

CHAOS

BY DOCTOR ERNST MOLDEN

[This article reviews a new book by Karl Friedrich Nowak, of which we give bibliographical data under Books Mentioned.]

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WAS that experience a reality or a dream? Chaos, a rapid, bloody drama, rending asunder our body politic, flashed before us with the speed of a hurried film, whose figures blur before our eyes and leave us confused and almost unconscious of their detail! No single individual among us, to be sure, actually passed through all of the experiences that followed the collapse of our military front in October 1918. No one saw more than a tiny section of that chaos with his own eyes. But here the hand of an author who has already published two notable books upon the war has arranged for us in orderly fashion the salient incidents of those decisive days when our defeat degenerated into chaos. Scene follows upon scene as in an absorbing romance. Every detail is painted with vivid colors, in language that, despite its marked individuality of style, never fails to tell its story with fluency and clearness.

In the middle of October 1918, when the German front was slowly yielding ground, Hindenburg begged for Austrian reinforcements. They were refused because our own front was in a critical position. In the Tyrol and Venetia our Austro-Hungarian troops, though they still believed themselves superior to their enemy, no longer had their former confidence. Their June offensive had failed. Although kept in the dark as to the ultimate reasons why, they knew that for the first time

in the war a general assault on the Italian front had not reached its objective. An infallible instinct told the common soldier that this fiasco was due to incompetent leadership. His respect for the enemy was not increased, but his confidence in his own commanders was diminished.

Possibly his generals might again do better in a pinch. But there was something else that did not promise to improve, something that was getting worse day by day. This was the army's provisioning and supplies. Our troops in the trenches were hardly better off than were the Bulgarian soldiers when they refused en masse to remain with the colors. Their clothes were in rags, many had no linen or underwear, they were miserably fed, their shoes were mere scraps of leather tied to the soles with strings.

None the less, our forces were still reliable. Common soldiers and officers alike were willing to stand by their guns. Then, all of a sudden, the manifesto of Emperor Charles burst like a bomb in the midst of men still eager, disciplined, and obedient soldiers. Instantly distrust ran like wild-fire through the army. The men did not understand what was going on, for their homes were distant and they had become almost strangers in their native villages. Agitators at once began to circulate from regiment to regiment — preachers of radicalism who inter-

preted the manifesto to their stolid but uneasy hearers to suit their own views.

First came the appeal of Count Michael Karolyi, then the appeal of Archduke Joseph. Here was an Imperial Field-Marshal and Archduke calling the Hungarian divisions back to their native land.

Even a conspiracy in the very staff of Archduke Joseph, at his Bozen headquarters, had not shaken confidence. The enemy seized the moment to make a general assault on our lines. At only one point, where the English were stationed, was he able to gain a few kilometres. The whole front commanded by Marshal Boroevic stood fast. That general did not fear the English, but he feared his own troops. In spite of all the efforts of the enemy, the battle never reached a critical phase. From a purely military standpoint, the Marshal felt perfectly safe. None the less, there was peril in the situation, peril of the most critical kind.

It was impossible to undertake a counter-offensive on the morning of October 29. The soldiers, ordered to advance, mutinied. The signal for this was given by the Twenty-sixth Regiment of Czech Rifles, who were facing the English. Before this, however, Hungarian troops in the Tyrol had refused to attack, and had hooted the Alpine troops who were ordered to take their place. Even the latter had become infected. The new Commander-in-Chief, Kövess, who had been summoned from Serbia to succeed Archduke Joseph, telegraphed the Kaiser at Baden: 'An armistice must be made at all costs, otherwise the army will demobilize of its own accord, and sweep back through the country like a devastating horde, burning and pillaging.'

Our enemy had no conception as yet of the extent of his victory, because it was not a victory won on the battlefield. He did not appreciate in the

slightest the demoralization behind our front. It was just at this time that Premier Lammasch summoned his Cabinet to its first meeting, to consult on measures for giving the dying monarchy, if possible, a new lease of life under a reformed constitution. But messengers of disaster followed each other in such quick succession that he adjourned the meeting. Revolution had broken out in Bohemia. The National Committee there had seized control of the government. But no details were known as to what was really occurring at Prague. No one knew what the ultimate purpose was. No one knew what was happening in Hungary.

The Czech leaders were in Switzerland, whither they had gone with passports provided by our confiding Foreign Minister. While at Vienna, on their way to Geneva, they had met the South Slav delegates at the Hôtel de France to make final arrangements for the contingency of a general break-up. It was then agreed to make no terms of any kind with Old Austria.

On this occasion Tusar, who was a member of the Austro-Hungarian Parliament, was given funds to set himself up as the new Czechoslovak agent in Vienna.

As soon as Tusar notified the people of Prague by telephone that our armies were in retreat, and just at the moment that Count Coudenhove, the Austro-Hungarian Statthalter in Bohemia, took the express at that city for Vienna to secure further instructions from the new Premier, Dr. Raschin issued his order: 'Now turn things loose.' The same day the Croats revolted. General Snjaric, the Military Commander at Agram, paid his personal respects to the Emperor, and then placed himself at the orders of the Croat National Council. The commander of the reserves and his forces followed this example. Imperial rosettes disappeared

from the officers' caps and were replaced by cockades. A memorandum had been presented to the Kaiser a short time before, in which his Chief of Staff informed him of the plans and programme of the South Slav revolutionists. Enemy submarines were carrying dispatches between Dr. Trombic of Serbia and the South Slav Committee in Austria-Hungary. Ever since October 30 the defection of the Slavs had been known to the Imperial Court.

The Kaiser thereupon presented the Imperial Fleet to the South Slav Government. Admiral Horthy first made this suggestion. Count Andrassy, to whom the monarch in his dismay exclaimed: 'What shall I do with the fleet?' answered: 'There is nothing else to do, Your Majesty. Give the Navy to the South Slav Government. Then there will be at least a little hope that it may fall wholly or partly into the hands of one of the succession States and eventually be saved for the House of Hapsburg.' Although everyone saw that the new national States would desert the old Empire, the Emperor and the Vienna Cabinet still clung to the hope that they might possibly accept Charles as their personal sovereign.

Blow upon blow, disaster upon disaster followed fast: Prague in revolt; the South Slavs in revolt; even the Hungarian capital in revolution! Within forty-eight hours, during those last days of October 1918, King Arpad's thousand-year-old realm on the Danube collapsed in fragments. Seventy thousand deserters were knocking about Budapest. They were hourly becoming bolder and defying the efforts of the authorities to restrain them. A National Council was organized. Returning officers from the front, labor leaders, Socialist radicals, and the students, most of whom were still in uniform, were determined to push things

further. Socialist ambition and the embittered patriotic resentment of the demoralized officers who had just returned from the trenches made common cause. One regiment mutinied; the Government leaders were in a panic.

Professor Jassy, Karolyi's adviser, asked the Socialist Kunfi: 'Do you think a revolution will break out to-day?'

'No,' was the answer, 'conditions are not yet ripe, no matter how vigorous our propaganda.'

'I believe,' declared the Professor, 'we shall all swing on the scaffold. We shall have a revolution without previous preparation.'

Kunfi assented: 'You are right. The young fellows and the officers have ruined everything. To tumble into a revolution like this! Several of the National Councillors have fled. Our cause is lost. We have not a single soldier with our company. They can arrest all of us.'

However, the company appeared, but not to arrest the Hungarian National Council. Instead it placed itself at their orders. The next morning the whole garrison declared in favor of the Council. Joseph Pogany, the author, volunteered to look after the troops. Count Michael Karolyi let him do so. The man in charge of people's kitchens was summoned, for there was no food for the soldiers. Pogany instructed him to have city maps prepared with the public eating-houses marked in red, and distributed to the soldiers; and ordered that the first meal should be the best it was possible to provide. His first concern was to keep the soldiers in good humor.

While these scenes were occurring at Vienna and Budapest, demoralization continued to make headway in the army at the front. For four days, from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-

eighth of October, the Belluno army group fought with praiseworthy discipline and courage. The Czechs of the dangerous Prague Palace Regiment distinguished themselves especially in this fighting. But overnight a complete change occurred. On the evening of October 24, Boroëvic ordered his officers not to punish disobedience to orders by military law, but to use moral suasion. Czech soldiers shouted to their commander: 'Klofac calls us!' The Croats protested: 'The Hungarians have been sent home. We want to go back to Croatia. We, too, must defend our country.' So Marshal Boroëvic issued an order from Udine for a general retirement along the entire front. The English had gained little and the Italians nothing by actual fighting. Our forces at the front, except for the Seventh Honved division, maintained their morale and fought as well as ever to the last. But behind them mutiny and desertion were running riot.

This was the situation when Austria asked for an immediate armistice. Her delegates hastened from Trent to Padua, while Vienna waited to hear the conditions. Finally, the Chief of the General Staff brought them. During the ensuing consultation, he advised that, severe as the terms were, they must be accepted. A member of the Cabinet objected that the opinion of the National Council must be obtained. This new executive body appeared. It consisted of seven members headed by Victor Adler, leader of the Social-Democrats. There was a consultation in the blue 'Chinese Salon' of the Schönbrunn Palace. The Kaiser entered. The armistice conditions were read. Victor Adler spoke:

'We did not make this war. Let the men who are responsible for the war reply to the armistice demands.'

Thereupon the Kaiser said: 'Neither did I make this war. At all cost, how-

ever, peace must be obtained for our people.'

'Quite true. Neither is Your Majesty guilty,' State Councillor Maier interrupted. 'The whole nation is guilty for the war. I remember how wildly everyone demanded war when it started.'

The State Council withdrew. The Emperor consulted with his old advisers, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of War, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. They nominally retained their portfolios in order that the Kaiser might not be entirely bereft of counsel. No one contradicted Baron Arz, when he declared that it was impossible to accept the armistice terms as presented. Freiherr von Spitzmüller, the Minister of Finance, insisted that some consideration should be shown for Austria's German allies; even though Austria surrendered to the enemy, she ought to demand at least that Italian troops should not march through her territories against Germany.

Finally, Arz burst into the Adjutant's room and hastened to the telephone. Baron Waldstätten answered.

'Thou, Waldstätten, get clearly what I am about to say. The armistice terms of the Entente are accepted. All fighting is to cease at once.'

Through a misunderstanding an order that delivered a hundred thousand troops prisoners into the hands of the enemy had been given. The next question was: What should the Emperor do? His different palaces and castles were considered. Count Erdödy brought alarming rumors as to conditions in Vienna. Schöber, the Police Chief, when asked by telephone, replied: 'I beg Your Majesty to be reassured. Schönbrunn is fully protected.' The Chief of Police felt that the working people, though excited by the course events were taking, would be obedient to their leaders. Victor Adler

had said: 'You need not worry, nothing will happen to the gentry. Whether he be King of Austria or Emperor of the United States of Southeastern Europe, Charles will be personally safe.'

It was already late at night. The

Kaiser recalled that the following day would be Sunday. He ordered a mass to be said; so the Court Bishop Seidl was summoned in haste. The Imperial couple did not leave Vienna until a few days later.

COLERIDGE AND THE MORNING POST

[This article appeared on the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Coleridge's birth. Although unsigned, it is probably from the pen of Mr. E. B. Osborn, literary editor of the *Morning Post*.]

From the *Morning Post*, October 21

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It is to-day a hundred and fifty years since the birth of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, many of whose most enduring writings were first printed in the *Morning Post*. At the close of the eighteenth century and the opening years of the nineteenth, when Daniel Stuart was editor and proprietor of this journal, Coleridge was the leading member of his staff.

Before that time the poet had been identified with several visionary projects, one of which was to open a school on a system that would, he believed, make his 'scholars better senators than perhaps any one member of either House of Parliament.' As a preliminary to this venture he was to perfect himself in German, taking up his residence in Jena, where Schiller lived, and translating the works of that author to support himself while studying at the local university. He went to Germany, visiting first Hamburg, then Ratzeburg, and finally — not Jena, but Göttingen, where he acquired great proficiency in the language of the country. On his return to England he secluded himself in lodgings near the Strand; where with-

in six weeks he completed his splendid translation of *Wallenstein*. But nothing came of his school for the education of statesmen.

While on the Continent, Coleridge had sent several poems to the editor of the *Morning Post*, who was so impressed with them and with what his own brother-in-law, Sir James Mackintosh, had said of the poet, that he offered him an appointment on the staff of the paper. 'Soon after my return from Germany,' Coleridge records, 'I was asked to undertake the literary and political departments of the *Morning Post*, and I acceded to the proposal on condition that the paper should thenceforward be conducted on certain fixed principles, and that I should neither be obliged nor requested to deviate from them in favor of any party.' But, as events proved, he would write neither what was wanted nor when he was wanted.

Despite all this, however, Stuart, who had Wordsworth, Southey, and Lamb among his contributors, gradually came to recognize the author of the *Ancient Mariner* as one of the