

Europe on the Eve

FELIX MORLEY

ON MAY 5, 1937, I was told by Eugene Meyer, then publisher of *The Washington Post*, that he would like me, as editor of the paper, to make a trip of observation and reporting in Europe with him. He had reservations on the *Normandie* in two weeks time, accompanied by Mrs. Meyer, their daughter Florence and a maid, these to be established in Paris for six weeks while he and I would travel around together. He would not go to Germany, because of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, but would be glad if I could make investigations there. All my expenses would be covered by the paper and my salary, while absent, paid directly to my wife.

It was, of course, a command performance but not less attractive for that reason. Events in Europe were obviously coming to a crisis. Hitler was moving towards *Anschluss*, or union, with Austria, and was threatening to annex the German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia. In Britain, France and Russia there was grave apprehension, but no coordinated policy of resistance to these or further Nazi demands. I had lived a total of nearly six years in Europe, spoke

French and German adequately and was familiar with the history and politics of the entire area. To "write up" the tense situation in an objective manner would be not merely a journalistic service but a pleasure. So I accepted immediately.

Nevertheless I knew in advance that there would be some travail in this travel. The plan was for the two of us to interview celebrities together, with the editor writing a series of informative articles on our findings for front-page display in *The Post*. The publisher had numerous European connections and rightly thought that his international financial know-how would serve to broaden my outlook. On the other hand, Mr. Meyer had little interest in average opinion and by refusing to visit Germany would miss the key to the entire situation. Moreover, he was unfamiliar with the techniques of newspaper correspondence, in which I had years of experience.

A good reporter does not argue with the person from whom he seeks information. He must, of course, question in a manner showing that he is both well-informed and alert to propaganda. But his basic function

is to present a *tabula rasa* on which the selected interviewee is invited to express opinions, whether wise or otherwise. When the questioner considers these deficient he does not directly contradict but seeks another source to present opposing viewpoints and thus obtain a balanced picture. Editorial opinion should be most sparingly used in writing a news story and never if the report is set forth as strictly factual.

This procedure was not Mr. Meyer's habit. In the triangular interviews throughout the trip he was not hesitant in expressing his own, well-informed ideas. To these the statesmen interviewed would always listen courteously, which did not justify the assumption of agreement. When the publisher heard a viewpoint in accord with his own he seldom thought it necessary to look further. In writing my articles, therefore, I was under intangible pressures never before experienced. Nor was it easy to grind out the correspondence at the end of exhausting days, while my colleague was socializing.

The social relationship was also somewhat anomalous. In some respects I served as a courier, making many of the appointments as well as travel and hotel arrangements. This was important, since my publisher was not accustomed to handling details for himself. Taking a taxi to the station, after an overnight visit to Brussels, I noticed that my chief was leaving without his suitcase and inquired. "I guess I thought the valet would pack it for me!" said Mr. Meyer ruefully. The editor could not refrain from observing that few newspapermen could depend on such auxiliary service.

I also functioned as a traveling companion. Mr. Meyer liked to talk and his wealth of experience, depth of knowledge and wide-ranging interests made him a fascinating conversationalist. But it was clear that the subordinate's role was to listen

rather than to dilate himself and as time went on the unilateral pattern became a little tiresome. Such annoyance, however, was offset by the publisher's unfailing generosity. He paid for almost everything, including tips. Federal Reserve notes fairly showered the decks of the *Normandie* as we disembarked. "It should not be a difficult trip," I confided to my journal, "as long as Meyer's bottomless purse stands back of me."

The Meyer ladies left the ship at Cherbourg, to establish a Paris base. Eugene and I, headed for London, went on to Southampton, passing through a big flotilla of the British fleet still assembled in the Solent following the Coronation Review for George VI. That night in London my brother Frank had us both to dinner at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, along with several mutual journalistic friends including Jim Bone of the *Guardian* and my old friend Hamish Miles, now a member of *The Times'* editorial staff. The blow-out must have been a strain on the fraternal pocketbook, immediately following a vacation trip to Salzburg, but Frank stood to it as the perfect host. It was the last time I would see Hamish, a cherished comrade from World War I days. In a few months the still youthful Scot would be stricken by an inoperable brain tumor. It seemed improbable that this delicate aesthete would get on well with so forceful a character as the aggressive Jewish publisher. But with individuals Eugene Meyer had an almost chameleon power of adaptation and the pair were simpatico.

The Imperial Conference was sitting in London, considering bonds soon to be tested in the furnace of war, and I spent the next morning with contacts made for me by old friends on the League of Nations' Secretariat—Raymond Kershaw for Australia and Craig McGeachie, a clever and attractive woman, for Canada. I lunched alone with my brother at Simpson's, after-

wards meeting Meyer at the U.S. Embassy for a quiet conference with Ray Atherton, now much more favorable to coordinated Anglo-American policies than had been the case when I had talked with this career diplomat in London a year earlier. Then publisher and editor caught a late afternoon train to Oxford where they were royally entertained overnight at Rhodes House, completed since my last presence at this Alma Mater, fifteen years earlier. Little else, however, was changed in Oxford and I had pleasure in acting as cicerone to my appreciative boss. By invitation we dined in Hall at New College (founded in 1386) where several old Dons of my time as a Rhodes Scholar received us cordially. Then there was port, in the Senior Common Room, and a moonlight stroll through well-remembered quadrangles and streets. "What a glorious old place it is," I wrote in my diary, "how unrivaled, how redolent of the finest human aspirations!" Next morning there was even time for a visit to Blackwell's famous bookshop before returning to London and lunch with Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, who had in, among others, Lord Lothian (the former Phillip Kerr) newly appointed Ambassador to Washington, Dawson was moderately pro-German, to the extent of regarding that country's overthrow of the Treaty of Versailles as justified. But more outspoken in this regard was elderly James L. Garvin, famous editor of *The Observer*, who argued strongly against any British—or American—policy that could lead towards an alliance with Soviet Russia. Communism, for Garvin, was much more of a threat than Hitler to Western civilization.

There were many more talks, with Labor Party leaders, economists, financiers and businessmen, during the crowded nine days in England. I found it exhausting, having had to produce articles, generally late at night, on the often conflicting impressions

with which the daytime hours were crowded. This writing, featured in *The Post* as my copy streamed in, had to be objective, clear and convincing, also much more "in depth" than ordinary cable correspondence. I had the necessary background and Meyer's comment, as we reviewed what we had heard, was often luminous and always helpful. But the publisher, for all his keen thinking, was congenitally unable to write a single paragraph of comprehensible newspaper English so that I had to compose to satisfy both. This was wearisome and when the weekend came I struck for time off, to leave London and visit quietly with my parents who had come over to make a visit to rural Woodbridge, the ancestral Morley home.

I was always grateful for this overnight stop in the placid, almost unchanging, East Anglian town. My father, now nearly 77, chatted happily of his boyhood days there, as we strolled along the river and through the familiar winding streets. We visited the abandoned Quaker Meeting House, then up for sale, and Professor Morley identified the simple family headstones in its little yard. The feverish panorama of this world's politics seemed far away. The old mathematician, back in his mid-Victorian childhood and never much concerned with current events, gave little thought to the developing madness. In time, but not yet, I would assume the same protective armor. That night I was in London again, picking up threads with Eugene Meyer. More interviews had been scheduled before leaving, 24 hours later, by the comfortable train ferry to Dunkirk and Paris. The small French port with a Scottish name—the kirk on the dunes—was familiar to me from the 1914 war. In the one impending it would become very widely known.

For the day of arrival in Paris an older sister of Mr. Meyer, wife of the Brazilian Ambassador there, had arranged a cozy

lunch with the then Premier of France, Leon Blum, as honor guest. Afterwards I talked at length with this leader of the uneasy Popular Front government, finding him surprisingly temperate towards Germany. "Blum," I wrote in my journal that night, "finds Czechoslovakia in the position of Poland at the end of the Eighteenth Century, which would seem to carry a certain implication of an eventual partition." But this pacific and gentle Socialist, who would oppose the Munich settlement, be interned by the Germans and surface briefly after World War II, was at the moment on the eve of overthrow by the Chamber of Deputies. Another Premier, Camille Chautemps, was in office a few days later. With him, as well as with former Premier Herriot, Georges Bonnet, René de Chambrun, Pierre Comert, Bertrand de Jouvenel, André Philip and other influential French friends I conferred at length. It was cumulatively evident that France, far more than Britain, was both physically unprepared and psychologically unwilling to stand up to German demands, a fact of which the *Führer* was certainly well aware.

The stay in Paris was broken by an overnight trip to Brussels, for a talk arranged with Prime Minister Paul Van Zeeland. The Belgian leader was about to visit Washington and welcomed the backstage advice which Mr. Meyer was both competent and glad to give him. Van Zeeland, a forceful and able conservative, was more anxious to ask than to answer questions but asserted that Belgium could successfully maintain its newly-announced neutrality in the event of another war. He made plain his concern about French political weakness, with all the implications for a small adjacent country unable to resist alone. It made me the more anxious to get a slant on the Nazi attitude, when I took the sleeper from Paris to Berlin the night of June 9. I would have

a scant four days in the German capital, before rejoining Mr. Meyer in Prague.

Though necessarily brief, the editor looked forward to this dip into the Third Reich with keen anticipation. It was his first visit to Germany since 1931 and Berlin he had not seen for sixteen years. Thus he was in an excellent position to observe the changes brought by the Nazis, the more so because of familiarity with the language. In casual conversation it was easy for him to pose as a curious German-American, on a first visit to the *Vaterland* since childhood. The approach always brought an interested and seemingly frank response. Also he was fortunate in having good friends at the U.S. Embassy: Jimmy Riddleberger, well up the diplomatic ladder since their Geneva acquaintance; Loyd Steere, the agricultural attaché, whom he had known in Washington, and Douglas Miller, a Rhodes Scholar of his vintage, then serving as commercial attaché.¹ Foremost among German friends was former Judge Karl von Lewinski who described his country as a "*sehr orderliches Gefängnis*" (very orderly prison). Another old friend, Paul Leverkuehn, a reserve officer, was at the time away on maneuvers.

In Berlin, however, there was little evidence of armed force, some said because military preparedness was so unpopular. Persecution of Jews and Communists was still relatively restrained and I was disposed to think the police-state stories somewhat exaggerated. I had been told that my baggage would certainly be secretly examined and therefore, on reaching the Adlon Hotel, arranged papers in my unlocked suitcase so that it would be obvious immediately if they were at all disturbed. Somewhat to my disappointment there was no evidence of this. On the other hand, von Lewinski told me of the police agents employed as doormen for every apartment house and anticipated questioning about my visit.

Germany seemed in more pacific mood than expected. Certainly the "man in the street"—taxi drivers, waiters, shopkeepers—deplored the possibility of another war. Uninvited but welcomed I joined a random student group for a *Bierabend* in a popular restaurant. The songs were all sentimental—nothing patriotic—and the boys and girls alike were unanimously critical of Hitler's saber-rattling. I went with von Lewinski to watch the Davis Cup tennis match with Belgium and noted how punctiliously the audience applauded points scored by the outplayed foreigners. Nor did the atmosphere seem exceptionally repressive. That evening the judge took his daughter and son-in-law, an Austrian architect named Wiedemann, along with their visitor to dinner at the big outdoor restaurant in the Zoologischer Garten. Towards the end of a merry meal the young Austrian pulled a lock of his black hair down his forehead, held a small pocket comb so that it looked like a trim moustache, and began a high-pitched gabble obviously imitative of the *Führer*. I was appalled, expecting immediate arrest by the Gestapo. But people at nearby tables only smiled. "For the moment one Austrian can make fun of another," said von Lewinski. Nevertheless Wiedemann, like everyone else, rose to his feet for mass singing of the Horst Wessel Lied and followed it with the Nazi salute from which I alone refrained. The architect was no Nazi but he viewed the German-Austrian *Anschluss* as inevitable. "There was no work for me in Vienna," he said. "I had to come to Germany for employment. Either Germany takes over Austria or half my countrymen will migrate here, where jobs are plentiful."

It was extremely hot in Berlin—37° Centigrade *im Schatten* people complained—and the renowned energy of the inhabitants was somewhat subdued thereby. Having made no advance arrangements I could not get to talk with either Hitler or Goering,

which was regrettable. However, with the help of the Embassy, I made appointments with several lesser Nazi functionaries. Notable among these was Dr. Walther Darré, Minister of Agriculture and Nutrition, a big man who received the visitor in a baggy and unseasonable suit which he proudly explained had just been made from beechwood fibre. "The process will save us imports of wool," said the Minister. "And it is developing so well that we plan to plant thousands of beech trees in this area"—pointing to a big wall map—"where the beech flourishes." A few hours later, at the Air Ministry, the editor was told of plans for a new commercial airport north of Berlin, located for him on an identical map in the same area that Dr. Darré had designated for forestation. I asked whether this would eliminate previous farmland. "Practically none," replied the official. "It's very poor soil, growing nothing but beech trees useful only for firewood." Like big bureaucracies everywhere the National Socialist planners were often working at cross-purposes. But this particular contretemps was doubtless straightened out by Goering, who was at the time director of both aviation and forestry.

Dr. Darré convinced me that "in case of need" Germany would prove more self-sufficient than had been the case in the first war. That this "need" was not imaginary I was forced to conclude from my most significant interview, with Dr. Karl Haushofer, the geopolitician said to have been largely responsible for guiding Hitler's foreign policy. Though gracious, this scholarly old man would talk about his "Heartland" theory only under a pledge of no quotation or attribution "since Americans are so prone to misunderstand." With this reservation, Haushofer spoke eloquently. The "Heartland" of Europe, he explained, is the great prairie which extends without significant natural interruption from the

Elbe River to the Ural Mountains. It is for the most part invulnerable to sea power and too huge for successful air attack. "Whoever dominates that plain will control the destiny of the Continent." Currently, he said, using a map and pointer in professional manner, Prussia and Poland control the western part of this vital area, the bulk of which is in Russian hands. Should Russia take over Poland and Eastern Germany, then Communism would be the master of all Europe and, working with a Red China, would control the Eurasian land mass and, in effect, the world. It was therefore in the interest of the West that Germany work out an arrangement with Poland, keeping a large part of the "Heartland" from Russian domination. This meant modification of the Polish Corridor, by which the Treaty of Versailles had inexcusably split East Prussia from the rest of Germany. To that end Nazi diplomacy was dedicated and he hoped his visitor would recognize that such a settlement was in the interest of all. There was no question of Haushofer's sincerity. His presentation was thoughtful and I felt able to present its essence, without mentioning the source, in one of my articles.

On the last morning of his stay the editor went for a drive on the much advertised, and beautifully engineered, *Autobahn*, then visiting the *Vier Jahre Zeit* exposition with Douglas Miller. The name expressed the four more years of power which Hitler asked in order to complete his program of German regeneration. Actually four years from that date would see the German armies plunging deep into their eventual disaster in Russia. But the exposition, focussing on industrial accomplishment, was impressive. At the entrance was a big painting with the title from the Gospel of St. John: *Am Anfang war das Wort*—"In the Beginning was the Word." This somewhat sacrilegious representation showed Hitler talking to a group in a cellar, during the

proscribed period of the Nazi movement. His small audience was evidently intended to depict his appeal to all elements of German society. There was a one-legged war veteran, a college student, an old Hausfrau knitting as she listened, a peasant, a beautiful blonde maiden, a businessman in stiff collar with briefcase under his arm and other symbolic figures. I have often wondered about the fate of that starkly propagandist painting.

That afternoon the correspondent was formally invited to the U.S. Embassy, where he had tea *à deux* with William E. Dodd, the much-trying Ambassador who was soon to give up his not too successful tenure of office there. In reply to questioning as to my findings I emphasized the contrast between the despairing German mood of 1921 and the completely self-confident, not to say arrogant, Nazi attitude in 1937. The Ambassador, a student of history, nodded his head sadly. "The wheel has turned too quickly," he said, confirming von Lewinski's gloomy prediction that Hitler henceforth would show little restraint. That night, after mailing a couple of articles to catch a German express steamer, I took the train for Prague. There was a brief stop-over in lovely Dresden; then across the contested frontier and through the seething Sudetenland to meet Mr. Meyer for breakfast at his hotel in the capital of Czechoslovakia.

Prague was no longer quite as picturesque a city as I remembered from a visit in 1921. During the intervening years Czech passion for modernization had swept away much of the medieval huddle around the Karlůvmost, oldest and most decorative of the dozen bridges across the Vltava river. It had been called *Karlsbrücke* and the correspondent found the rigidly enforced change from German to Czech nomenclature confusing. He could not accustom himself to speaking of the beautiful

old *Theinkirche* as *Tynskykostel*. The Christmas Carol helped with the one named after St. Wenceslaus. But local pronunciation of the great Gothic Cathedral of St. Vitus was never absorbed. That seemed a particularly appropriate patron for a people as nervously energetic as the Czechs.

But there was little time for sightseeing. Mr. Meyer had secured an appointment with President Edward Benes and by mid-morning we were at his office, in the great hilltop castle of Hradcany. It is said to contain 868 separate rooms and certainly many stately halls were traversed before the visitors were ushered into the huge audience chamber where the President, a small and sharp-looking man, seemed both physically and metaphorically lost. He sat at a royal desk with a magnificent view over the far-flung city with the winding river cutting through its middle. Through the tall windows of this room, onto the rocks far below, several unpopular governors of Bohemia had been unceremoniously ejected some centuries ago. This crude form of justice was euphemized in the official guidebook as "defenestration." I had no premonition that Jan Masaryk, foreign minister of the Republic and son of its first President, would be similarly "defenestrated" when the Communists took control of Prague, early in 1948.

The interview was conducted in English, which Benes spoke with extraordinary lucidity. It soon demonstrated that a prevalent English criticism of his policy—its extreme Czech nationalism—was fully justified. Czechoslovakia, a hybrid creation of the Paris Peace Conference, bore little resemblance to the ancient kingdom of Bohemia which was supposed to give it historical justification. The artificial boundaries included big blocs of discontented Germans, Magyars, Moravians, Poles and Ruthenians to whom the governing Czechs and Slovaks allowed little autonomy. Since

there was also bad feeling between its two dominant elements Czechoslovakia reproduced, on a less stable basis, all the political weakness of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy from which it had been arbitrarily carved by the Paris peace-makers. And no minority president could hope to inspire the solidifying loyalty with which the Hapsburgs had cemented the old regime.

According to Dr. Benes his country had no problems that could not be solved with a little more time and a little less Hitler. Unquestionably the latter was working zealously to stir discontent in the heavily Germanic part of Czechoslovakia. But this only made the Czech leaders more adamant in refusing to Sudeten Germans the same right of self-determination with which the former had so eloquently clouded Woodrow Wilson's vision. Even in 1937, I believe, a really federalized republic, emphasizing home rule, might have solved the problem. Dr. Benes could not see it that way so it was ironic that a decade later he would have to accept the Kremlin's solution, annexing the tail of Czechoslovakia and making the remainder a vassal "people's democratic republic." Yet, as a predominantly Slavic country, it was a not unnatural fate for an area doomed by geography alone to a precarious independence. There was little apprehension among the merry group of Czech officials who took the editor to dinner that evening at a beautiful river-side restaurant. Since the United States had presided over Czechoslovakia's rise, they told him, Americans would surely prevent its fall. It was the same unhappy assumption that would later involve us in Korea, Vietnam and Israel. I wondered about this assumed "commitment" as I took the sleeper for Vienna, where Mr. Meyer had preceded me by plane. But I was certain, from what I had learned in Germany, that the Nazi hammer would fall first on Austria.

Though no plebiscite on the issue was

ever held it is probable that, in 1937, a large majority of Austrians looked favorably on union with Germany. The larger country was much more prosperous than the truncated remnant of Hapsburg grandeur and the Nazi movement had not by then wholly disgraced itself, except in Jewish eyes. The faded magnificence of Vienna only emphasized the poverty of the mountainous sliver to which the old dual monarchy had been reduced and in the disproportionately huge capital one worker in every three was unemployed. Scars from recent street fighting were apparent and the government of moderate Chancellor Schuschnigg wavered helplessly between the Nazi and Communist factions. Hope of stability had vanished with the assassination of Chancellor Dollfuss, three years earlier, and everyone seemed to agree that a German takeover, though feared by many, was inevitable. Again the sorry consequences of the Versailles "peace" were all too apparent.

The principal Vienna informant of *The Post* correspondent was the U.S. Minister, George S. Messersmith, a career diplomat who had previously been Consul General in Berlin and was familiar with the economic as well as political aspects of the situation. He confirmed the report, heard by me in Berlin, that Mussolini had withdrawn his earlier objections to *Anschluss*, thus making the Austro-German union virtually certain. The question was no longer *whether* but only *when* and *how* it would take place, a subject much debated at the Café Louvre where the foreign correspondents gathered to exchange reports and rumors. I felt so sure of the ground on *Anschluss* that I predicted it in one of my articles, following an interview with timid Foreign Minister Schmidt. This was at the famous Ballhausplatz where the Congress of Vienna, by refusing to humiliate and crush Napoleonic France, had worked out

a contrastingly durable peace. Meyer got virtual confirmation of the Hitler-Mussolini accord when he called upon Chancellor Schuschnigg the evening that I left for Munich, "*Hauptstadt der Bewegung*" (Chief City of the Movement), where I felt it important to look into the mechanics of Nazi operation.

Not the least illuminating meeting of the Vienna stay was one with Helena Kollmann, the Austrian girl who had cared for our small daughters in Baltimore and then accompanied the family to Geneva in 1928. Helena had risen to the position of inspector in a textile factory and was engaged to an expert woodworker, Hans Mareda, who came with her to the dinner I arranged in a modest restaurant. Hans was unable to find work, even as a plain carpenter, because of the cessation of almost all construction in Vienna. Consequently Helena could not marry, her own small wage being scarcely sufficient to support her widowed mother. Nobody could have been less of a Nazi than Helena but her comment on *Anschluss* was: "Most of my friends think that is our only hope." It would be nearly nine months before Hitler would actually incorporate Austria in the Third Reich. But certainly nobody should have been surprised when he finally moved to do so.

At the British Embassy, in Berlin, I had been advised to make contact with His Majesty's Consul General in Munich. This Mr. Gainor was said to be unusually well-informed on details of National Socialist organization. By prearrangement, therefore, the correspondent went direct from the railroad station to the British Consulate where this high-type civil servant described the "apparatus" built up by Hitler and his associates to control and direct the German people. It was a terrifying analysis of the manner in which principles of business management can be applied to keep an entire population in efficient subjection. Then

I reported to the *Presse Abteilung* and was sent on with an escort to the famous "Braunhaus," national headquarters of the Nazi Party. Here, as everywhere, I was well received and shown in operation the complex organization which Gairner had already described. Great batteries of filing cabinets contained individual cards for every party member, cross-indexed both for localities and skills. When a job of any magnitude was to be filled, either in industry or the professions, particulars had to be sent to the Braunhaus. If a registered Nazi met the requirements he or she would be "recommended" to the employer, whether that was a schoolboard in Silesia or an insurance office in the Rhineland. In reply to a question the reporter was assured that there was no "legal" obligation to employ the referred *Partei Mitglieder* in preference to another applicant. "But we haven't set up this system just for the fun of it," the official added with a smile.

This careful melding of Nazi members and directive positions was curiously distorted in the highest echelons of government. There executive appointments were often given to obviously unqualified persons, merely because they had been associated with Hitler in the early days of the movement. Ribbentrop, soon to become Foreign Minister, was one illustration of this bad staff work and a number of incompetent generals were equally disastrous. Goering was everywhere regarded as an able man, and also Dr. Goebbels in his twisted way. But when war came most of those in the Fuehrer's intimate circle could not be called competent, still less distinguished. This was a point much emphasized by my Russian Embassy friend, Nehmann, whenever I argued with him in Washington that the Communist and Nazi dictatorships were essentially similar. "To be a Nazi," said Nehmann, "you need only goosestep and shout 'Heil Hitler'. To be a Communist

you must first and foremost be well trained. Stumblebums do not last long in the Communist hierarchy."

A pleasant young official from the Press Bureau—Eric Gassner—was assigned as escort and on request took me to the "Temple of Honor" where Hitler's comrades killed in the premature Putsch of 1923 were buried. I had heard that this illustrated German sentimentality at its most maudlin. In a deeply excavated shrine, reached by a ring of marble steps, a dozen great granite sarcophagi were aligned, each bearing the name of the fallen under an elaborately carved eagle and wreath-encircled swastika. Below all this was the word *HIER* in large capitals, this being the presumed answer of the interred to the summons of the *Fuehrer*. This domed temple of *Ewige Wache*, or Eternal Watch, was continuously guarded by steel-helmeted, strapping S.S. troopers but did not seem to attract many visitors. I then asked whether I might visit Dachau, a concentration camp near Munich where many Jews were said to be confined. That would be impossible without a special pass and 24 hours delay, said Gassner, adding that only Communists, profiteers and other "criminals" were under detention there. "I expect you are going to have racial trouble with your Negroes," he added evasively.

Frau Gassner, blond, beautiful, petite and lively, joined us for lunch at the famous Hofbrauhaus, and surprised me by telling stories making fun of Hitler. One stuck in memory, about a Muenchener who was arrested for causing a street disturbance. He was charged with repeatedly shouting: "First I come and then comes Hitler." The magistrate asked his name. "Heinrich Heil, your Honor, Heil Hitler!" Many Bavarians would never use that sychophantic greeting, sticking to their traditional *Grüss Gott*. All told I was in Munich only 12 hours on this trip but it

gave opportunity to revisit several of the lovely old places which the bombings would irreparably damage. The Gassners saw me to my train and I sought to balance my thoughts from the tidy and tended countryside, speeding through the long summer evening towards the Alpine barrier and Geneva beyond.

At Zürich a *courette* was available, but there were no covers and I spent an uncomfortable night, not much relieved by making notes for my article on Nazi Munich. Then, as the train pulled into Cornavin Station in the gray dawn, there was a familiar voice and a broad, smiling face at the window. They belonged to my cheery Swabian friend Fritz Schnable, the German chief of the League of Nations Publications Division, with whom I had worked closely seven years earlier. Old Fritz had risen at 4:00 a.m. to meet me and take me to the Schnable home for a hot bath and breakfast before the long day started. Respect for the many incorruptible German individualists whom he knew, like Schnable and von Lewinski, kept the reporter from falling into the conventional pattern of indiscriminate hatred. He would think of his friends across the Rhine when Americans asserted, as many came to do, that: "All Huns are uncivilized."

It was a poignant experience to revisit Geneva, outwardly as unchanged as overshadowing Mont Blanc since he had reluctantly left there early in 1931. "Except that Isabel was not with me," he wrote in his journal, it was all "unalloyed pleasure." Yet, in the same entry, this was qualified. ". . . there is something tragic in the tranquility of the place, by contrast with the alarms and excursions for which solutions should be sought at the League H.Q., and are not."

For the editor the return had aspects of Homecoming Day. Many of his old friends were still, somewhat nervously, with the

Secretariat and he was lodged at Merimont, the palatial Sweetser residence which Isabel and he had occupied the summer of 1930. Joseph Avenol, who had succeeded Sir Eric Drummond as Secretary-General, gave a big luncheon for him and Mr. Meyer, who was also a Sweetser guest. Together they inspected the new and handsome Palais des Nations, with the many artistic gifts from various governments and the striking Sert murals in the imposing Council Chamber. In the fine library I was shown a shelf with several well-thumbed copies of my book on *The Society of Nations*—a "must" for every serious student of the League, they said graciously. "But over all," I noted, "broods that ominous quiet, though it is clear that the machinery is well-oiled and all ready to function if only the governments will call it into action." I could have stayed a month with pleasure but Meyer now was eager to get back. For those who had shown the travelers attention at Geneva the publisher gave a big dinner at Eaux Vives, the modish lakeside restaurant which the Morleys had come to know well during their residence. Afterwards, at the less pretentious and more familiar Bavaria *Bierstube* there was time for a couple of steins with magnetic Robert Dell, roving correspondent of the *Guardian*, who before long would be in trouble with the French authorities for alleged pro-Germanism.

Then on to Paris, where Chaumpey had now replaced the vacillating Blum as Premier. The French financial situation was desperate; the franc growing weaker daily. With Meyer doing the shrewd questioning an illuminating discussion with the new Prime Minister was obtained. I cabled the essence of this to *The Post* and then hurried to London where a key Parliamentary debate on British policy in the worsening Spanish crisis was scheduled. A Labor Party resolution calling for aid to the collapsing Republican government was up for

decision and Prime Minister Chamberlain's insistence on strict neutrality was roundly criticized. The editor had wangled a seat in the crowded press gallery of the House of Commons, where he admired the perfect courtesy with which sharp acrimony was cloaked. When Chamberlain said it was "a time for cool heads" Lloyd George retorted that "any fish can have a cool head. What Britain needs now is a warm heart." But the Prime Minister had the majority solidly behind his pacific course, as later at Munich, and the move to intervene in Spain was defeated, nearly two to one. As I reported, confusion was dominant in France, caution in Britain, indifference in the United States and helplessness in the League of Nations. It was not a combination likely to deter a Nazi takeover in Austria, when Hitler got ready to strike.

This was my last report on a memorable circuit. The next day, June 26, the editor boarded the *Berengaria* at Southampton. At Cherbourg Mr. Meyer rejoined from Paris and they docked in New York July 2, just 44 days after departure. For me it had been a grueling period. In addition to several cables I had written some twenty careful articles which *The Post* would soon republish in booklet form, titled *Europe Today*. On the whole relations with my boss had been excellent but judgments were not always uniform. They could not be, in view of Mr. Meyer's very natural refusal to inspect the German scene. In a frank discussion on the return trip the publisher accused his editor of undue resistance to the former's ideas. To this I replied tartly that if a Yes-man had been wanted I was a poor selection. The breeze blew over quickly and probably revealed, more than anything else, the anxieties which both men were bringing back.

It was obvious that the machinery of collective action had completely broken down. The League was moribund. For the first

time war now seemed to me a probability. Hitler would force it because his growing megalomania would overstrain the breaking point of British toleration. There would be no resistance to German annexation of Austria, justifiable under the principle of self-determination. There would probably be no war if jerrybuilt Czechoslovakia were dismembered by German pressure. Britain had no treaty commitment there, aside from the general obligations of the disintegrating League Covenant, and France was in no condition to resist. But the third step in Hitler's expansion program would be to recover Danzig and the territorial connection with East Prussia, at Polish expense. Here there would certainly be stern opposition, for different reasons, both from Britain and from Russia. Because of the significance of the Polish vote this would also shake American neutrality.

If war should come, what would be its effect on nations already half-ruined and morally debilitated by the degeneration of the last conflict? What Pandora's box of lasting social evils would be opened by the vengeful emotionalism that renewed hostilities would inevitably produce? The idealized brutalities of Commando training, for instance, would surely have its heritage in a growth of organized gangsterism, most dangerous in American cities because of racial overtones. Belief in the sanctity of private property, dear to American hearts, would be weakened by countless requisitions, confiscations and authorized destruction. Finally, what would be the effect of total war, with its enormous impetus for centralization, on the structure of a federal republic constitutionally dedicated to the dispersion, division and localization of power? There was more than a chance that such schizophrenia would undermine the basic institutions of the United States, no matter who won or lost on fields of battle.

What then should be the policy of the

United States, and what the editorial policy of *The Post*? The answer to the first question should also answer the second, but I was not too confident that this would be the case. It would be no gain for America if Communism should take over in Central Europe, which would be the probable result of a violent Nazi overthrow. The intolerable humiliation and impossible exactions of the Treaty of Versailles were fundamentally responsible for the mass neurosis that had swept Hitler to power. The movement was anathema to countless Germans and, unlike the deeply calculating Communist leadership, was unlikely to last if international

stability could be restored. On the other hand Americans were sure to become evermore anti-German if Nazi persecution of the Jews was stepped up, as seemed all too probable. And as a Jew could my publisher be expected to support the difficult policy of neutrality that pure reason suggested as the best American course, more so because the intervention of 1917 had been so barren of good results?

These questions deeply worried me on the voyage home. The sea was calm and the weather glorious. But the editor knew that a hurricane was gathering.

¹In 1941 Miller published a strongly anti-Nazi book: *You Can't Do Business With Hitler*. A more balanced study of the period is found in

Failure of a Mission, by Sir Nevile Henderson, who in 1937 was the newly-installed British Ambassador to Germany.

T.S. Eliot and the Critique of Liberalism

GEORGE A. PANICHAS

Are you aware that the more serious thinkers among us are used . . . to regard the spirit of Liberalism as the characteristic of the destined Antichrist?

—John Henry Newman (1841)

EXCEPT FOR FRAGMENTS, the critique of modern liberalism has not been written. It cannot be otherwise. Our experience of liberalism, whether at this point of cruel history it is that of a moribund liberalism or of a *meta*-liberalism, remains dynamic. We can record the cumulative effects of the process, its inclusive progressions, but we can hardly determine its complete and final ending. We shall have to be content with the fragments that contain the substance of the critique of modern liberalism. Julien Benda, José Ortega y Gasset, and Nicolas Berdyaev on the Continent, T. E. Hulme and Christopher Dawson in England, Irving Babbitt and Reinhold Niebuhr in the United States—it is to writers like these that we need to turn in order to compile such a critique. Unquestionably, the name of Thomas Stearns Eliot figures prominently in this hierarchic list despite the fact that his social writings now seem to be read only by literary scholars. They are largely dismissed, except to be ridiculed or damned, by most critics and cultural historians. Yet Eliot's contribution to the critique of modern liberalism is considerable. That his contribution has been misunderstood and misrepresented as an example of "right-wing millennialism," reflects not upon the quality

of Eliot's thought but rather upon twentieth-century intellectuals who, as Benda once pointed out, do not have enough moral stamina to carry the weight of their culture.

Modern man has still to acquire those high items of civilization that Eliot admired in Virgil's world, a "more civilized world of dignity, reason and order." Eliot was thoroughly aware of the dominance of those forces leading to the decline of Western culture. "The forces of deterioration are a large crawling mass," he says, "and the forces of development half a dozen men." From the beginning he knew on which side of the cultural argument he belonged. That is, he refused to accept indiscriminately the view that cultural change is the law of life—a view that liberal ideologues have stoutly defended. This view epitomized for Eliot precisely the heresy that leads to cultural breakdown. "The heretic," he insists, "whether he call himself fascist, or communist, or democrat or rationalist always has low ideals and great expectations." Eliot chose to resist the liberal doctrine no less than the liberal trend that he saw ascendant in the world. He made his choice knowing its alienating consequences. "What Machiavelli did not see about human nature is the myth of human goodness which for liberal