



Drawings by Arnold Ronnebeck

America and Germany

by **COUNT HERMANN KEYSERLING**

IF I HAVE learned one thing during forty-eight years of pilgrimage on earth, it is this — that what human beings utter as an expression of their conscious thought rarely corresponds to vital truth. Exceptions are provided by those few whose consciousness is harmoniously linked and adjusted to their unconscious. The attitude of most people may be illustrated by a typical occurrence in awakening love: a girl talks and even thinks most harshly of the man for whom, unknowingly, she is beginning to care.

Why was every innovator the best-hated man of his age? Why was every libel brought up against him readily believed? Not because people thought in their inmost hearts that he was wrong, but because they felt that he was right. But, since the admission of this fact would inevitably have disrupted the existing state of balance within their souls, the latter very naturally fought for life. After an innovator had conquered, he was canonized for the very same reasons for which he had before been persecuted.

What applies to individuals also applies naturally to nations. To-day the world seems practically subdivided into Pro- and Anti-Americans, very much as it was before and during the World War into Pro- and Anti-

Germans. This is the natural consequence of the change in equilibrium that has taken place since the war. But who is really in sympathy with the Americans, and who is not? This is a difficult question to answer, all the more so because those who pass judgment most readily are generally not only those who know least, but also those who care to know least. They simply want to get rid of a feeling of uneasiness. And there are two ways of dismissing a disturbing vital influence: one way is disparagement, the other idealization. In effect, the two are identical, for it is the essence of an ideal that it does *not* belong to the plane of reality.

It is a matter of course that Europeans do not see Americans in the light in which Americans see themselves. It is also natural that only one in a thousand of those who know the facts about America understand them; for in order to understand facts, one must grasp their significance — that is, see through them; and very few of those who are interested in the facts are capable of such vision. But what about the feelings and emotions America inspires? Even here no manifested phenomenon can be accepted as conclusive proof. Since every judgment passed is a compound of emotion and thought, it is obviously more than difficult to determine Europe's real, inner relationship to America.

II

I HAD TO MAKE these general preliminary remarks in order to be able, in what I shall have to say, to dismiss at the outset any consideration of intrinsic value or likableness. Americans themselves lay great stress on the latter quality. This is perfectly correct in a home atmosphere, especially if the national atmosphere is as similar to a kindergarten as is that of the United States. But no "foreigner" has ever been liked on these grounds, nor could he ever be. As to the unquestionable advantages of American life — advantages, that is, in the sense that all would like to share them — it is obvious that they must needs evoke envy. At this point I may pronounce a first positive judgment, although it will surprise unsophisticated readers: *Given* the tremendous power to which America has risen, *given* its unique prosperity and security, the fact is simply astounding that, comparatively speaking, the nation evokes so little overt hatred. This is indeed significant. And yet the general feeling which Europeans at large have for America is decidedly one of dislike, of however mild a kind. This could not be otherwise.

But now the real problem only begins. What does this dislike mean? What is the root of it? It may be anything. It may be budding love. It may be recognition of superiority. It may be envy, or the fear of the weaker. It may be contempt. It may be recognition of inferiority. Here we arrive at the great cleavage among Europeans. There are those who think of America as a symbol of the future, and who love it. There are others who think the same, but cling fiercely to the present or the past. There are people who think of Americanism as a progressive thing, and there are others to whom it means barbarization pure and simple.

But even here, appearance and reality seldom coincide. In the first place, exceedingly few Europeans see America as it is. Moreover, much of what the word *America* stands for in Europe has little to do with the New World: it simply stands for the general process of mechanization and rationalization which all mankind is going through to-day. The problem seems as confused as possible. Still, on the basis of what was said in the first paragraph, we can now divine the real issue. *All nations being fundamentally self-centered, Europeans*

feel, at bottom, in sympathy or antipathy with America according to whether or not their own nation develops of its own accord on lines similar to or corresponding in spirit with the United States. Indeed, here and here alone, it is a question of indubitable reality and not of appearance. All conscious thoughts may be wrong, all manifested emotions not representative of truth. But the relationship between the specific *élan vital* or life-modes of two nations provides a standard which is objectively valid.

From this we see at once that two European nations — the English and the French — cannot possibly, in their heart of hearts, be in sympathy with the United States, whatever they may say. The psychological texture of the English is so totally different from that of latterday Americans that one may almost call it a freak of nature that both speak the same language. Only think of the love for little things so characteristic of the English, and on the other hand of the American trend toward the colossal; of the American lack of reserve, and the extreme cultivation of this quality by Englishmen; of the extreme sense of privacy in the latter, and the equally extreme love of publicity in the former; of the Englishman's highly developed political sense, and the almost complete lack of it in the American; of the individualism of the English, and the inherent socialism of the Americans.

As to France, her whole tradition is static and humanistic, and she would inevitably lose her soul if she developed along the lines of American dynamism and pragmatism. The whole scale of values of the French is as different from that of present-day Americans as from that of the Hindus. This applies in particular to the French sense of quality as contrasted with quantity — a direct heritage from classical antiquity. What still binds together the Americans and the French are memories of the eighteenth century; but no nation really lives on memories.

In opposition to this, all young or rejuvenated nations are more or less akin to America. Many of them dislike her, but this kind of enmity means as close a relationship as love, because the basic kinship is the primary thing. Even the contrast between Fascist and American organizations is much more a thing of the surface than that between the American

and the English life-modes. Yet, Russia and Germany are the only rejuvenated nations whose inner relationship to America is so close that they are inevitable allies in history, whatever their respective policies may be — whether they are actual friends or enemies.

I cannot deal with the Russian problem here. While writing *America* (which will be published this summer) I was forced, again and again, into the conclusion that modern Russia and America stand for the two foci of the New World in the Making, in the same sense that Catholicism and Protestantism did in the age of the religious wars. That is to say, they belong as polar opposites to an identical field of force. As for Germany, I found that it is also converging with America, but for different reasons. These I stated for the first time in the first session of the School of Wisdom which took place after my return from my American lecture tour of 1928, and the spontaneous response to my assertions and demonstrations is proof positive in my eyes that I am not mistaken in my judgment.

The facts of the case are the following. In few countries does one hear as many disparaging judgments passed on the United States as in Germany. The reasons for this are several. Since I am writing for Americans, I will first give those which speak in their favor. There is that type of inherent German intellectualism which cannot understand the direct American sense for the reality of things. There is the German narrowness. There is the traditional German enviousness. There is the fact that every German is practically a "monad without windows," which makes him incapable of liberty in the best American sense.

But there are other reasons which speak entirely in Germany's favor. Germany believes that cultural values are supreme; that inner riches are more important than external wealth; that the quality of the individual, as such, means more than his relationship to his fellowmen, for which reason a high

individual quality is of infinitely greater importance than the best of social services; and finally, that there is a hierarchy of spiritual values, independent of all success. And yet, after having absorbed whatever I could of the real atmosphere of the United States, and after having concentrated on Germany again on my return, I dare assert that whatever antipathy there is on the surface, and however many insuperable incompatibilities exist between the two nations, the basic phenomenon to-day is one of intrinsic sympathy. I mean that kind of sympathy which alone is of permanent avail between nations — the sympathy based on a similar or parallel destiny.

With individuals it has often happened that what seemed to be fate, in the sense of chance occurrence or external coercion, really called out a man's true nature. In the same way, external circumstances have often forced a man to guide his life into new channels which made for rejuvenation and even inspiration. The same has occurred to nations. It was always danger which made steel out of soft iron. And very often what seemed to be the worst of fates called into manifestation a nation's true inner form. This is what has happened to Germany as a consequence of her defeat. Not

that I think that postwar Germany is a thing of higher quality than the Germany of millennial tradition; I am much more afraid that the highest expressions of Germany's qualitative spirit must, for a long time, belong to the past, because, as I have shown in *Europe*, Germany can be in her best possible condition only under some form of caste rule. But there is no doubt that the political and social texture of prewar Germany no longer corresponded to the nation's actual state.

The Germans of to-day are different in kind from those who counted historically in Germany's previous great epochs. Accordingly, the revolution — I do not hereby mean the German Revolution in the technical sense, but



the war with all its consequences — actually freed a tremendous amount of formerly repressed energy. And the catastrophe, as such, has worked more good than evil, for the reason, peculiar to Germany, that this nation is instinctively bent more on the past than on the future, is very much inclined to submit to existing forms and existing law, and, accordingly, is peculiarly unfit to regenerate herself by a slow evolutionary process — a process so wonderfully demonstrated in the English. But above all, fate has forced Germany to adapt herself inwardly to the Future as opposed to the Past. This, then, has called into historic prominence those German qualities which belong to the historic plane of Russia on the one hand and of America on the other.

The sympathy for Russia, very naturally, asserted itself first; every new movement begins under the banner of Radicalism. But very soon the pendulum swung back to the other pole of the New World in the Making — the United States. This nation is as young in soul as Russia, but it does not repudiate Western culture. It does not even repudiate Western tradition, as far as that tradition reaches back to the eighteenth century. One may even say more: America is essentially traditionalistic to the extent that it acknowledges history; and this, as a phenomenon concomitant with that of extreme modernity, must be peculiarly congenial to the German temperament.

But there are other causes a medieval philosopher would have called “accidental,” which are even more responsible for Germany’s shifting of sympathy. Materially ruined by the war and the peace, Germany must needs direct all her energies to material rehabilitation. And the one nation in the world which has an unqualifiedly positive attitude toward material advance is America. It is this understanding which counts foremost in this connection, and not the fact that more money is to be had from America for purposes of reconstruction than from anywhere else. And by “understanding,” I mean chiefly moral understanding — understanding in the spirit of fairness and good will. One of the best qualities of the American nation is the inheritance of that old pioneer spirit which sincerely applauds the man who, being down, lets himself be neither discouraged nor broken, but rises again without asking for more help than is indispensable in

making a new start. But there is another accidental cause which works even more in the same direction. Germany is disarmed and practically defenseless; its rehabilitation depends entirely on long years of undisturbed peace. Now there may be a doubt as to whether America is a guarantee of peace in the modern world; perhaps it keeps too aloof from European affairs for that. But America, and America alone, *stands* for peace in the modern world. And this makes Germany her fated ally.

Here I cannot do more than give a few hints. America’s real and organic Constitution — which is entirely different from the official one — represents a complete *novum* in history. For the first time, the centre to which all national events are related is not something belonging to the plane of what the Romans called the *forum*, but to private life. This is due to many causes converging in their effects — among others, to the inherent socialism (as opposed to individualism) of the American soul, and to the predominance of woman’s scale of values. I am dealing with all of them in my new book. But what concerns us here is just the *fact* that the values of private life predominate in the United States. *And this one fact suffices to make America, and America alone so far, the champion of world peace.*

All who remember the horrors of the World War very naturally desire peace. But an outlawry of war — whatever may have been decreed by ever so many official papers — is logical nonsense as long as the spirit of politics prevails. Wherever this condition holds true, war *must* be the last legitimate resort. This accounts for all the insincerities and failures at Geneva. As against this, no conflict of private life ever leads to war by its own inherent logic. To think of war here as an *ultima ratio* is as absurd as to renounce war in a world where the spirit of politics rules supreme.

In America it is the spirit of private life which rules supreme. Therefore America must necessarily stand for peace. But for the same reason Germany is unconsciously — but all the more irresistibly — driven to the side of America. Most Germans do not know as yet why they instinctively sympathize so much with America in spite of all the unsympathetic opinions they express. For their case is precisely that of the girl mentioned at the beginning of this article.

IT IS NOT my business to state how Americans feel about Germany to-day; they are probably as unconscious of the trend of history which works through their depths as are the Germans. Yet it is patent that some kind of echo to what the Germans feel is already alive within the souls of a great many Americans. This accounts, partly at least, for the understanding German literature undoubtedly meets with in America, as opposed to England.

The German intellectual class knows practically nothing of things American and is seldom in sympathy with the New World. But then, most of its known representatives stand for Germany's past. They are not really representative. After a catastrophe like that which Germany has gone through, the true condition and striving of a nation never expresses itself in literature. Just as Lindbergh is more representative of young America than anything one may read, in the same sense men like Dr. Eckener and the great pioneers of science and enterprise, who have already won back a good deal of Germany's world prominence in their respective fields, are more expressive to-day of Germany's best spirit than any work of abstract contemplation. Germany is beginning her career over again. Therefore, a literature truly representative of new Germany has yet to be born. Let no American believe that those German authors

who delight in Germany's breakdown, who made fortunes on the basis of that breakdown and to-day enjoy a kind of world reputation, are representative of new Germany in the least. Their case is similar to that of an imaginary American who, after an entire collapse of the United States as it is to-day, would give away with delight all it has stood for from the Mayflower up to the World War.

But I do know well the body of truly representative German youth, which is of course intensely national and proud of Germany's great millennial past. In particular do I know those among them who are likely to be the leaders of the next decades, because at Darmstadt there happens to be not only a School of Wisdom, but also what is probably Germany's best technical college. After having finished their studies, all the most promising of these young men go out to America for a year or two, as a matter of course. They feel that they belong to the same generation as those among the young Americans who are of the universalist (as opposed to the localist) type. And the same is true, more or less, of all the future-bent young people in all circles of Germany who do not belong to the romantic camp. The Romanticists, of course, who have always been very numerous in Germany and are responsible for much of its best literature and art, disapprove of any kind of extraverted life. But then, Romanticists never counted in the historical life of a nation.





Do We Need a NEW GOD?—A debate

I—The Passing of Supernaturalism

by **HARRY ELMER BARNES**

THE QUESTION of a new and more adequate conception of God involves so many potentially relevant issues that any discussion of the subject within the limitations of space imposed renders it necessary to select with care the essential elements in the case. Our Fundamentalist friends have furnished us with a concise epitome of what they regard as the essence of contemporary orthodoxy. The writer will attempt to formulate in equally brief and specific form what appear to him to be the vital arguments of modern scholarship against orthodox supernatural religion. These arguments — and it seems that the Modernists will have to concede them if they expect Modernism to receive the benediction of informed and educated persons in the second quarter of the twentieth century — are the following:

1. That the question of a new conception of God is of vital social significance, because upon

DR. HARRY ELMER BARNES, who is a Professor of Sociology at Smith College, here enlarges upon the arguments he presented before the last meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. At that time his opinions aroused a storm of comment all over the country, but no opportunity was given him to debate the question with those who so violently disagreed with him. That opportunity is now provided, and **CANON WILLIAM SHEAFE CHASE**, an Episcopal minister, meets Dr. Barnes on his own ground and defends the Christian religion and its God from his spirited attack.

it hinges our whole philosophy of the good life and our attitude toward a multitude of social and cultural issues.

2. That the Biblical God, Yahweh of the Hebrews, has been thoroughly undermined and discredited by the progress of natural science, Biblical scholarship, and cultural history.

3. That the conventional orthodox view of Jesus Christ as the literal "only begotten son of God" and a peerless and unique religious

teacher is undermined as certainly and completely by the state of contemporary knowledge as is the Hebrew God, Yahweh.

4. That the task of constructing, in the disciplined human imagination, a conception of God compatible with the framework and perspective of modern knowledge is so difficult and baffling as to be, for all practical purposes, futile.

5. That any conception of God compatible with modern knowledge would be so vague and