

# French Opinion on the War

I HAVE not been out of France since the beginning of the war, except for five weeks spent in England at the end of 1914. Nearly all my friends here are French and circumstances bring me in touch with people of all classes and various shades of opinion. Nothing is more difficult, it is obvious, than to get any accurate information about the state of opinion in a belligerent country, and I hesitate to generalize about French public opinion. But on one point I am quite decided: opinion is very different here from what it was a year ago, and still more different from what it was earlier in the war.

About English opinion I cannot speak at all definitely, for I have not been in England for eighteen months, but from all that I hear, it is very much what French opinion was eighteen months ago. That would be natural, since England came effectively into the war so much later than France, and for a long time after the war began the bulk of the English people was little affected by it directly. Here the war has affected almost everybody from the first; conscription makes an immense difference in that regard. However, even now, England has not suffered from the war to anything like the same extent as France. The losses of men, great as they are in proportion to the effectives, do not come near the losses in France. The economic conditions in England are still incomparably better than in France, where trade and industry have been paralyzed for nearly two years and only trade in munitions and that in food and drink flourish. France is living on capital and on imports; the imports rise steadily every month and, for the first four months of this year, reached a total value of about five hundred million dollars, an increase of about thirty per cent on the first four months of last year. Naturally, the idea of a long war of attrition, which seems to be complacently accepted in England, has never been accepted here. Indeed there is a good deal of popular dissatisfaction with England due to the belief that England is indifferent to the duration of the war, because it has not suffered as France has suffered, and that the English do not realize what the prolongation of the war would mean to France or what the war means to France already.

There are, so far as I can judge, very few people left in France who believe that it is possible to reduce the enemy to impotence. M. Maurice Barrès has long since abandoned his favorite pastime of carving up the German Empire in ad-

vance and we hear no more of ambitious schemes of annexing German territory up to the Rhine. Even M. Hervé hardly ever says now that peace is impossible until we have liberated the inhabitants of Schleswig-Holstein, the Dalmatians, the Croats, the Czechs, and heaven knows whom besides, and restored freedom to Poland under the benevolent sceptre of the Czar. It is no longer even the official program of the government to reduce Germany to impotence; M. Briand, when he became Prime Minister last November, merely asked that Germany should be willing "to resume its rank among the nations with the intention of developing itself according to its genius while respecting the genius of others." A nation that was reduced to impotence could not develop itself at all. The last place in which it is believed that it is possible to reduce Germany to impotence is probably the army. Certainly, in spite of the continued official declarations that we are more sure of victory than ever, French opinion is much less optimistic than it was; or, let us say, it has fewer illusions.

Of those people who, when in February, 1915, there was a talk of German peace overtures, explained those overtures by the hypothesis that Germany recognized that it had done all it could, there are some who now say that it was a great mistake not to have made peace long ago—that we shall probably get no better terms for having waited. Indeed the question: "What good will come of it?" is becoming a very frequent one. People are beginning to realize that victory itself would be of no use if, when it came, France, as M. Jean Herbeté said recently in the *Echo de Paris*, most bellicose of papers, came out of the war bled to death (*saignée au blanc*). The question whether the war will be crowned by victory is becoming of much less importance than the question of the effect of the war on France, whatever its result may be. Victory will not bring back the dead to life, restore those who are permanently maimed, or prevent the physical degeneration that must ensue if only the weak and the old are left to be the fathers of the future. On the whole I should say that the feeling in France resembles that in Germany much more than it resembles the feeling in England, for the conditions in France and Germany are much more alike, although France, of course, is not suffering from the scarcity that the British fleet has caused in Germany. Prices are very high here, but there is no real scarcity.

Such are the modest generalizations to which I am prepared to commit myself, and I will add one

more to them. Very few people here, so far as I can judge, would be prepared to accept peace at any price, but if peace were offered to France tomorrow with the evacuation of French and Belgian territory and the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine, there would not be one per cent of the French people in favor of continuing the war in order to crush German militarism or reduce Germany to impotence. One great difficulty in the way of peace negotiations is that the respective governments have so terribly compromised themselves by the extravagant hopes that they have held out to their respective peoples. Dr. Bethmann-Hollweg talks, reasonably enough, of the necessity of looking at the land map of the war, but he voluntarily forgets to look at the map of the sea.

Apart from the points as to which it is possible to generalize at all, there are great differences of opinion according to age, class and locality. The old are much more bellicose than the young as a rule; those who still say that we must exterminate the Germans, reduce them to impotence for two centuries, or take other drastic measures in their regard, are nearly always over sixty and usually over seventy. The old seem horribly indifferent to the massacre of the young; I hardly like to say that they are actually pleased to survive so many men younger than themselves, but really they sometimes talk in such a way as to suggest that. This is an old man's war so far as its direction is concerned; it is the old who send the young to be killed. It is very easy to shout "*jusqu' au bout*," when one is in no danger of going even "*jusqu' au front*," and those who are not fighting seem as a rule much more bellicose than those who are. The French army has shown magnificent courage and tenacity as a whole, but it is not the men at the front who say that they like war or paint attractive pictures of the delightful life in the trenches; they leave all that to elderly academicians and journalists. I have met many men who have been made anti-militarists by going to the front; I have never met or even heard of an example of a contrary conversion, although I cannot assert that it is unknown.

Among those who are not fighting there are the differences of class and locality. For instance, Paris is, as it always has been, more jingo than the other large towns. There are certain towns such as Limoges and Grenoble, where the movement in favor of peace is very strong and has gained the large majority of the population. The south of France is more strongly in favor of peace on the whole than other parts of the country; it has always been intensely anti-militarist. The French Socialist party has been split in two by the war; a minority of rather more than one-third of the

Socialist deputies—about thirty-five—advocate the immediate resumption of international relations with other Socialist parties, including those of enemy countries, in order to organize an international movement for peace. This minority is now in permanent opposition, whereas the majority of the Socialist deputies is ministerial, as in Germany. The Socialist deputies for Toulouse are in the majority, but the Socialist party in Toulouse has declared in favor of the minority. Other southern towns are inclined in the same direction.

An interesting circumstance is that there is a growing feeling in favor of peace in conservative circles, and the peasants form perhaps the class that is as a whole most anxious to finish the war. This is interesting, because the conservatives and the peasants made peace in 1871 against the wish of the urban population and of the advanced parties led by Gambetta. The peasants voted conservative in 1871, whereas they now vote radical in most parts of France, chiefly because they are anti-clerical. They still remain conservative, although firmly Republican, however; they have no sympathy with royalism or any other form of reaction. Even in departments where the peasants return Socialist or advanced radical deputies, their innate conservatism is not rooted out. The peasants are slow to act and difficult to move, but they have a large voice in the government of France. If they really made up their minds that the war must be brought to an end, peace negotiations would be near.

Although, as I have said, there is a peace tendency in certain conservative circles, especially among the families of the old Right who are Orleanists by tradition, the bourgeoisie—that is to say, those who are neither peasants nor proletariat—is on the whole the most bellicose class of the population. The Nationalist reaction that preceded the war was almost entirely confined to the bourgeoisie. It greatly affected the younger generation, many of whom are now much less Nationalist than they were before they knew what war meant. The older generation has not had that experience and it is suffering less from the war than the corresponding class in any other belligerent country. There are a good many people, of course, who are positively profiting by the war; the profits on government contracts are enormous, since the government pays far too much for everything, especially munitions, and large sums are earned by mere intermediaries. But, leaving aside those who profit by the war and, therefore, are not anxious to see the end of it, the class that lives on rent or interest is hardly affected at all. Men who earn their living by a trade or profession have often suffered terribly; many of them are ruined, but the *rentier*

is in clover. His income, as a rule, is not reduced, and he pays no more taxes than in time of peace, which is to say that he pays very little, for the system of taxation that exists in France is probably the system most favorable to the rich and most unjust to the poor in the world. While in England and Germany there is a very heavy income tax, in France an insignificant income tax has just come into force, a mere installment of M. Caillaux's income-tax scheme, which was passed by the Chamber seven years ago and has been hung up by the Senate ever since. That is the only fresh taxation yet imposed since the war began. M. Ribot's system of running the war on loans, many of them at very short term, may not be sound financially, but it has kept the *rentier* quiet. Anybody can see in Paris that the rich are not as a rule touched by the war; there is no sign of the war economy of which one hears so much in England. Therefore, the French bourgeoisie is less tired of the war than the other classes, although there are signs of a change even in bourgeois opinion. The feeling of the proletariat differs in different places, but there is certainly no general feeling among the industrial classes in favor of continuing the war to crush Germany.

To sum up, there is very little extravagance here in regard to the results to be obtained from the war or the conditions to be imposed upon Germany. There is a very general desire for the war to end, but there is a fear that it cannot yet be ended without some sacrifice of French or Belgian territory, which would never be agreed to. If the French people had the assurance that no such sacrifice would be demanded, that Germany would agree as a preliminary to peace negotiations that the integrity of France and Belgium should be taken for granted, not even discussed, then peace negotiations would be in sight. The French people would allow all other points to be matter of negotiation. That is the direction that any mediation should take. The split in the Socialist party has brought peace nearer. The Socialist minority in the Chamber joined by a certain number of radicals makes the nucleus of a peace movement, which at present takes the form of encouraging international discussions. But it is not a movement for peace at any price, and what is required to make it effective is just such an assurance in regard to the integrity of France and Belgium.

ROBERT DELL.

## The New Profession of City Manager

**T**HERE are now forty municipal officials in the United States who are styled "city managers," under the new commission-manager form of government. They are the professional chief executives of their respective municipalities, each with appointive power over the city's entire administrative establishment. They are not popularly elected, but hired for reasons of fitness and for an indefinite tenure by a small elected commission of five local men. In all but two cases the commissions have gone out of town for their managers. Sometimes they have advertised for them, just as the German cities advertise for a new burgomeister. Sumter, South Carolina, issued a proclamation, Jackson, Michigan, gave a note to the associated press, Hickory, North Carolina, had a little paid advertisement in the *Engineering News*. In five cases they have captured successful managers of smaller cities by offering them larger salaries and opportunities. Thus it was, for instance, that Mr. Carr did well as city manager of Cadillac, Michigan, and won promotion to the managership of the city of Niagara Falls, and Mr. Ashburner went from Staunton, Virginia, to Springfield, Ohio. Three managers received their training under Manager

Waite of Dayton, who was himself previously the head of the Department of Public Works of Cincinnati during Mayor Hunt's reform administration. Two universities, Texas and Michigan, have arranged courses for training city managers. The managers have held two annual conventions to exchange ideas and their "Proceedings"\* are interesting civic reading.

The commission-manager government vests all the powers of the city in a single elective board called the commission or council, usually, but not necessarily, of five members elected at large. Often the title of mayor is retained, but it merely indicates the chairman of the commission, his powers being identical with those of the other commissioners, having a vote but no veto and no separate appointive power. The commission hires the city manager, not being limited in its choice to a local resident and usually having the naming of his salary unrestricted by the charter. The city manager holds his office for an indefinite tenure but may be removed by the commission at any time. He appoints all department heads, prepares the budget and runs the government under

\* Obtainable from O. E. Carr, City Manager, Niagara Falls; price, 15 cents.