

Can the Germans Rightfully Rearm?

BY BERNARD LANDE COHEN

They argue that the Allies, by failing to carry out their disarmament promises in the Peace Treaty, have relieved Germany of its obligation, but is this true?

THE tendency since the War to regard the Germans as an injured nation is responsible for the wide-spread belief that the stand of the Hitler Government on armaments is a natural outcome of what is considered a breach of faith on the part of the former Allies. Mr. Lloyd George, for example, expresses this viewpoint very energetically in the following terms: "Hitler would never have been there to issue his manifesto in the name of the German nation had it not been for the outrageous breach of faith perpetrated by the nations that ruled the League. He is giving dramatic expression to the indignation of every honest man in Germany at the shameless and elaborate trickery and treachery perpetrated upon his great country." This summing up of an intricate problem fully illustrates a disposition of the human mind to simplify issues which in reality are anything but simple, and is characteristic of the carelessness which has dominated the whole subject of disarmament. It would make for clearness of thought if the reduction

of military power which the Treaty of Versailles sought to impose upon Germany were examined on its own merits independently of the larger issue of general disarmament. In other words, should it be found that the limitation of German arms was intrinsically a justifiable act in 1919, it need not follow that we must revise this opinion only because the other nations have not likewise cut down their own armaments.

The main provisions of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles are as follows:

(1) The German army is limited to 100,000 strong including staffs, officers and men of all ranks. Its reorganization is provided for in great detail and the strength of each unit and even the kind of training is laid down in elaborate tables.

(2) Compulsory military service is abolished and none but volunteers may serve; the intention being to prevent the building up of large reserves that go with conscript armies.

(3) There are numerous and ingenious restrictions designed to prevent the

mass training of men and the creation of territorial and auxiliary forces.

(4) Possession is forbidden of military and naval airplanes, poison gas, tanks, armored cars and guns exceeding four inches in calibre.

(5) As regards weapons permitted, the number is carefully restricted in each case and is dealt with in detail in separate schedules, the aim being to render German military power absolutely static.

(6) The import and export of arms is prohibited, and their manufacture within Germany itself confined to certain specified factories.

Although cut down to the lowest point which any of her enemies thought it worth while to demand, the military power of Germany remained at a much higher level than that of any of the smaller nations of the world. None of the South American Republics, for instance, have armaments even proportionately as great as those Germany was allowed to retain, whatever basis of comparison may be used—population, length of frontier, area or wealth. In 1932, the last year for which reliable figures are available, the Dutch regular army consisted of 19,500 exclusive of those serving in the colonies; the standing army of Denmark was a little more than 14,000, while that of Switzerland was about 46,000. Thus Holland, Denmark and Switzerland together had fewer men under arms than Germany; nevertheless, not one of these minor states seems for this reason to have considered its position insecure or its citizens under any disadvantage, and judging by their public credit, it is evident that the confidence of financiers and investors in their stability has not been diminished by reason of their insignificant military array.

Before the rise of Hitler, Germany had less reason to fear foreign aggression than almost any other nation in the world. Among the heavily armed states England, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States of America were far from hostile. Even France showed signs of friendliness by withdrawing her troops from the Rhine before the expiration of the delay fixed by the Treaty. France welcomed Germany to the League of Nations on equal terms with herself, and in 1932 virtually canceled her claims to all further reparations. From the point of view of the German taxpayer the disarmament provisions of the Treaty were even a blessing, since he was no longer forced to do military service, while the burden of military taxation, the heaviest in Europe before the War, was very substantially reduced.

Much has been made of the so-called humiliation of Germany under the Versailles Treaty, and of her alleged inequality to other nations. Experts in the art of war are agreed, and history proves, that it is impossible to gauge the actual and potential strength of nations in advance, too many factors being involved. Strength is more than a matter of size or numbers, for in war the imponderable elements are many. For instance, a great deal depends on the ability of the general staff; even such a thing as an efficient espionage system must weigh in the balance; while the possession of a single new weapon could be a decisive factor that would overcome the enemy's superiority in other fields. Of the utmost importance are economic position and industrial equipment, which enable a combatant state to adapt itself quickly to the needs of war; hence it follows that inferiority in actual strength may

be compensated for by superiority in potential strength. In the case of Germany this would seem only too true, her military impotence at the present day being by no means such as the framers of the Treaty had intended, even assuming that all of its provisions were faithfully observed—which is far from being the case. In no other country has civil aviation been so far developed, and to convert a commercial airplane into a bombing plane capable of carrying explosive, incendiary and gas bombs is the work of a few hours. While of little use for other military purposes, they would be capable, in a series of night raids upon enemy centres of population, of creating all the havoc and destruction which have been promised for the next war. As to chemical warfare, Major Lefebure, an English authority on poison gas, may here be quoted with advantage. "The great ease and rapidity with which the German dye factories mobilized for poison gas production has already been demonstrated. It took forty years and more to develop these factories yet forty days saw many of these plants producing huge tonnages of poison gas, and as many hours were sufficient for others." Given the conjunction of innumerable bombing planes and immense quantities of poison gas, and the inequality of Germany, as regards some of her neighbors at least, ought not to be taken too much for granted.

One often hears it said that the limitation clauses of the Treaty are humiliating to Germany. The habit of personifying nations, and making statements about them as though they were objective realities distinct from human beings, should be curtailed if we are to substitute rational analysis for political mysticism. Germany, otherwise than in

a geographical sense, is no more than a pure abstraction, its personality being no less a legal fiction than that of the United States Steel Corporation or the Hamburg American Steamship Company. Germany is not morally a person and therefore could not be wronged or humiliated. Should it be claimed, rather, that the unilateral disarmament has been humiliating to the German people, the statement, though more intelligible, is none the less capable of being reduced to an absurdity. Common experience tells us that the average citizen is too much occupied with his own affairs to give more than passing attention to affairs of state, and that he is rarely disturbed by any political event other than a war. It were preposterous to expect that the employed working man or peasant in Germany should take it to heart because the army of the Fatherland is limited to 100,000. Even in the age of Hitler there are yet abrupt differences between different groups of Germans, and they are not a homogeneous people by any means. A German writer once pointed out that it would be far easier to promote understanding and good will between Germans and Frenchmen than between German Social Democrats and German Junkers. The moral issues of the world have nothing to do with lines of nationality, and a situation which might grieve the National Socialists certainly need not affect the other Germans in the same way, even those that are politically inclined.

THE disarmament of the whole world is the declared intention of the Treaty of Versailles, and in the Preamble to Part V dealing with German disarmament the principle is laid down as follows: "In order to render possible

the initiation of a general limitation of armaments of all nations, Germany undertakes strictly to observe the military, naval and air clauses which follow." The subject was likewise referred to in the reply to a German memorandum on the draft of the Treaty. "The Allied and Associated Powers wish to make it clear that their requirements in regard to German armaments were not made solely with the object of rendering it impossible to resume her policy of military aggression. They are also the first steps towards that general reduction and limitation of armaments which they seek to bring about as one of the most fruitful preventatives of war, and which it will be one of the first duties of the League of Nations to provide." Finally, Article VIII of the Covenant affirms the solemn obligation of the League of Nations to bring about "the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety, and the enforcement by common action of international obligations."

The failure to carry into effect this part of the Treaty has been held responsible for the triumph of Hitlerism and the present impasse of European affairs. While the militarism of the neighboring countries undoubtedly helped to prepare an atmosphere in Germany favorable to the growth of the Nazi movement, to conclude, in the manner of Mr. Lloyd George, that Hitler would never have won otherwise is a careless assumption which a closer examination of the facts would scarcely bear out, inasmuch as it would be just as easy to show that the fear of Hitler prevented disarmament as to prove the reverse proposition, that the failure to disarm brought about the victory of the Nazis. Let us suppose that the disarmament conference had been a success. To

conclude that Hitler would then have been led to give up his ambition of becoming the German savior would be altogether too naïve, since it is obvious that plenty of subject matter for speech-making would still have been left for him and his followers. The defeat of Germany in the Great War would still have been a fact; and the Jews, the Communists and the Socialists would in any event have furnished sufficient material for agitation. The onset of the world-wide depression after 1929 opened up opportunities for an able demagogue in almost any country, and even if disarmament had actually been accomplished, it is difficult to see how the economic distress of the German masses could have been alleviated thereby. The payment of reparations had a far greater effect on the lives of the people than such matters as the French having too many guns or spending too much money on fortifications; yet even the stoppage of this tribute did not stem the tide of Hitlerism. When all the known facts about the Nazi movement are taken together, there is hardly any reason to assume that an international treaty on arms would have in itself so affected domestic conditions and the interaction of personalities that the struggle for power within Germany would have run its course otherwise than it did.

Another commonly accepted axiom is that the Allies tricked the Germans into disarming by promising to do likewise, and then failed to carry out their promise. No one has been able to show exactly in what way Germany has suffered, nor why her grievances should be greater than those of other European nations whose interest in disarmament was not less real than that of Germany. The representatives of many

countries exerted their efforts on behalf of disarmament with great zeal and have certainly no less reason to be chagrined at its failure than Hitler and his followers. The militarism of the former Allies ought not to be condoned, but to conclude that a definite obligation assumed by the Germans may now be disregarded and that they are free to join in the race is to admit a principle that could only aggravate the present evil. The promise to disarm, in so far as the declaration of intention in the Preamble to Part V of the Treaty is to be considered as a promise made specifically to Germany, was clearly conditioned upon the carrying out of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty, and it is significant that the Control Commission set up by the Allies has never reported that Germany has disarmed to the level required. Aside from the difficulties inherent in the enforcement of a treaty of this kind, even where no questions of bad faith can enter, many instances of violation have in fact come to light, and if not serious enough to render the treaty entirely ineffective, it remains true, none the less, that the Germans have disarmed only in so far as they were actually compelled to do so. Moreover, since no time limit was fixed for the carrying out of the "promise," and general disarmament is admittedly impossible without an agreement of all the important nations of the world, some of whom, such as Soviet Russia and the United States, were not signatories of the Treaty, it may still be too early to assume that bad faith was shown by any particular group of powers. Certainly, no time was lost in taking up the question, for in 1921 the first assembly of the League of Nations addressed itself to the task by appointing

a Preparatory Committee to study the whole question and to consider means of giving effect to Article VIII of the Covenant. This committee, which came to be known as the Temporary Mixed Commission, drew up a Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance upon which the Locarno Pact was later to be founded. Other committees were appointed to draw up technical plans for submission to the various governments preparatory to the summoning of the Disarmament Conference; and it is in its technical features that disarmament met with obstacles which have proven insurmountable.

AT THE time the Allied statesmen made their declaration for a general reduction in armaments, there is reason to believe that they were quite sincere; but their pledge must be understood as having been given not to Germany alone but to the whole world. The occasion seemed most propitious, after the principal despotic governments were overthrown, and the Germans, considered rightly or wrongly to be the champions of militarism, had been defeated. Universal disarmament seemed, at the time, an easy and natural outcome of the greatest of all wars. It might have been apparent, however, that a joint promise to reduce armaments necessitated a further agreement between the promissors *inter se*; and it should be obvious that the failure to reach this agreement was not due to the continuance of any league against Germany on the part of the other nations, but rather to the emergence of a new series of international rivalries which embittered the relations of the former Allies. Disarmament failed for no other reason than the fact that it proved to be an utter impossibility.

The expressed object of a disarmament conference is an international agreement that would strike a balance between the armaments of different nations, at a lower level than they maintain at present, without involving injustice as between one nation and another. When the difficulties involved in this procedure are raised into the clear light of reality they appear formidable enough to make it apparent that conceived according to this method disarmament is entirely unrealizable.

(1) The system of compulsory peacetime military service is something which nations are unwilling to give up, thereby making possible the creation of large reserves which could be added to the standing forces when mobilization takes place.

(2) An even greater complication is that which results from the rapid progress of invention and its application to the ends of war, for undoubtedly the various general staffs would insist on retaining full liberty to experiment in new forms of warfare, being obsessed with fear lest their rivals by means of secret inventions suddenly gain an advantage over them.

(3) No disarmament treaty could include and limit all the vital industrial and economic factors upon which military strength ultimately depends. Thus, weapons useful in war have peacetime uses of great importance, aircraft being the most obvious example. The same thing may be said of poison gas, since the power to produce it on a large scale and at short notice depends on the possession of chemical factories, which are indispensable for many peacetime purposes.

(4) The limitation of arms, even if accepted, would be most difficult to control. As regards certain weapons, such

as fighting ships, supervision might be comparatively easy; nor could an excessive number of troops be drilled and organized in secret. However, large stores of weapons, ammunition and poison gas could be so accumulated, while the merest suspicion of bad faith would itself be sufficient to undermine any treaty.

(5) A treaty on armaments need not put an end to military competition, for the race would only be diverted into other fields left untouched, or in new weapons subsequently developed.

That disarmament, as conceived at the present time, is a delusion has already been demonstrated by past experience. All kinds of difficulties have arisen in the interpretation of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, while some of them have been disregarded entirely. Thus, the export and import of war material to and from Germany in direct violation of the Treaty has been connived at for years, and it is now recognized that the quantity of her arms and military equipment is a thing entirely beyond control. In the opinion of experts, bombing planes and poison gas will play a decisive rôle in any future conflict, and in a country as industrially organized as Germany these would be available at once. The events which followed the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 teach a similar lesson. A treaty was signed by England, Japan, the United States and France to limit the number of their capital ships. It has been faithfully adhered to by all the contracting parties, yet there is now going on a naval race between them as intense and costly as the one ended by the Washington Conference, the competition having merely been diverted to war vessels of other categories. Disarmament, so

long as it continues to be dealt with as a mathematical problem, is inevitably doomed to failure, partly because no exact ratio of military power can possibly be established between nations, and also because so little account is being taken of the real causes that underlie the competition in armaments. Problems of fundamental importance require a solution before there could be any hope of stopping the further increase in armaments, or reducing them.

THE growth of militarism before 1914 was discussed by Norman Angell in *The Great Illusion*, a book which later events have shown to be prophetic. He postulates the question why it is that each state fears its neighbors and is busy building up armaments; and answers by pointing out that there is a universal assumption that a nation, in order to find outlets for its expanding population and increasing industry, is necessarily pushed to territorial expansion and the exercise of political force against others; and by doing so it stands to further the prosperity of its people. He then goes on to prove with great ability the essential fallacy of this whole doctrine, and to show that in the modern world the commerce and industry of a people no longer depend on the expansion of its political frontiers; that military power is socially and economically futile and can have no relation to the prosperity of the people exercising it; and that it is impossible for one nation to seize by force the wealth and trade of another. According to this writer, the universal acceptance of the fact that it is bound to bring loss to both sides no matter who wins would in itself lessen the probability of war and thereby solve the problem of armaments.

While it is true that at no time in the history of the world has the opposition to war been more pronounced than at the present day, nevertheless, an armed conflict seems no less imminent than in 1909 when Norman Angell penned his celebrated thesis. Even if the belief in its economic usefulness has been dissipated, it must be acknowledged that the possibility of war springs from an even more primitive impulse than that of economic determinism. History teaches that from the beginning, potentates have made war with no incentive other than that of their own egotism and vanity, and in 1914 this motive was not wanting in Germany at least, where a powerful military and aristocratic caste cared less about the economic pros and cons than about the love of glory and the extension of power. Today, no less than formerly, the ambition and pugnacity of dictatorial groups plays an all-important part in raising the expectation of warfare. Beginning with the rise of Mussolini, the last decade has seen the gradual eclipse of democracy throughout the world, and this decline has coincided with the increasing probability of war. To enforce this impression, we have the noteworthy fact that in no instance is there a likelihood of war between two democratic states. War between France and England, or France and Spain, is very improbable and the same may be said as respects other democratic countries bordering on each other. Peace seems assured between Belgium and Holland, Sweden and Norway, Brazil and the Argentine, Canada and the United States. On the other hand, when we come to consider the possible sources of warfare, we find that in every instance at least one of the parties involved is under the power

of a dictator. Japan, which is in the hands of a military clique, has for many years loomed as an antagonist of the United States, and more recently of Soviet Russia. Italy, since the advent of the Mussolini dictatorship, has had strained relations with her two principal neighbors, Jugo-Slavia and France; while republican Germany was not considered a possible focus of war until Hitler became ruler. It will be seen that wherever there is a likelihood of war at least one of the parties concerned is a non-democratic state.

It may be true, to quote Norman Angell, that "for a modern nation to add to its territory no more adds to the wealth of the people of such nation than it would add to the wealth of the Londoners if the City of London were to annex the County of Hertford." But if by any chance his argument should fail to impress Hitler, Mussolini or the Japanese Minister of War, a considerable part of the world's population has reason to expect war and to prepare for it. Given absolute power in the hands of a few and the personal factor becomes uppermost; the economic and moral disadvantages of war are considerations which may be pushed into the background, and bear no weight against the passion of romantic and adventurous men for more power and greater fame. It must be plain to all that a successful war against the Soviets would rejoice the military party in Japan regardless of the economic consequences, while the annexation of more territory by Italy or the re-taking of Alsace by Germany would add immeasurably to the prestige of their respective dictators.

The present danger of war in certain parts of the world arises from the fact that the most vital decisions rest with a mere handful of people, who may or may not be actuated by humanitarian ideals. In the final analysis this threat can only be removed by a revolution in Japan and the collapse of the dictatorship in Germany and Italy. It is easy to see that there would be no more incentive for the United States to enlarge her Pacific fleet once the military party in Japan were overthrown. Similarly, should Italy and Germany get rid of their dictators, the present tension in Europe would relax itself at once. France could then easily venture to reduce her vast military expenditures regardless of any international treaties; and the cumulative impulse of the present for all the nations to increase their armaments might well be converted into a movement everywhere to cut them down. Disarmament is not to be achieved by means of any artificial system of limitations but only through the recognition of the historical background of the problem. The last sixty years have seen a constantly upward trend in military preparations, owing to the prevalent feeling of insecurity and the presentiment of danger; and the true approach to the problem is the establishment of a new set of conditions that would result logically in the reversal of this trend. The creation of a psychological basis for peace is possible only with the return of responsible government and its adoption throughout the world. The reduction of armaments by gradual stages could then be expected to follow in consequence of a new historic process.

Sons as Lovers

BY HENRY MORTON ROBINSON

Who diagnoses our national melancholia uneconomically as the effect of romantic love

WHEN the ingenious Prince of Aquitaine suggested that his attendant lords and ladies spend their elegant leisure in playing his newly invented game of *Merci*, he was unconsciously appealing to something basic and perennial in human nature. He was offering his subjects a straight play-time proposition—with prizes not so Platonic as is generally supposed. The charm of his little game (which under the name of romantic love has enjoyed considerable currency in the Western world) was obviously this: it had nothing to do with marriage, or housekeeping, or child-bearing, or any of the more irksome forms of reality. No, it was something else again—a delicate pastime to divert the minds and, no doubt, elevate the souls of the grand personages who played it. Cavaliers that they were, they did not take the sport too seriously. All the vows of eternal fidelity, all the inflated language of courtship were understood to be merely the props and conventions of the love game, as played by Provençal aristocrats high up on their castled rock.

Down in the valley the common yeomanry performed the prosier chores of existence. These toilers of the glebe had

neither the leisure nor the address to play the love game, so they mated and spawned according to their lights, which, though dim, were fairly natural. The great leveler democracy had not yet brought the vocabulary or usage of romantic love down to their plane, and they certainly did not have to depend on a *carte d'amour* in getting from one place to another. The loutish swain of that day merely went walking with a good sound girl, and after a couple of elementary tests, married her. She, having no illusions about being a goddess or a cup-winning Miss Derbyshire, turned in a good job with the skillet and cradle. It is not recorded that she was abused or neglected by her husband, or—what is more important—she did not *consider* herself abused or neglected.

But all this was long ago and far away. Since then, social erosion (education, revolution—in brief, democracy) has washed the courtly peaks of Provence down to a lowly pene-plain, bringing many of their peculiarly aristocratic customs, including romantic love, down with them. The glittering coins of speech once used as counters in the love game have been debased with plebeian clay, and a mutilated jargon of the love-