

# Saga of a Deadly Dynasty

*The House of Krupp*, by Peter Batty (Stein & Day, 333 pp. \$7.95), chronicles the fortunes of the German arms-manufacturing dynasty whose influence on world history has been incalculable. Henry C. Wolfe, author of "The German Octopus," has visited the Villa Hügel and observed the Krupp empire from close at hand.

By HENRY C. WOLFE

WHEN Imperial Germany violated Belgium's neutrality in August 1914, British and American military writers expected the powerful forts surrounding Liège to hold off the Kaiser's invading troops. But "Big Bertha," the giant mortar forged by Krupp, speedily wrecked the defending bastions. It was the "incredible Krupps" who turned out "Long Max," the monster rifle that shelled Paris in 1918, and "Fat Gustav," the biggest gun ever made, which Adolf Hitler used in besieging Sevastopol.

But the House of Krupp has done more than produce massive lethal weapons designed to win military victory and political triumph. Its huge coal and iron complex has been described as a "state within a state," a power that could make or destroy German political leaders, and influence—if not direct—government policies. Its offices abroad have not infrequently been invested with the pomp and prestige of embassies. In business it has often played no favorites among nations, even arming its own government's enemies. At Königgrätz (1866) there were Krupp armaments on both sides; Prussian General von Voigts-Rhetz wrote to Alfred Krupp: "These children of yours conversed for long hot hours with their Austrian cousins . . ." Eleven years later Krupp supplied arms to the contending armies in the Russo-Turkish war. At the battle of Jutland (1916) Krupp armor plate bulwarked both British and German ships.

In *The House of Krupp* Peter Batty, a British radio and television writer and producer, has written a hard-hitting exposé of the firm that has played a key role in Europe's military and political history. He gives an astounding account of the centuries-old organization which, a very phoenix of destructiveness, has survived depres-

sions, military defeats, and foreign occupations. His book is must reading for those who want to understand world affairs from the inside.

The saga of the Krupp dynasty is a "story of intrigue and greed, of the lust for power and the possession of power." This economic empire has been controlled by "insensitive men—unscrupulous, grasping, materialistic, but thoroughly able." Their extraordinary ability and limitless cynicism have made them an international menace. By "their indiscriminate selling of weapons to all comers" they "helped exacerbate one diplomatic crisis after another."

The first Krupp we know about was Arndt, founder of the dynasty, who died in 1624. Among his successors it was Alfred (1812-1887) who, by turning out guns in a big way, really got the show on the road. His ruthless business practices brought him orders from many countries, and he "would not stretch his patriotism at the cost of potential Krupp profits." Alfred not only made money but also received decorations from France, Portugal, Japan, Sweden, and—not surprisingly—Prussia. In 1870, when the invading Prussian armies reached Paris, most Prussian generals opposed bombarding the French capital. Even though Alfred had been twice decorated by France, he argued strongly in favor of it.

Alfred's granddaughter was the celebrated Bertha, after whom the pulverizing mortar of 1914 was named. She married Gustav von Bohlen und Halbach, upon whom the Kaiser conferred

her family name. He was "perhaps the most contemptible Krupp of all time." After World War I the Allies decided to put an end to the Krupp menace by breaking up the firm; they sentenced Gustav to fifteen years in prison, but within six months he was out and soon back in full control of the organization. With Hitler's seizure of power Gustav became a "super-Nazi," and made his son, Alfried Krupp (who died July 30, 1967), his collaborator.

The most horrible chapter in the Krupps' evil history deals with their exploitation of slave labor in World War II. The unspeakable conditions under which the victims worked—starved, frozen, tortured by SS men and women—almost defy belief. After the Nazi defeat, Gustav was too ill to be prosecuted, but Alfried was brought to trial. In his indictment General Telford Taylor charged: "There was no crime such a state could commit—whether it was war, plunder, or slavery—in which these men would not participate."

On July 31, 1948, Alfried was found guilty on the counts of spoliation and slave labor and was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment. Yet by February 3, 1951, he was a free man, able to return to Essen and take up the reins of Krupp management again. This time, however, he turned his talents from cannons to supermarkets, engineering, motor trucks, and other more profitable enterprises.

The Krupp company is currently experiencing some financial difficulties, and for the first time has been opened to outside stockholders. With Alfried's death there will probably be changes in management and policies. Even so, the Villa Hügel, seat of the House of Krupp, may still resound to "talk of matters of State. Where kaisers and führers once pontificated, presidents, shahs, kings, emperors and even Communist cabinet ministers now mingle and chatter . . . The House of Krupp has risen, fallen, and risen again."



Alfried Krupp being sentenced for war crimes at Nuremburg, 1948—guilty of spoliation and slave labor.

—From the book.

# Three Goals for Prussia

***The Blood and Iron Chancellor: A Documentary Biography of Otto von Bismarck***, by Louis L. Snyder (Van Nostrand, 423 pp. \$8.95), draws mainly on primary sources to reveal the personality and policies of a militaristic Junker. Hans Kohn is professor emeritus of history of the City University of New York.

By HANS KOHN

**I**N THE five years between 1866 and 1871 a Junker of unusual ability achieved three goals.

The first was the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership, an attempt vainly undertaken by the democratic National Assembly of the German people, or rather the German middle classes, assembled in Frankfurt on the Main in 1848-49. The second was the defeat of these middle classes by the Prussian military monarchy and nobility, which maintained its privileged position wholly until 1918 and partly until 1933. The third was the elimination of the Habsburg dynasty from the affairs of Germany (and Italy), which pushed the Habsburg empire to seek compensation in an expansion into the Balkans. The man who accomplished these objectives

was Otto von Bismarck. Yet twenty years after his death in 1898 his creation suffered a severe setback, and a quarter of a century later Prussia and the ruling dynasty, which he so faithfully served and which seemed still so strongly rooted in 1914, disappeared.

There has rarely been a statesman whose work lasted as short a time as did Bismarck's. The same cannot be said of Gladstone, whom Bismarck despised. Gladstone introduced a number of reforms that continue to dominate British life, and his home rule for Ireland has set the example for the peaceful transition from an empire and great bitterness to friendly cooperation. How different German and European history of the last hundred years would have been if the Germans had had a Gladstone, or even a Cavour, instead of Bismarck. It is very possible that the war of 1914 would not have broken out if Bismarck had not insisted, under the pressure of the military, on France ceding Alsace-Lorraine, and if Count Andrassy, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, who was pro-German and anti-Slav, had not led Austria-Hungary into the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the alliance with Germany.

In German domestic policy Bismarck refused to allow "un-German" parties,

first the Catholic Centrum (1872-78) and then the Social Democrats (1878-90), full participation in the political life of the country. He thought them unreliable on account of their "internationalism." His successors provoked what he feared, an alliance of the democratic republic of France with the reactionary monarchy of Russia, whose ideological differences were bridged by a common apprehension over Germany's power. In his famous speech of February 6, 1888, Bismarck justified increased armaments as the best guarantee for peace. "That sounds paradoxical, but it is true. With the powerful machine which we are making of the German army no aggression will be attempted." The Reichstag supported him unanimously. Bismarck was wrong, but we should not forget that in other countries similar arguments are propounded today.

**B**ISMARCK's victories in 1866 and 1870 convinced the German intellectual middle class, who were ready to assume leadership in Germany in 1848, that they could not do it and that leadership belonged to the Prussian nobility. In the last century the events of 1848-49 have almost been forgotten, and German history has been interpreted as a triumphal progress from the war of liberation, in 1813, to 1914, when the spirit of Prussian militarism seemed to most German scholars and people so superior to the "decadence" of the West. In 1945 there was hope that the temper of 1848-49 would be revived. Now the centenary of 1870 is fast approaching and with it the glorification of Bismarck, the civilian chancellor who almost always appeared in a cuirassier uniform.

For that reason it is most important that Professor Snyder's documentary biography be widely read and pondered. Bismarck, a legend in his lifetime, is brought nearer to us mostly from primary sources, so that the present generation gets a well-rounded view of his personality and policy. *The Blood and Iron Chancellor* will sustain the interest of all laymen concerned with German history. Though the present reviewer believes it is most improbable that a new Hitlerism will appear in West Germany, a new Bismarckism, with its rejection of the ways of the West, is not an impossibility. There exists a very deep difference between the two. Nevertheless a new Bismarckism would be in the second half of the twentieth century even more of an anachronism than it was in the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, as then, it would carry a greater threat to the Germans than to other peoples. Professor Snyder's book, which is written with restraint and objectivity, might help the reader to understand the fundamental aspects of the Bismarckian Reich.



"Hold it! Thirty-six of you went out there but only thirty-five came back."