

The Morass East of the Rhine

Across the Blockade, by Henry Noel Brailsford. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe.

WHAT is going to come out of Europe east of the Rhine nobody knows. You may talk, if you like, of the immense recuperative power exhibited in the past by peoples apparently utterly crushed; you may hope that within the boundaries laid down by the Peace Treaty the same kind of stable national economic states will arise as served before the war among the premises of political thinking. You must confess, however, that progress in that direction is not encouraging. There is so little that is cheerful to say about the internal condition of the new states created or enlarged by the war, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania, that our press says practically nothing about it at all. We know well enough that none of those governments makes ends meet, we know that they are trying to do business with a currency as degraded as our own at the time when "not worth a Continental" expressed the final term of worthlessness without expense of profanity. That is about all we know, or shall know, until we have accounted to ourselves for the time that has elapsed since the great breakdown of national purposes registered in the armistice.

Brailsford's book helps to fill just this need. It is a record of what he saw in four months of travel through Austria, Hungary, Poland and Germany in the early part of last year. He was in Hungary during the Bela Kun regime; he was in Vienna during the abortive Communistic rising of April; in Poland, while there was a lull in pogrom making, he saw enough to illuminate the sufferings of the Jews already endured or yet to come. He was in Germany when the peace terms became known. Few men have had better opportunities to observe what was going on deep in the souls of peoples shaken out of all habits of concealment by great crises, and there is no keener observer living than Brailsford. What he has to say is worth thinking over.

At the time of which Brailsford writes the peoples of Central Europe, friends and foes alike, were suffering terribly under the continuance of the Allied blockade. Germany and Austria were being subjected to a regimen more drastic than that of the war blockade, since relations with Scandinavia were cut off. The disarmed Magyars were being set upon by Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs and Rumanians, not without the approval of the Allied architects of continental alliances. Germany was sunk in an abyss of despair; Polish nationalism was winning for itself a little evanescent warmth from the fires of anti-Semitism, deliberately kindled by the Dmowski faction which the western democracies delighted most to honor. Nowhere was there any really generous faith animating the masses of the people, except for a brief moment in Hungary, before the Allies crushed Bela Kun and turned the hapless Magyars over to the counter-revolution. How ghastly the impression left upon a sensitive observer like Brailsford may be inferred from the following:

"Another decade of wars and blockades and revolutions, and every relic of learning and humanity may be swept away from the Rhine to the Volga. There must have been, when the barbarians surged over the Roman provinces in the twilight centuries lonely villas, left standing amid the ruins of the Empire, in which old men survived, conning Greek manuscripts in pillaged rooms, while the Goths enjoyed their wealth. . . . As the months of desolation

lengthened into years, these old men hoped for the return of civilization, and dying prayed that their sons would live to see it. Their sons lived like barbarians, dimly remembering the interrupted studies of their youth. Their sons' sons were barbarians born."

But must we have a decade of war and blockade and revolution, to usher in a new series of Dark Ages? Brailsford does not affirm this, but neither has he the least confidence in the present settlement. What war and the blockade did to Germany was to break, not only the militaristic spirit, the criminal lust for imperial power of the ruling caste, but the spirit by which scientist and artist, mechanic and laborer are sustained in their creative efforts. The Peace Treaty perpetuated the evil. After its terms became known, apathy and disbelief became fixed upon the people, distrust of themselves, distrust of all other peoples. Their new constitution seemed a pedant's exercise. There was revolutionary desire enough, but not revolutionary will, and the play of forces in Germany resolved itself into an unstable equilibrium between Noske's machine guns and the power of the strike and sabotage. Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Rumania, enriched by German, Magyar and Bulgarian spoils to which they were not entitled, found themselves committed to a dependence on France. "A small state ceases to be independent when it has wronged a neighbor; it must thereafter subordinate itself to a protector." And when the wrong consists in the appropriation of territory, there is a perverse natural law that compels it to thrust the wrong continually deeper. For there is a border population to be harried. But is not that population protected by the League of Nations? The League, as Brailsford sees it, is nothing but a Grand Alliance to insure the fruits of victory; and when did an alliance ever control the internal policy of an ally? "From an ally one wants an army, not virtue. While the League remains a militant alliance against the Germans and Bolsheviks, it will achieve nothing for the Polish Jews, or for any other minority." There has been abundant confirmation, since, of this pessimistic formula.

Central Europe has gone through hell. It has many more miseries to go through before it can arrive at a state where civilized living is possible. For that the war lusts of Central Europe were primarily responsible. They have been mostly burnt out. A year ago there were intelligent men who were confident that the German and Magyar militarists would soon be back in the saddle, to lead their eager peoples in a war of revenge. But the peoples east of the Rhine are disillusioned of militarism. They can not be led eagerly to any war, whatever its cause. That is a gain which Brailsford seems not to take sufficiently into account.

For the prolongation of the miseries of Central Europe through the interminable armistice period, for the purpose of making the vanquished accept not a good peace but a bad one, the Allied diplomats at Paris were to blame. But the consequence of that is that the peoples west of the Rhine also are disillusioned. Our cause of war was white, our enemies' cause was black, but the peace the diplomats made was at best gray. And the general recognition of this fact has terribly discredited the leadership that forges plans of military alliance and imperial aggrandizement. Is that not also a gain that Brailsford has overlooked? The civilization of the pre-war period has been shaken and fissured by the war and the peace. But politically just the most important fact of that civilization was the blind faith in which the peoples surrendered to their leaders the power to play with

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ALVIN JOHNSON.

State Control

The Limits of State Industrial Control: A Symposium on the Present Situation and How to Meet it, edited by Huntly Carter. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co.

THE snippets of opinion which Mr. Huntly Carter has gathered into his new symposium teach little about the problem of state control over industry. For the unpointed loquacity of most of the replies the vagueness of Mr. Carter's questions was no doubt partly to blame. He asked a number of representative public persons:

"1. What in your opinion will be the situation immediately after the war as regards State Control? 2. What in your view is the limitation of State Control to be maintained? 3. What in your view is the best policy of control to be pursued in the higher interests of commerce, trade and industry?" Such a questionnaire did not so much stimulate a discussion as inflict a reaction test, and the experiment lost much of its value because Mr. Carter failed to annotate the answers with their reaction times.

The forty-one contributors represent forty-one separate facets of England's governmental, industrial, and sociological mind. Yet if Mr. Carter had taken the trouble to plot their replies a certain regularity might have been discovered in their responses. At one end are the statesmen and commercialists who want control to end at the earliest moment in order that free play may be given again to a smothered and protestant individualism. At the other end are Mr. Emil Davies and Mr. Bernard Shaw, who desire that state control should be indefinitely expanded and strengthened in the interest of the commonwealth. Between them is the main body whose opinions on state control have reduced the problem to an experimentally verifiable "more or less." This heterogeneous majority see that state control is a method, not an end, and accordingly they tend to side alternately with the great industrialists who demand governmental aid in securing supplies and markets, or with the guild socialists who have not entirely lost sight of the fact that the state must have some general disposition of the product and the usufruct of industry. No inquiry into the problem of state control can be steadily illuminated until a detailed history of the war experiment has been written. Until such a common datum of reference has been created the best of symposiums must prove intellectually little better than a Barmecide feast.

L. M.

Contributors

PAUL ROSENFELD is a graduate of Yale and the author of various critical articles on music and literature. WINTHROP D. LANE is a graduate of University of Michigan. He is an associate editor of *The Survey* and a specialist in prison reform, child welfare and educational work.

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