

# THE RULERS OF EUROPE TO-DAY

BY LT.-COL. CHARLES À COURT REPINGTON

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THE war and the peace treaties left most of us with a very indistinct impression of the character of the various governments which we had set up in continental Europe, and with no impression at all of the men in charge of these governments. In fact, they changed from day to day, and we had scarcely accustomed ourselves to a Simons, a Witos, a Karolyi, or a Mayr before they passed away and were succeeded by others, who for the greater part were little known to us and appeared and disappeared like transient shades. The Europe of our experience had vanished. Authority in some countries had very palpably lapsed. There were new ideas simmering, mostly of a republican tendency. The great states were doomed in many countries, and universal suffrage with an eight-hour day was the rule. But who ruled, and how they ruled, and why they ruled, was more or less a mystery to us. Unconsciously our ideas of Europe remained those of the old Europe, when in fact all the old Continent was in solution, or rather dissolution, and among the recently belligerent nations there remained only France, the most conservative country on earth, standing like an ensign on a hill, to remind us of anything that we had known before. . . .

Obviously, when four great empires are suddenly broken up or diminished, and a number of new states emerge from the cauldron of a peace, and a host of new men from the bourgeoisie, agrarian, educational, and other ranks suddenly assume charge of state machinery, and all the play of the old parties is no more, then we are in the presence of conditions with which we are not acquainted. Unless we are content to take all our new ideas at second-hand from other people, who are as likely as not to be stupid, wrong, prejudiced, or with axes to grind, we must make a virtue of necessity and go and see for ourselves.

At all events, I took that course at the first favorable opportunity that offered in the form of a suggestion from Viscount Burnham, and proceeded to make a grand tour through Europe on the model of our ancestors, with some advantages in respect to rapidity of travel that our forbears did not share, but with corresponding disadvantages, among which discomforts, dirt, crowds, bad food, and the attentions of train-bandits were among the least. The greatest disappointment of all was to find that almost everyone whom one knew before had disappeared. The old magnates and the gentry generally had

little or no share in the new governments, and had retired to their castles and their country houses — so long as they were permitted to retain them — to mourn over the regretted past. . . .

In the present German Government there are three men who count, namely, Dr. Wirth, the Chancellor, Dr. Rosen, the Foreign Minister, and Dr. Walther Rathenau, whose chief business is reconstruction. If I do not name President Ebert, it is because one never hears his name mentioned. Wirth is a tall and powerfully made Swabian, forty-one years of age, with a healthy complexion, totally devoid of pretentiousness, and indeed with a modesty which one hardly expects in a successor of the mighty Bismarck. Wirth is generally regarded as an honest and courageous man, whose retention in power is equally an interest of Germany as of other Powers. This opinion is shared by all the Allied and Associated *corps diplomatique* in Berlin. The Chancellor took upon himself the task of accepting the Allied Ultimatum of last May, and now has the equally unpopular duty of doubling the German revenue in order to pay the reparations. We have, in principle, suspended the economic sanctions on the Rhine as a tribute to his loyal and straightforward dealing, but all the Right parties are bitterly hostile to him, and the recent fall of the mark will add to his difficulties. If peace is to be preserved and further sanctions avoided, the Wirth policy, if not his government, must be continued. The Right are incapable of forming a government, except by dint of another revolution, but the Chancellor has a most invidious task in front of him, and if he falls we shall have a stormy time in prospect.

Dr. Rosen is a much older man than the Chancellor, and is a trained diplomatist of the old school. We have heard of him in Abyssinia, at Tangiers,

and at The Hague, from which latter capital he came to his new post. At The Hague he was boycotted by his colleagues owing to some childish question of diplomatic precedence. He is experienced and well-informed, but has the disadvantage of being considered an enemy of England, for which reputation he is unable to account. Like all his contemporaries in the German diplomatic service, he probably hankers for the old régime, and Dr. Wirth has probably taken him on account of his knowledge of diplomatic etiquette and wide acquaintance with affairs. Rathenau is the most influential of the ministers next to the Chancellor. Skilled in the theory and practice of economics, he is also a writer of many widely read books, and one of the most remarkable intellects in Germany. The preface to his work *Von kommenden Dingen* explains the man, but perhaps his spirit is too subtle, and his elaboration of ideas too Teutonically voluminous, to appeal to many British readers.

Taking Austria next, we find Dr. Heinisch, the Minister President, and Herr Schober, the Chancellor and Foreign Minister, the leading figures. President Heinisch is a calm and dignified country gentleman, without great enthusiasm, perhaps, but also without dangerous ambitions. He is a man to be trusted, and his weight is always sure to be thrown on the side of prudence and moderation in all things. He is a sound practical farmer and highly skilled in the technique of intensive production. A steady figure rather than a brilliant one, but a sure support of a Ministry in difficult days. Chancellor Schober is everybody's friend at Vienna. A charming character and a man of the world in the best sense, he was formerly Police President, and there is very little about Vienna life that he does not know. He is much liked and trusted by the old régime as by the

new, and can be firmly counted upon to pursue a policy of prudence and reserve in these difficult days which have come to Austria. Of men in the second rank of authority at Vienna I should reckon Dr. Friedrich Hertz and Dr. Schüller to be the most capable. The latter is in the Foreign Office, while the former has an office in the President's official residence and is a high authority on many political and economic questions. In the Austrian banks, which have so enormously developed their scope of late, are many intellects in the front rank, and in all financial negotiations Austria can name very sound representatives. I have not met the leaders of the Great German Party, who form at present a small minority in the Parliament. Their *Anschluss* programme of union with Germany is liable to run Austria upon diplomatic rocks if it be continued, but since Herr Schober took over the reins this party has given hostages for more prudent behavior. I have found no desire at all in Austria for the return of the Hapsburgs. Austria is in great straits so far as state finance is concerned, and it is the interests of the Allies to put her on her feet again, but remedies tarry, and the *valuta* goes from bad to worse.

If we turn north from Vienna we find Dr. Masaryk still the ruling spirit in Czechoslovakia and President of the new State. His past services to his country are in the memory of us all, and it is to be regretted that for more than half of this year the state of his health has removed him from the active conduct of affairs. During this period things have not gone too well for his country, which has particularly suffered from a somewhat selfish economic policy and has difficulties within. Dr. Masaryk's return to Prague from Capri has been hailed with delight by the Czechs, and has been followed by the formation of a Parliamentary Govern-

ment with Dr. Bénès as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. M. Cerny, the Premier of a Government of permanent officials, had before this carried on, and it had been Dr. Bénès, the Foreign Minister, a political child of Masaryk's, who had come most to the front. Dr. Bénès is a comparatively young man who has won golden opinions in Europe during his recent travels. Sound, shrewd, capable, and active, he has based himself on the Entente, without on that account losing touch with Russia and the Slavs, since he regards Czechoslovakia as the western advance guard of the Slav people. He has, by a series of alliances and understandings, fortified the position of his country, not only against Germany, but against Germany's former allies, and has entered fully into the political designs of M. Take Jonsescu, so far as they aim at the maintenance of the peace treaties and at the suppression of all disturbers of the peace. One must not talk to Dr. Bénès of the Balkanization of Central Europe. He does not admit it, but on the contrary has large ideas of his own for the creation of the United States of Central Europe, which he hopes to obtain, after some lapse of time, by a series of economic arrangements between Austria and the Succession States, which will restore some of the old liberty of trade without reviving the centralization and political defects of the Hapsburg régime. In this design he has not yet progressed very far, but certainly I have found that Austria and Hungary are not without sympathy toward the general idea. In any case, Bénès is a force to be counted with, even if his influence in his own country carries less weight than it does abroad. Those twelve divisions which Czechoslovakia could rapidly throw into the field are a support for her foreign policy and make her enemies beware of her.

It is not necessary to dwell much

upon the internal politics of Italy, but we may certainly rejoice that her internal position has changed for the better during the past year, and that the industrial and agrarian troubles, in the north and south respectively, from which she was suffering acutely not long ago, have given place to a better feeling without disastrous conflicts on a large scale. In the domain of Foreign Affairs, Count Sforza was the presiding spirit up to the moment of his recent fall, and it is possible that his eclipse may only be temporary. A strong Ententist, he understood and carried out in practice the reserved and prudent policy of the country. He was always a moderating influence in the assemblies of the Powers, and possessed an infinite capacity for compromise and pacification. If he generally acted with England he was unable to follow her in her Near Eastern policy, and sided with France in the desire of the latter to revise the Treaty of Sèvres and render *viable* the much-reduced Ottoman Empire. It is not certain, after all the events of the past year, notably the Greek successes and the alliance between the Kemalists and the Soviet Government, whether Count Sforza's successor, the Marchese della Torretta, will continue the Sforza policy toward Greece and Turkey. There is no real want of harmony between Italy's policy and ours, but while England, France, and Italy follow different lines of thought, no Entente policy can exist in the Near East, nor can any one of these lines of thought be followed up to its logical consequences. If the new Foreign Minister of Italy can help to bring about a better understanding between the three Powers in this part of the world, he will do a signal service to the cause of peace. On the political side Count Sforza scored a marked success at Rapallo, and the Porto Rose Conference was intended to confirm this success on the commercial side. Finance,

economics, and emigration are at the back of Italian foreign policy. Italy, under its present rulers, has no policy of aggression at all and is the enemy of adventures. There is no good reason why England and Italy should not march resolutely together in the present as they have in the past.

With Hungary we have many sympathies, which are often misunderstood both in Hungary and elsewhere. We like her people and their leaders. We sympathize with her terrible mutilation by the Trianon Treaty and we wish her to recover from her misfortunes. But we have to insist, with our friends, that the terms of the Treaty should be rigidly carried out. Except in this regrettable affair of Western Hungary — concerning which the Hungarian case has not been presented to us — the 'Royal Hungarian Government,' as it still terms itself, has shown great good sense since the fantastic fooling of Bela Kun was suppressed. Admiral Horthy, the Cromwell of Hungary, has his enemies, but whether we study the record of Count Teleki or Count Bethlen, Count Banffy or his predecessor at the Foreign Office, we find that the affairs of this much-mutilated state have been conducted with a sense of responsibility and a gravity that appeal to us.

Officially, at least, the harmful Magyar propaganda in Transylvania has terminated. Hungary, taught by misfortune, and too martial not to accept the verdict of arms, turns to reconstruction, and resolutely excludes adventures, if only from recognition of the fact that she will be crushed if she attempts them. Hungary is monarchical, but every Hungarian saw the folly of King Karl's recent escapade, and there are too many cool heads and experienced hands in the Hungarian Parliament for great political errors to be perpetrated when it is in the power of the Government at Budapest to repress them. In her gen-

eral policy Hungary is more Left than Liberal. Power is in the hands of the peasants, and the smaller nobility are more noticeable in governments than the old historic families. No very marked personality towers over others now, though Counts Julius Andrassy and Albert Apponyi are still in public life; but Hungarian Parliamentarism follows English lines, and in spite of Trianon there is a considerable English sentiment, not lessened by the fact that the upper classes nearly all speak English fluently. In Minister Hegedus, who is in charge of finance, Hungary has a man who proposes that Hungary should save herself by her own exertions, and though there may be difficult days ahead for the country, there is a strong foundation of real statesmanship which gives hope for the recovery and reconstruction of Hungary if she keeps herself free from German tempters.

Rumania has become a country with seventeen million inhabitants, in possession of a more than doubled area of territory, with agricultural and mineral wealth which should not leave her future in doubt. But she has enemies, among whom the Bolsheviks, who keep an army on the Dniester, are not the least. All the coolness and experience of the King and of his brave Consort, who never despaired of her adopted country in the darkest days, are needed to guide the ship of State into a safe haven. Three figures stand out most prominently in Rumanian politics: first, General Avarescu, the present Prime Minister, secondly, M. Take Jonescu, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and thirdly, M. Bratiano, leader of the Liberals and probable successor to the premiership if the Conservatives are upset. Avarescu is a distinguished figure and a national hero. Everyone has confidence in his probity, his statesmanship, and his judgment. None of the

accusations and criticisms often leveled against the politicians of Rumania touch him at all; but politics, in Rumania as elsewhere in continental Europe, are exceedingly bitter, and the recent withdrawal of the Opposition from Parliament has placed him in a difficult position. In the domain of foreign politics M. Take Jonescu is supreme. Alert, active, and wide-awake, he joins to a fine perception of the motives which sway men and nations a ripe experience of diplomacy over a series of years, and he has secured the external relations of Rumania upon a stable basis. The Little Entente is in the main his handiwork, and unites Rumania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and practically Greece, in an association for mutual defense which no combination in the East of Europe is likely to upset. Poland is also associated with Rumania in defence against Bolshevik outbreaks, and the bedrock foundation of all is trust in the Entente and belief in the permanence of Anglo-French amity, without which all the diplomatic scaffoldings of post-war Europe are liable to fall down. M. Take Jonescu deserves our approval because he has buttressed up the peace treaties by his fruitful activity in a quarter of Europe to which we pay less attention than we should. If the confidence of the King and of the head of the Government are indispensable to him, it has not been wanting; and certainly this famous Foreign Minister, supported as he is by a powerful army, which is credited to be the most solid of all Rumanian institutions, has deserved well of his country and the Entente.

In Poland the Presidency of Marshal Pilsudsky scarcely seems compatible with the long endurance of any Ministry, not even that of M. Witos, and it is not, at the moment, possible to say what personalities may hereafter conduct the difficult affairs of the reunited



country. We shall not see Poland reconstructed on a firm basis until she has a sound currency, and until the conscience of European statesmen is conquered with respect to Poland. A peaceful Europe is not conceivable without a strong Poland. Poland cannot be strong unless the Allies support her. If they do not, the eventuality of a Russo-German combination must hereafter be foreseen. These are the considerations which ought to weigh in Poland's favor. Even if the Poles appear lawless, feckless, fickle, and inefficient, we must remember their past sufferings, and how German, Austrian, and Russian armies traversed many times and ruined the country almost from end to end. In the domain of finance the preliminary Polish Budget of this year showed a deficit of 73 milliards of Polish marks, and the paper currency, also in July, exceeded 100 milliards of marks. The very vital questions of foreign exchanges and sound currencies can be dealt with effectually only by a world combination.

Yugoslavia is another country the future of which cannot at present be predicted. It has a new King, and a new Constitution passed by a small majority. Our admiration of the valor and constancy of the Serbs during the war cannot blind us to the fact that Yugoslavia as a State has not yet reached the condition of political stability and administrative order that are desirable, and that M. Pachich has serious trouble with his Communists, with the Croats and Slovenes, with finance, with trade, and with tariffs. The country is potentially powerful and has great resources. Its army is already a serious force. But the building up of a solid State out of such discordant elements as Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes must be a work of time, and until time has elapsed a profitable study of personalities is unobtainable.

It is different when we turn to Bulgaria and to Greece. Bulgaria remains a monarchy, and her young King Boris is one of the most agreeable figures in the East of Europe. Self-sacrificing, and with a strong sense of duty, he has become a popular figure, and is the most democratic of monarchs. So far as depends upon him, no adventures will ever be undertaken by Bulgaria. But his country lives in an atmosphere of foreign suspicion, and the Agrarian Party now in power does not include the best experience and brains of the country. M. Stamboulisky, the Prime Minister, is a son of the soil and a product of the Balkan times. His record in the past and his opposition to ex-Tsar Ferdinand and the war give him some right to complain that his Ententist sentiments, and those of his Government, are not taken into account. But Bulgaria's past treachery and crimes have aligned the world against her, and particularly the Little Entente, which suffered most from Bulgarian rapacity. It is perhaps the fundamental error of the Government of Sofia not to recognize that a few men who are well-intentioned do not absolve a whole people from their past offenses. Bulgaria is held in deep suspicion still, and M. Stamboulisky has displayed some indiscretion in his conduct of external affairs. He should have resolutely opposed the suspicious relations with the Kemalists and the Reds from the very first, and though he may be guiltless — even his chief political opponents inform me that they believe him guiltless — of any design to make agreements with Turks or Reds, he has allowed many suspected characters to come to Sofia and to stay there, while certain Bulgarian missions to Russia and Asia Minor are subjects of deep suspicion. If the Little Entente is filled with harsh views about Bulgaria, the latter has deserved them by her past offenses, and

has urgent need of the greatest frankness and straight-dealing in her foreign policy if she desires, not only to regain the confidence of her neighbors, but to prevent worse things happening to her than have happened yet.

When we come to Greece we find that the Powers are most unfortunately divided in their attitude toward her. England on the whole wishes to support her if the King can make good, and would have been prepared to ratify the Treaty of Sèvres while accepting the King passively. France dislikes the King, and is, was, all for the revision of the Treaty and for supporting the Turks. Italy accepts without question the plebiscite which recalled the King, but joins France in her policy toward the Turks. An utterly invertebrate policy has therefore resulted. We leave all our ministers at Athens, though we have not yet recognized the King. Though it was at our urgent request that Greece sent an army to Asia Minor to drive Kemal back, we have not supported our agent either with men, money, or active sympathy. The position of the King is therefore difficult, and that of his Government still more so. The *Basileus* is everything in Greece. He was recalled by the all but unanimous vote of his people. Yet he is still kept in Coventry by the Allies, whose ministers have no relations with the Court officially. Judging the King by his acts, he undoubtedly has the country with him, has restricted himself to his constitutional rôle, and has led his army in the popular crusade against the Kemalists, who are now allied with the Reds. So far as I have been able to ascertain, both the King and his people long for British friendship and assistance, and fully believe that they are fighting England's enemies at England's instigation. The reputation of England in Greece stands so high as to be predominant, but Greece

is a little country which has accepted a mission almost too great for her resources, and it is high time that the Allies should compose their differences and bring this contest to an end.

There are many fine intelligences in Greece, which will never want for statesmen, or men versed in finance or affairs. M. Gounaris still leads the party in Parliament, and in relation to foreign politics the country to a man is solid behind the Government, which believes that it is merely continuing in external affairs, the policy of M. Venizelos. M. Gounaris is more highly considered in Greece than he is in certain foreign capitals, which still show a considerable suspicion of him. He is a good speaker with a good presence, and has gathered round him a capable body of ministers. M. Stratos is another man who is well considered by many, and at the head of the National Bank is M. Maximos, who is among the first financial authorities of the day. But the circumstances of the time indicate not obscurely that Greece is pursuing a policy in Asia Minor beyond her strength to terminate, and that it is not to her Greek personalities, but to those of the Entente, that the conclusion of peace must fall.

If we study all the leading personalities in turn, I think we can say that if, for the most part, they lack the distinction and prestige of the pre-war days, they are one and all honestly doing their best to promote peace and reconstruction. I have found no evidence of ill-will. The affairs of Governments are, as a rule, in the hands of previously unknown men, humble often in their origin, with no adventitious aids of great names, great successes, wealth, or social distinction. They live very modestly, and Giolitti's humble home is evidence of the fact. There is no social splendor anywhere, no parade, and no pretense

of it. But there is a great lack, sometimes amounting to a complete absence, of authority. It is for this reason that the yearning for monarchy has returned, especially among the prouder races, who resent the lack of distinguished representation in their directing circles. The arm of the State does not reach very far, and the hand is often weak. Parliamentary government is not yet anywhere completely acclimatized. There are Governments of caretakers and permanent officials. There are Coalitions of somewhat discordant elements. There are Oppositions on strike, and there is here and there a form of pseudo-democratic tyranny. The vanquished are more or less disarmed, but the victors, England and the United States excepted, stronger than ever. There is an apparent lack of great men, and if I say 'apparent' it is not because I underrate the sterling qualities of

many men now at the head of affairs, but because experience shows that statesmen do not spring into life all of a sudden, like Minerva from the head of Zeus, but grow slowly in repute and authority from a whole series of long experiences and successful endeavors. Scarcely any one of the men at the head of affairs on the continent of Europe, a king or two apart, has at his command this solid backing of prestige to affirm his position with his own people or to exercise authority abroad. Good-will, high character, brilliance, and industry many possess, but only time and a past record of real successes can affirm the predominance of a statesman, and therefore we must, I think, legislate for the long continuance of this want of prestige, and for the internal weaknesses, and perhaps upheavals, which may result from the failure of real authority in post-war Europe.

## GERMANY'S SECRET ARMY PLANS

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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No body of men in Europe have been more industrious, more vigilant, more cunning, since the Armistice than have the body of German military leaders, 'active' or 'retired,' in their endeavor to preserve all that might serve as a foundation for future strength. Their evasions of the Versailles disarmament clauses, their parries and thrusts against the efforts of the Control Organizations, have been uninterruptedly pursued in spite of Allied notes or decrees, Allied conferences, and Allied supervision on the spot.

It would be the highest indiscretion to imagine that the exclusion of many Monarchist generals from the Republican Reichswehr has sealed their fate and rendered them innocuous for all time. In Bavaria one hears the 'Ludendorff Group' spoken of frequently by those who know, as the most potent and most attractive power in the state; and the Ludendorff Group includes, besides that very active chief himself, Colonel Bauer, who last year planned a Russian-German-Hungarian alliance against the treaties, Commander Ehrhardt, the