

## The Ex-Kaiser's Apology

*Comparative Tables of Historical Events from 1878 to the Outbreak of the War in 1914, by Emperor William II. Leipzig: K. F. Koehler.*

TOWARDS the end of 1921, there appeared in Germany a small book entitled *Vergleichende Geschichtstabellen von 1878 bis zum Kriegausbruch 1914, von Kaiser Wilhelm II.* Written at Amerongen, and printed originally for private circulation, it was published to the world on the recommendation of Hindenburg. In it the ex-Kaiser presents his apologia for his international policy—an outline, as it were, of the defence which he would have put forward, had he been brought to trial by the Allies.

The ex-Kaiser's method of presenting his case is, undeniably, ingenious. To plead, to explain, to argue in his own person would have been undignified. But to marshal political events, year by year, in parallel columns under the headings of the chief nations concerned, looks like letting the facts speak for themselves. In the order and sequence of the facts the intelligent reader is expected to discern the sinister pattern of a gradually growing conspiracy of Russia, France and England against a prosperous, unprovocative Germany and its peace-loving Emperor. However, lest the reader miss the moral, he is assisted by excerpts from diplomatic papers which are interspersed among the facts and which provide, like a Greek chorus, a running commentary on the drift and meaning of the events recorded. Very cleverly, these excerpts are selected mainly from Belgian sources, and are all carefully chosen to insinuate the conclusion which the ex-Kaiser wishes the reader to draw. This conclusion is, thus, made to appear to the reader, not as a German plea, but as the verdict of well-informed and impartial onlookers. It is intended to strike him as the verdict of history itself.

Where opportunity offers, the ex-Kaiser does not disdain to score a debating-point. Thus he quotes de Brocqueville, then Belgian Prime Minister and Minister for War, as having said in May, 1914, that neither the French nor the German armies ought to hesitate to cross neutral territory by force, if the safety of their countries demanded it. He notes declarations of successive British statesmen on the treatment of food as contraband which are certainly inconsistent with England's blockade policy during the war. He makes play with some of Lord Fisher's lurid proposals for "Kopenhagening" the German fleet by a surprise assault in time of peace. But, for his main score, he relies on a long series of Belgian despatches which begin in 1882 with a warning about the anti-German policy of the Pan-slavist party in Russia, and which go on steadily through the years up to 1913, now dwelling on the purely defensive character of the Triple Alliance, now praising Germany as the main guarantor of European peace and the Kaiser's character as deeply religious and peace-loving, now voicing misgivings at the policy of Edward VII. Thus, in 1906, and again in 1907, the Belgian Ministers in London, Paris and Petersburg report concurrently preparations of the Triple Entente for war against Germany, and in 1909 the Belgian Minister in Berlin writes caustically the peace of the world has never been more in danger than since Edward VII set out to preserve it by his policy of isolating Germany.

But the ex-Kaiser's three trump cards are drawn from the confidential utterances of three leading Entente statesmen. First, in 1913, Sazonov is reported to have said, "The Emperor's love of peace is our guarantee that we shall be

able to choose the moment of war to suit ourselves." Next we have, from a Russian newspaper, an alleged remark of Sir Edward Grey's, in March, 1914, to the Pan-slavist leader, Brantschaminow, to the effect that a great war would shortly break out and that England would take part in it in order to escape from her internal difficulties. Lastly, we have, in April, 1914, Clemenceau's question to an Italian attaché: "In three months we shall have war. Will Italy be on our side?"

Thus, the ex-Kaiser's defence is the familiar one of an indictment of the Entente. Russia's panslavist policy of conquest, France's desire for revenge, England's envy of a competitor wove the fateful net in which the peaceful German people was enmeshed. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, the checking of Russia's march to Constantinople at the Congress of Berlin in 1877, the growth of German commerce, of the German fleet, of the German colonies—these things united Germany's enemies against her. Skillfully her enemies manoeuvred her into a situation where, in sheer self-defence, she had to declare war, and yet was condemned, by declaring war first and invading Belgium, to appear as the aggressor and to put herself in the wrong in the eyes of the world.

But what is the evidence for the peaceful character of German policy? On this head, the best facts adduced by the ex-Kaiser belong to the years 1898-1901. In April, 1898, and again in March, 1901, he declined English offers of an alliance, lest Germany should be drawn into an anti-Russian policy "and the peace of the world be endangered." In February, 1900, and again in October, 1901, he similarly declined Franco-Russian proposals for joint action against England, then embarrassed by the Boer war, and earned the thanks of Queen Victoria. In 1912, Poincaré, writing to the French ambassador in Berlin, refers to "the untiring persistence with which Germany seeks an understanding with France," but adds that such an understanding would be possible only on condition of the return of Alsace-Lorraine, and that France is too deeply committed to Russia and England to reverse her policy.

For these things, so far as they go, the ex-Kaiser is entitled to credit. But is there not another side to the picture? He does, indeed, chronicle the Kruger-telegram, the spectacular visits to Palestine and Tangier, the Agadir episode and other demonstrations with which periodically he startled the world. But he sets them down without any comment, without any sign that he appreciates the threatening character which they seemed to bear to other nations. Even defeat and exile have not opened his eyes to his own mistakes. Otherwise he could not have passed by all his flamboyant and bellicose speeches. He does not remind us how often he flourished the mailed fist. He chronicles, in 1898, Russia's invitation to the First Peace Conference at the Hague, but does not add that he at once made a speech discrediting the whole idea, or that Germany at all Hague Conferences was the chief obstacle, not only to a reduction of armaments, but even to a holiday in the competitive increase of armaments. He does not quote Gothein's comment, that all participants in the Hague Conference carried away the definite impression that Germany refused to bind herself by international agreements, in order to be free for war when the moment should seem opportune. In fact, the most serious omissions in the ex-Kaiser's chronicle concern the German army and navy. Only twice does he give statistics, once in 1905 and, again, in 1914, and then merely to show that France kept a larger army than Germany and that England spent more on her fleet; also that the enemy

forces in peace-time considerably outnumbered the armies of Germany and Austria. But how German army-increases were related to German policy and to the international situation, he does not show. He forgets to mention how often the blunders of his "Gefühlspolitik," as Bismarck bitterly called it, had to be made good by the creation of additional army-corps. He has not a single word on the big capital-levy of 1913 for army-purposes, which threw such an ominous shadow on the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of his accession to the throne. Nor would anyone discover from his pages how it was the building of the German fleet which, more than anything else, drove England into the ranks of Germany's enemies and lent color to the view that Germany aimed at world-dominion. Yet even from the facts which the ex-Kaiser himself supplies—and he by no means gives them all—it is clear that from 1895 to 1912 England, anxious to escape from her "splendid isolation," made repeated attempts to effect an understanding with Germany but was invariably rebuffed. It is especially worth noting that England renewed these efforts, as Lord Haldane has shown in his book, *Before the War*, even after she had entered into the Entente with France and Russia, precisely because she realized the danger of being drawn into a war against Germany. How far that evil genius of the German Foreign Office, Holstein, is responsible for the missing of these opportunities, how far Tirpitz's naval policy, how far the ex-Kaiser's personal antipathy for Edward VII, or even deep-laid complexes in his character traceable to his unhappy relations, as a child, to his English mother—who can tell? The fact remains that German foreign policy was stupid, and not even the war has taught the ex-Kaiser to appreciate how stupid it was.

Thus, the apparent objectivity of the ex-Kaiser's method of defence is wholly delusive. There is much special pleading behind an elaborate show of not pleading at all. Much the same facts, dressed up in different comments, could be fitted into a pattern pointing to the opposite conclusion. For, in international politics, every "fact" bears many, and often contradictory, valuations. In the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion, hostility and fear, what to one nation is merely a legitimate measure of defence may be to its neighbor a threatening measure of aggression. The mere fact that a people is numerous, well-organized, intelligent may make it a potential danger to others. Let it be armed as well, and it is an enemy at once. It is mere one-sided blindness, in such conditions, to protest one's own love of peace whilst seeing in others nothing but their will to war.

There is, perhaps, no task in the whole range of diplomacy which requires greater wisdom and shrewdness, more coolness and tact, than the task of guiding, in a crowded, competitive, jealous, fear-ridden world, the destinies of a nation which is rapidly expanding in population, in industry, in commerce, and in learning, and which is ambitious to see its flag upon the Seven Seas and to play its part in colonization and international finance. Such a task fell to the ex-Kaiser. It was Germany's misfortune that he was both too romantic and too confident of Germany's strength and superiority to all-comers, to see the facts in their true proportions. He was a poor judge of his own utterances and actions. He was a poor judge, too, in the choice of his advisers, military and political. Before his own conscience he may stand guiltless. But the innocence of good intentions is no excuse at the bar of History for disastrous blundering. Granted that he and his advisers sought nothing but Germany's rightful place in the sun, yet they sought

it in a way which could not but turn old friends into new enemies, without making out of old enemies new friends. Their fatal mistake was to think that, because they had inherited an empire born of war, war and the threat of war must be permanent instruments of its policy. To this mistake the ex-Kaiser lent himself, because, though he may have loved peace most, he loved also, and loved too well, strutting upon the world's stage as the glittering lord of war. Like a child, he was burnt by the fire with which he played. Like a child, he now cries out that he intended no harm.

R. F. ALFRED HOERNLE.

## The Larger Socialism

*The Larger Socialism, by Bertram Benedict. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$2.50.*

THIS book is the friendly, intelligent attempt of a liberal Socialist to bridge the gulf between the world of 1914 and the post-war world. The theme is that revisionist Socialism is predominant over Marxism in Anglo-Saxon lands; that Socialism must become a broader and a deeper theory and political movement than at present; that the true Socialism is more of an extension than an innovation. The author urges that the American appeal should be to social class grouping rather than solely to economic class grouping. He wishes to see the movement free itself from the Marxian cast of thought, and devote more discussion to the comparative efficiency in wealth production of the present system and of Socialism. Mr. Benedict would emphasize the ethical and cultural appeal. These various enrichments he terms the "larger Socialism."

No one is any longer sure of a large-scale plan of redemption, with the exception of the Marxists and some militant employers. On a falling market, the British miners took their first decisive defeat in a generation. The long bold thrust of the producers' philosophy—variously expressed in syndicalism, guild socialism, and a fighting trades unionism—is slowing down from its impact with immovable matter. Economic forces are mightier than the "Guildsman." The consumer, the buyer, the citizen, (in short, the public), has gained a self-consciousness, a consciousness of his power. He has begun to organize. The theory of the strike has been that it caused enough annoyance to force public intervention, and that this public intervention resulted in a compromise between the claims of capital and labor which was a gain for labor. Recently in the great services and industries, like transportation and mining, the American, French and British experience has shown that the annoyance is too sharp for a genial solution, and that the public is willing to accept heavy punishment for the first few rounds in order to give a knock-out in the final rounds. This knock-out has been dealt to labor, as often as to capital.

What shall be the substitute for the strike? Political labor, perhaps. But all attempts at a wage-earning party, the voting solidarity of those who work with their hands, have broken down.

On the consumers' side, the very success of the cooperative movement has revealed its limitations. It will not bring a new social order in this generation nor the next. Meanwhile what outlet is there for ardent spirits who are impatient of the secular process? Probably, the trinity of workers' education, labor press, and labor research offer the best symbol for the disillusioned to rally round.

ARTHUR GLEASON.