into which the German Staff has condensed its conception of military duty in war-time.

(1) *French Yellow Book*, Despatch No. 2, p. 11.



Some of these propositions directly recall those of Treitschke. It is permissible, says the General Staff, " for the belligerent State to have recourse to all means which enable it to attain the object of the war " (1). This is but a specialised version of Treitschke's general precept in politics, the end justifies the means. Hence it follows, to quote General von Hartmann, that " international law must beware of paralyzing military action by placing fetters upon it " (2). If the will of the adversary can be broken by terrorising the civil population, it will be terrorised and all efficacious means, terrible as these may be, will be legitimate.

Again, the individual atrocities committed by the soldiery are but the methodical application of these principles and rules. Thus the whole system is homogeneous and logical; a pre-determined concept of the State is expressed in rules of conduct laid down by the military authority, and these rules are, in their turn, translated into action by the individual. Hence in all this, there is no question of individual misdeeds, more or less numerous; we recognise a completely organised system, deeply rooted in the public mentality, and working automatically (3).

(1) The German War Book [Professor J. H. Morgan's translation of the *Kriegsbrauch im Landkriege* (The Usages of War on Land)], p. 52.

(2) *Militärische Notwendigkeit und Humanität*, in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, XIII, p. 119.

(3) Treitschke himself has briefly treated the question of the rules of war. The principle from which he proceeds is identical with that on which the official doctrine of the German General Staff is based: everything must be subordinated to military exigency. " It is perfectly lawful ", he writes, " to wage war in any manner which promises to be most efficacious, since by this means its object, which is peace, will be most rapidly attained. For this reason, every effort should be made to strike the enemy to the heart. The most terrible weapons are absolutely permissible to this end, provided they cause no unnecessary suffering to the wounded. No philanthropic declamations can be allowed to affect this issue..." (II, p. 564). In the application of the principle, he shows a relative moderation. For instance, he condemns the useless destruction of works of art, and recommends respect for private property. Nevertheless, the humanity he allows to filter into the exiguous code of international law he lays down is measured out by drops. After recognising that the public conscience no longer sanctions the burning of towns and villages in

**Negation of the rights of nationalities.** — In the course of this study we shall have noted how impervious this mentality is to the idea of nationality, and the principle derived therefrom.

A nationality is a group of human beings, who for ethnica or perhaps merely for historical reasons desire to live under the same laws, and to form a single State, large or small, as it may be: and it is now a recognised principle among civilised peoples that, when this common desire has been persistently affirmed, it commands respect, and is indeed the only solid basis of a State. But this truth is made to appear a sentimental absurdity if we agree with Treitschke that a State may be consolidated by mere coercion, that the cordial consent of its citizens is unnecessary to it, and that its authority may be efficacious without their free consent. Seeing that great empires have endured against the will of their subjects (1), we should not hesitate to coerce a people if by so doing we may build up a great and powerful State.

Hence the passion of Germany for conquest and annexation. She cares so little what men may feel or desire. All she asks is that they should submit to the law of the conqueror, and she herself will see to it that it is obeyed. She never even dreams that it would be well to efface the memory of her violence, to win over the vanquished and assimilate them. Germany has never recognised the right of nations to dispose of themselves. This is the principle of her policy, and she proclaims beforehand that she will not depart from it when peace is made, if it be in her power to impose her laws.

war between civilised combatants, he adds: "The State must not be made a field of experiment for humanitarian sentiments". (II, p. 569). It is, however, not very easy to understand why Treitschke speaks of an international law in war-time, since the State is accountable only to itself. It *owes* nothing to anyone, in the strict sense of the term.

(1) See *supra*, p. 32.

## V

### THE MORBID CHARACTER OF THIS MENTALITY

It is now evident that there is an intelligently organised system of ideas in the German mind which accounts for deeds of which we would fain believe Germany incapable. We have not reconstructed this system artificially by indirect methods; it offered itself spontaneously to our analysis. The practical consequences resulting from it have not been deduced by us dialectically; they have been enunciated as natural and legitimate by the very persons who were mainly responsible for the establishment of this system. We are therefore able to see where and how they coincide with a certain form of German mentality, as with their principle. There is so little ground for surprise at their evolution that we might easily have foreseen them before the event, as we foresee an effect from its cause.

Besides, we do not maintain that the Germans individually are the victims of a kind of constitutional moral perversity corresponding to the deeds imputed to them. Treitschke's character was harsh, but ardent, disinterested, and of great nobility, "full of indulgence for man" (1). The soldiers who have committed the atrocities which rouse our indignation, the leaders who have prescribed them, the ministers who have dishonoured their country by refusing to honour her signature, are probably for the most part honest men, who perform their daily duties conscientiously. But the mental system we have studied above is not made for everyday private life. It is designed for public life and, above all, for war; for it is in war-time that public life is most intense.

(1) Guillard, *L'Allemagne nouvelle et ses historiens*, p. 255.

So when war is declared, it takes possession of the German conscience, drives out the ideas and sentiments hostile to it, and becomes the tyrant of the will. Thenceforth, the individual sees things from a special angle and becomes capable of actions which in time of peace he would, as an individual, reprobate severely.

How shall we characterise this mentality?

It has sometimes been defined as materialistic. The expression is unjust and incorrect. Indeed, to Treitschke, Bernhardi, and all the Pan-German theorists, materialism was the arch-enemy, against which war was to be waged unceasingly. In their eyes, economic life is but the low and vulgar manifestation of national life, and a people which makes wealth the goal of its highest effort is doomed to decadence. According to them prolonged peace becomes a source of moral danger because it develops a taste for comfort, and for a soft and easy life; it fosters our least admirable instincts. They are the apologists of war, because it is a school of abnegation and sacrifice. Their teaching, far from showing any indulgence to sensual appetites, breathes a spirit of austere and mystic idealism. The end for which they exhort men to sacrifice themselves is far beyond the circle of material interests.

Yet this idealism has an abnormal and noxious element which makes it a danger for humanity at large.

There is, in short, but one means by which the State may achieve that integral autonomy which they declare to be its essence, and free itself from any dependence on other states: it is to hold these others in subjection. If it cannot dominate them, it runs the risk of having to submit to them. If, to adopt Treitschke's formula, there is to be no power greater than its own, it must make its own superior to all others. The absolute independence to which it aspires can therefore only be ensured by its supremacy. True, Treitschke considers it neither possible nor desirable that one single State should absorb all the nations of the earth. A world-empire,

in the strict sense of the term, seems to him a monstrosity, for human civilisation is too rich a thing to be completely realised by a single nation (1). But it is nevertheless evident that, from this point of view, universal hegemony is the goal to which the State must press forward. It cannot tolerate equals, or at least, it must seek to reduce their numbers; for equals are rivals whom it must outstrip, if it is not to be outstripped by them. In its frenzied race to power, it cannot hold until it has reached a degree of might which cannot be challenged; and if, as a fact, this point can never be attained, none the less is it the duty of the State to approach it as closely as possible. This is the very principle of Pan-Germanism.

The origin of this political doctrine has been very generally referred to Germany's exaggerated estimate of herself, her importance and her civilisation. It is supposed that, if she has come to arrogate to herself a sort of innate right to rule the world, it is because, owing to some inexplicable illusion, she has made of herself an idol before which she invites the whole world to prostrate itself. But, as we have seen, Treitschke brings us to the very threshold of Pan-Germanism without any hint of this apotheosis (2).

It may therefore be asked whether it is not rather an effect than a cause, an explanation after the event, of a deeper and more primitive fact (3). The fundamental thing

(1) I, p. 29.

(2) It is true that Treitschke does not fail on occasion to extol the incomparable merits of Germany. But there is no trace of mysticism in his language. He glorifies Germany just as any other enthusiastic patriot glorifies his country; he never claims providential hegemony for her. But Bernhardt arrived at classic Pan-Germanism simply by developing his master's principles (see *Der nächste Krieg*. Chapters III and IV). An English translation of this book is published by Mr. Edward Arnold (London) under the title: "Germany and the Next War."

(3) The belief in the superiority of German culture is, in fact, not very illuminating; for a nation may consider itself morally and intellectually superior to others without wishing to dominate them. Germany might believe herself to be of divine essence without aspiring to conquer the world. Megalomania does not necessarily entail a taste for hegemony, though it tends to reinforce this after the event.

is her need to assert herself, to feel nothing above her, her impatience of all limitation and dependence, in a word, her "will to power". To explain to herself the ebullition of energy of which she was conscious, an energy which imperiously opposed every obstacle and every restraint, Germany created a myth she has persistently developed, complicating and systematising it in the process. To justify her lust for sovereignty, she naturally claimed every kind of superiority; and then, to explain this universal superiority she sought for its causes in race, in history, and in legend. Thus was born that multiform Pan-German mythology, now poetical and now scientific, which represents Germany as the highest terrestrial incarnation of divine power. But these conceptions, sometimes bordering on delirium, did not arise spontaneously, none knowing how or where; they are but the expression of a vital fact. This has justified us in saying that, in spite of its abstract appearance, the idea of the State, on which Treitschke's doctrine is based, masks a concrete and living sentiment; its soul is a certain attitude of the will. No doubt the myth, as it gradually developed, confirmed and strengthened the tendency which gave rise to it; but if we would understand it, we must go beyond the letter of its formulae. We must get down to the spiritual state, which is its cause.

This state may be defined as a morbid hypertrophy of the will, a kind of will-mania. The normal, healthy will, however vigorous, accepts the necessary relations of dependence inherent in the nature of things. Man is part of a physical system which supports, but at the same time limits him, and keeps him in a state of dependence. He therefore submits to the laws of this system, for he cannot change them; he obeys them, even when he makes them serve his ends. For to free himself entirely from these limitations and resistances, he would have to make a vacuum around him, to place himself, that is to say, outside the conditions of life. But there are moral forces equally incumbent on nations

and on individuals, though on different grounds and in different ways. There is no State so powerful that it can govern eternally against the wishes of its subjects and force them, by purely external coercion, to submit to its will. There is no state so great that it is not merged in the vaster system formed by the agglomeration of other states, that does not, in other words, form part of the great human community, and owe respect to this. There is a universal conscience and a universal opinion, and it is no more possible to escape the empire of these than to escape the empire of physical laws; for they are forces which re-act against those who transgress them; a State cannot subsist when all humanity is arrayed against it.

Now what we find at the base of the mentality we have been studying is precisely a sort of attempt to rise "above all human forces", to master them and exercise full and absolute sovereignty over them. It was with this word "sovereignty" that we began our analysis, and it is to this that we must come back in concluding, for it sums up the ideal set before us. The individual is not strong enough to realise this ideal, the essential principle of which is domination; but the State can and must attain to it by gathering firmly into its hand the sum of individual energies and directing them all to this supreme end. The State is the sole concrete and historic form possible to the Superman of whom Nietzsche was the prophet and harbinger, and the German State must put forth all its strength to become this Superman. The German State must be "*über Alles*" (above all). Superior to all private wills, individual or collective, superior to the moral laws themselves, without any law save that imposed by itself, it will be able to triumph over all resistance and rule by constraint, when it cannot secure voluntary acceptance. To affirm its power more impressively, we shall even find it exciting the whole world against itself, and lightheartedly braving universal

anger (1). The extravagance of these ambitions would in itself suffice to prove their pathological nature. Have they not, indeed, the same character of morbid enormity which we find in all the details of the material methods actually adopted by German strategy and tactics? The projects for invading England by air-craft, the dreams of cannon, the projectiles of which are to be almost exempt from the laws of gravity, recall the romances of a Jules Verne or a Wells. They seem to transport us into an unreal world, where nothing can any longer resist the will of man.

We are then clearly in the presence of a case of social pathology. Historians and sociologists will have to determine its causes in the future; we are content to-day to take note of its existence. The recognition of it cannot but confirm France and her Allies in their legitimate confidence; for there can be no greater source of strength than to have the nature of things on one's side; violence cannot be done to this with impunity. True, there are great nervous maladies in the course of which the powers of the patient appear to be abnormal; his capacity for work and production increases; he does things of which he would be incapable in a normal state. He too recognises no limits to his energies. But this super-activity is always transient; it wears itself out by its own exaggeration, and nature is not slow to take her revenge. Germany offers us a similar spectacle. The unhealthy activity of will, which attempts to evade the action of natural forces, has enabled her to accomplish great things. It has inspired her to build up the monstrous engine of war she has hurled upon the universe in order to subdue it. But it is not possible to subdue the world. When the will refuses to recognise the limitations and restrictions from which nothing human is exempt, it is inevitable that it should be carried away by excesses which exhaust it, and that sooner or later it should dash itself against superior forces which

(1) These words were written on the very day that the news of the *Lusitania* outrage was received.



will shatter it. Already, indeed, the onslaught of the monster has been checked. When all the nations whose existence it threatens or disturbs — and they are legion — combine against it, it will be unable to resist them, and the world will be set free. Now, though fortuitous combinations of interests, individuals, and circumstances may retard the day of deliverance, sooner or later it will dawn. For Germany cannot fulfil the destiny she has marked out for herself without preventing humanity from living in freedom, and life will not submit to perpetual enslavement. It is possible to repress and paralyse it for a time by mechanical action; but in the end it will resume its course, throwing out upon its banks the obstacles that oppose its free movement.





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