

TWENTIETH CENTURY HISTORY

The World Since 1900

Tony Howarth

Second Edition
by Josh Brooman

 LONGMAN

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Cover: Refugee family from Frankfurt-on-Oder rest in street in Berlin. Possible date, 1945. BBC Hulton Picture Library.

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BBC Television Series 'Twentieth Century History'

This television series is associated with this book. The series is designed primarily for pupils aged 14 to 17, many of whom will be following examination courses; but it is hoped that some programmes will be useful to pupils in current affairs or contemporary studies courses.

Fifteen programmes are broadcast during the school year. Most are in colour and each lasts for twenty minutes. The programme titles and the chapters which relate to them are given below.

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Most of the programmes cover short time spans and concentrate on those aspects of the subjects which television can best illustrate. They are therefore selective and do not attempt to deal with whole periods or topics. Archive film forms the bulk of the broadcast material, although other visual techniques are used, and in some

programmes eye-witnesses relate their personal experiences of events. The BBC has produced a booklet for teachers to accompany the series. Dates and times of transmissions are listed in the BBC's leaflet, *Radio and Television for Schools and Colleges*.

Author's Note

Author's Note

I would like to express my thanks to all the people who helped in the making of this book. In particular I am grateful for the advice and assistance of John Robottom, Janet Howarth, Marguerite Dupree, and Peter Campbell who designed the book. I wrote it, and therefore accept all responsibility for what follows.

Tony Howarth

Tony Howarth died in 1980. In revising and updating his book, I too have incurred debts, and owe thanks especially to John Robottom.

Josh Brooman



The framework of a childhood: a ten-year-old spinner in a cotton mill in North Carolina, USA, in 1909. The photographer, Lewis Hine, worked for the National Child Labor Committee, collecting evidence of children's working conditions. Because factory owners feared such photographs could lead to charges of exploitation, Lewis Hine had to pretend to be interested only in photographing the machinery, asking for a child to stand in 'for a sense of scale'. While arranging the scene, he measured the child's height against his coat buttons, making notes of her age, working conditions and years of experience.

1 People and Societies I

When the twentieth century began, not everyone got the date right. In the so-called 'Western world' time was measured in the Christian fashion (AD – in the Year of Our Lord) and its people knew for a fact that 1st January was New Year's Day.

But 1st January 1901 must have been supremely unimportant to Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims and Chinese. They had their own festivals on which to celebrate new beginnings. Exactly when the New Year began was a matter on which even Christians did not agree; the Russian calendar was thirteen days behind ours in Britain. While people in Moscow were preparing for the last Christmas of the nineteenth century, in Glasgow they were drinking in the twentieth century. Whether they got the time right is yet another matter – few people had watches.

That's just one example – though not in itself a very important one – of differences between peoples of the world at the beginning of the period this book will cover. You can, however, develop ideas of other, more important, differences from that one example. Obviously, industry did not yet have the technology to turn out mass-produced wristwatches. And religion mattered. Unlike today, there were very few Christians who were prepared to accept that one man's faith was as good as the next's; Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists could easily be dismissed as heathens.

But there were also greater differences which you can begin to imagine. The Russians hadn't yet changed from the old, Julian calendar to the new Gregorian calendar, used in Western Europe, and neither had the Greeks, Serbs and Romanians. This suggests isolation, the separateness of peoples and countries. It suggests old ways of thinking and behaving. It suggests people who dressed according to custom, not according to fashion. It brings to mind small communities where change was not welcome, where it would have been meaningless to set out to measure time accurately in minutes and seconds.

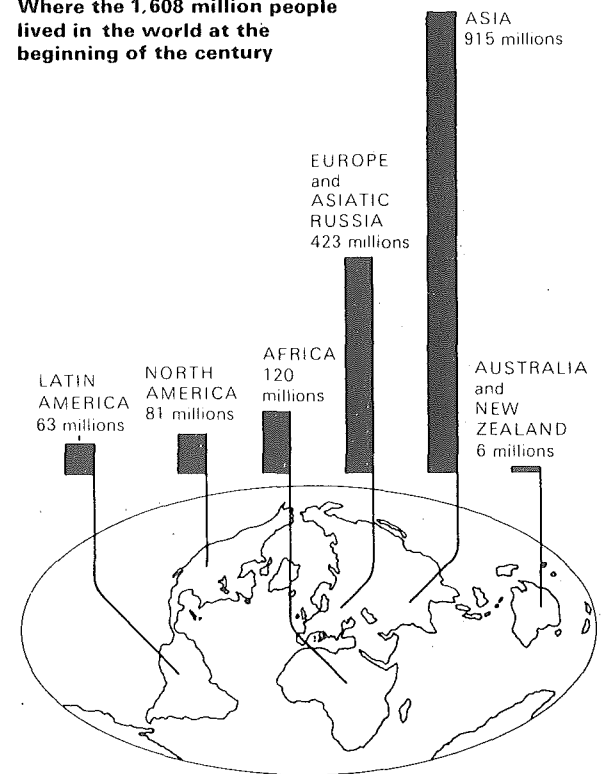
Such a picture, of an old-fashioned, slow-moving world, was partly true, but that picture was having to make room for increasing numbers of people to whom time, accuracy and the development of technology did matter. The rest of this chapter will provide information from which you should get a clearer view of that picture – a view which should help you to see

patterns of change, and of continuity, in the story of the world which was preparing to welcome your great-grandparents as babies.

The People

With a total of 1,608 million people (distributed as you can see below) the world seemed crowded after a century of rapid population growth.

Where the 1,608 million people lived in the world at the beginning of the century



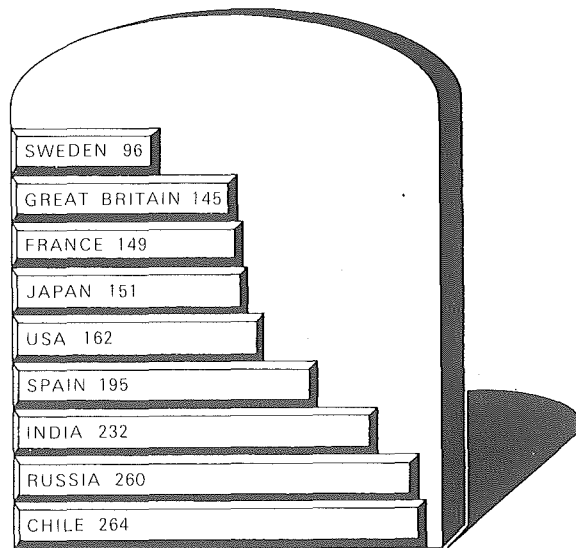
Let's put it another way: out of every 1,000 people in the world, 570 lived in Asia, 260 in Europe and the Russian Empire, 75 in Africa, 50 in North America, 40 in Latin America and 5 in Australia and New Zealand.

People and Societies I

The most densely populated part of the world, then as now, was Europe. Germany had 56 million people, the Austrian Empire 46, the United Kingdom (including Ireland) 42 million, France 39, Italy 33, Spain 19. There were more people in tiny Belgium than in Australia and New Zealand combined. In the vastness of Russia lived 133 million people.

Coming into the world was a hazardous business. It was much safer to be born in Sweden than in Russia, in Japan rather than in Chile.

Death in infancy: the number of children who died before the age of one (out of every 1,000 born alive)



The prospect facing a newly born child could be grim. In Western Europe or the USA he or she could expect to live, on average, until nearly 50; but a Russian baby could expect to reach only just over 30; an Indian about 23. Artificial techniques of contraception were already being used in the more industrialised countries of the West. Elsewhere—as you have seen—the most reliable family planner was Death.

Town and Country

Most of the world's workers (7 out of every 10) still made their living from farming. In some countries almost the entire population still worked on the land: in South East Asia and Russia 8 out of every 10; in the poorer parts of Eastern Europe, 9 out of 10. In

Western Europe (5 out of 10) the pattern was very different. Only *one* out of every 10 British workers was employed in agriculture.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Western Europe had become industrialised. Farmers still farmed—in East Anglia and East Prussia, in the Loire Valley and in Lombardy, in Sicily and in Sussex—and they still do. But the wealth and strength of Western European countries now lay in their ability and capacity to manufacture goods—to mass-produce a bewildering variety of things, from cotton sheets, woollen trousers and bicycles to shoes, saucepans, rifles and railway lines.

In a century of booming population growth, peasants and farm labourers had been drawn from the land to work in the factories, mines and shipyards. New cities were still growing and old towns rapidly expanding to house them. By 1914, Western Europe had more than 140 cities of over 140,000 inhabitants. They sprawled across the maps, linked by railways and fed by farmers who had begun to mechanise the cultivation of the land. In 1900, the world had only eleven cities with populations of over one million: four of them (London, Berlin, Vienna and Paris) were in Western Europe, two were in western Russia, and two in Asia. The other three (New York, Chicago and Philadelphia) were all in the USA—and that fact alone gives us a hint of the power of America's industrial muscle. The USA had become the world's top industrial heavyweight and the UK had already been pushed down to third position in the world in terms of industrial output.

In 1913, Americans produced 36 per cent of all the world's manufactured goods. Germany produced 16 per cent and the UK 14 per cent.

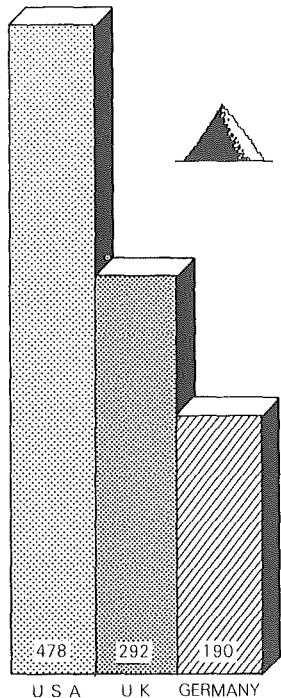
Trading Nations

Unlike Western Europe, North America had a variety of natural resources available for easy exploitation. The most obvious of those was the land itself, and in the second half of the nineteenth century large areas were opened up for the cultivation of crops, especially grain, and the rearing of animals. It was the golden age of the cowboys, the gun-toting guardians of the vast cattle ranges. Chicago became a slum city, reeking with the stink of blood and fat from factories where underpaid workers—many of them slowly dying from tuberculosis—canned meat for consumption by other workers in other cities of the Western world.

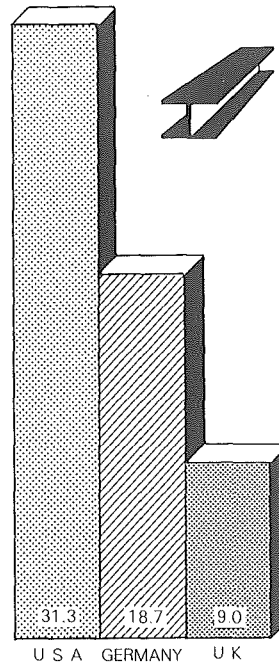
People and Societies I

The three industrial heavyweights in 1913

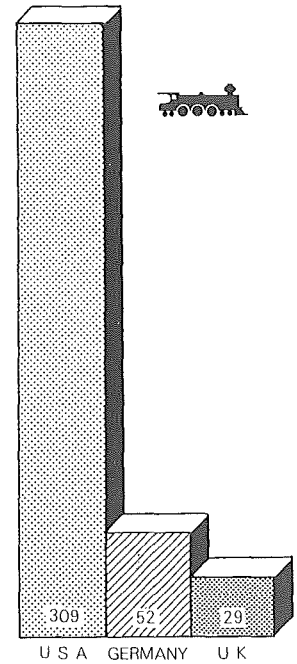
Coal
(millions of tonnes)



Steel
(millions of tonnes)



Railway
(thousands of km of track)



From the wide open spaces of Argentina and Australia came wheat, beef, mutton and lamb in abundance. The technology of refrigeration made possible the export of millions of carcasses a year. The journey of the lamb, from the pastures of New Zealand to the dinner tables of Britain, began. It was carried cheaply in the holds of iron, and then steel, steamships.

As the people of industrialised Western Europe provided much of the demand for grain and meat from the USA, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia, so they affected patterns of agriculture throughout most of the world. To meet their demands, tea plantations were laid out in India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and China; farm land in the West Indies was taken up with cane fields; coffee was cultivated in Brazil, and cocoa in West Africa. Tea, sugar, coffee and cocoa were (like rice, rubber and tropical fruits) labour-intensive crops—but there was plenty of cheap labour available to plant and harvest them.

The steam locomotive had created national, and even continental, markets by transporting goods and raw materials more quickly and more cheaply than ever before. Now the steamship enlarged world markets in food, raw materials and manufactures. And by 1903 those markets were connected by a world-wide network of submarine telegraph cables. Before cables, it took three weeks for a German or Italian to get a reply to a question he'd sent to New York; a reply from India took two months, and from Australia four months. Now questions about quantities, qualities and prices were answered on the same day.

Countries' economies (and the lives of their peoples) became more dependent on each other as they specialised in the production of the things they could grow, or could make better, or more cheaply or in greater quantities, than anyone else. The primary producers of raw materials, minerals and food, depended on the industrial nations for supplies of manufactured goods:

People and Societies I

the countries of town-dwellers depended on the primary producers for cheap food and for some of the raw materials they used in the manufacture of finished goods. The USA, already highly industrialised, and blessed with most of the valuable things to be found on this earth and beneath it, had it both ways.

The food, the raw materials and the manufactured goods which the nations of the world sold to and bought from each other were paid for in gold, or in currencies whose values were linked to gold, which was given a fixed price. This 'gold standard' meant that a manufacturer or trader knew, with reasonable certainty, what one pound, one dollar, one mark or one peseta was worth—in anybody's money. It made for stability and ease of trade, but it benefited mostly those countries already well-off.

At the centre of the world's financial system was London, the capital of the world's greatest trading nation—a nation which earned a great deal more abroad than it spent on importing goods and services. This huge balance of payments surplus was earned not only from the export of goods but also from 'invisible' exports such as shipping, insurance and dividends on overseas investments. Not surprisingly, this rich trading nation had become a great creditor nation, earning yet more money by lending her surplus abroad. It was in Britain's interests to stimulate world trade by lending money to those in need, provided they were

thought to be credit-worthy enough to be able to pay it back. But the world's poorer countries were not good credit-risks and so loans were not always easy for them to obtain—and in any case they had to be repaid, with interest.

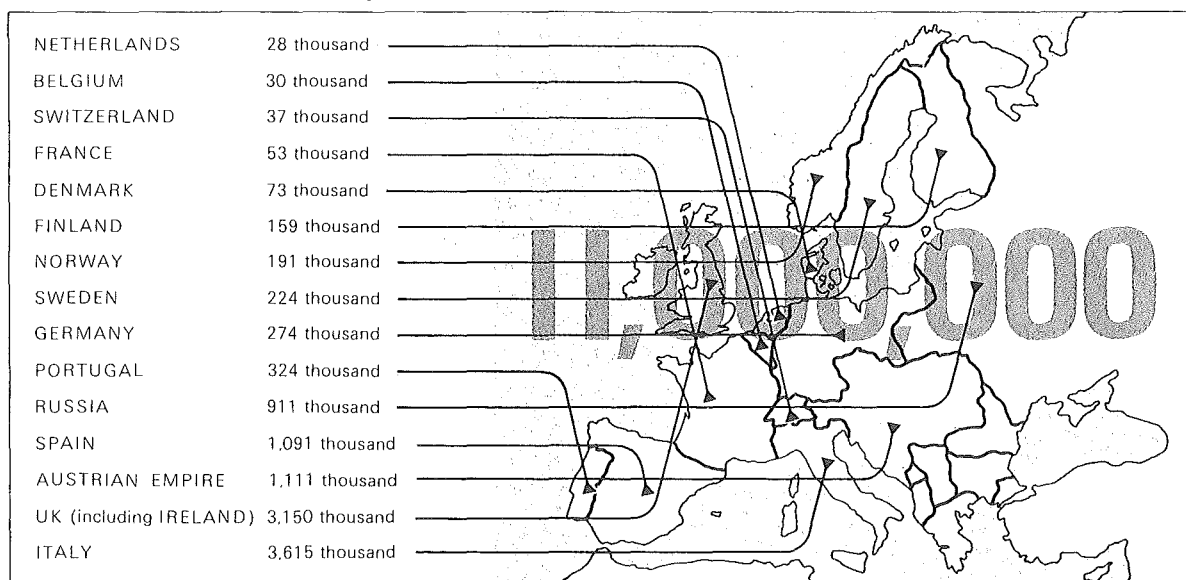
Migrants: New Faces, New Places

Not only goods were moved from country to country, continent to continent, in greater quantities than ever before. People moved too—by railroad and steamship—and in particular they moved out of Europe. Unemployed town-dwellers (in an age when governments didn't provide social security to fall back on), and farmers who couldn't produce food as cheaply as the beef and grain barons overseas, looked for a better life elsewhere.

Many of them were attracted by the wealth and promise of the USA, though large numbers of Italians and Spaniards preferred Latin North America, and considerable numbers of Britons went to stock the great emptinesses of Canada and Australia. But the USA gained most from the great European exodus. At the start of the twentieth century American society was a unique mixture of peoples of all nationalities, races and religions. Out of a population of 92 million Americans in 1910, well over 13 million were foreign-born.

There were population movements within and out

1901–10 Eleven million leave Europe



of Asia too. Millions of Chinese were moving, some into South East Asia, especially to Malaya and Singapore; while substantial numbers of Chinese and Japanese emigrated across the Pacific, to Hawaii or the USA – yet more good Americans in the making. Other Japanese made their way to Latin America. White Australians took fright at the prospect of a yellow invasion and the twentieth century's first immigration laws put the shutters up against the Asians. Meanwhile, on a smaller scale, Britain was receiving immigrants. As well as the continued influx of Irishmen and women, there were Jews from Eastern Europe, and ice-cream sellers from Italy – in a way, blazing the trail for the Indian restaurants and shops and Chinese take-aways of the future.

The Other Half

For most women in the world at the start of this century the purpose of life was marriage, and the purpose of marriage was to bear and rear children. Some societies kept women out of the business of public life altogether. Religion and custom affected them in ways which seemed odd, and sometimes perverted, to Western eyes. In Muslim lands women were kept in 'purdah', hiding their faces as well as their bodies from strangers. In China little girls' feet were mutilated to satisfy a male sense of what was attractive: small was beautiful. In India the murder of baby girls and the practice of 'suttee' – widows burning themselves alive on their husbands' funeral pyres – secretly continued despite the attempts of the British to stamp out these practices.

In the West male attitudes to women were hypocritical rather than cruel: men who believed that respectable ladies didn't like sex could enjoy themselves with child prostitutes. With few exceptions, women's influence was restricted to the home. Only in Australia, New Zealand and Finland did women have the vote before 1910.

However, such long-established anti-feminist traditions were gradually being weakened in the West. Industrialised economies called women into paid employment – in factories, offices, shops and schools. Marriage and domestic service were no longer the only careers open to the majority of women. For those who did marry, artificial techniques of contraception offered some the prospect of being able to limit the

years they would spend in the bearing and rearing of children. The first modern domestic appliances, such as gas cookers, held out the hope of a little relief from the daily drudgery of housework.

The more politically minded women began to organise their sex to fight for the right to vote and the right to control their own property. In the West at least the battle against male domination had begun.

The Shape of Things to Come

As the world entered the twentieth century it was clear that Western man was re-inventing transport – only the shape of the wheel remained from the original idea. Although the horse still had a lot of life left in him, his days were numbered. In 1900 there were 36,000 horses pulling tramcars in the towns of Great Britain: by 1914 only 900 were left. Motor-cars were already in mass-production; by 1914 there were a million of them on the roads of the USA. The age of the internal combustion engine had arrived. In 1903 the Wright brothers made the first powered flight in what was just recognisable as an aeroplane. In 1909 Blériot flew across the English Channel.

Along with the new forms of transport marched the new technology of communications. The telephone was invented in 1876 and was commonplace by the end of the century. In 1901 Guglielmo Marconi transmitted the first radio signal across the Atlantic, and so began the age of distant 'wireless' communications.

Much of the apparatus of modern Western society had already appeared – the typewriter, the sewing machine, the phonograph (ancestor of the record-player), the box camera, and, more ominously, the revolver and machine-gun. Perhaps most important of all, Western man knew how to generate and distribute electricity to his home and to his place of work.

The world doesn't change overnight. Only a small proportion of the world's population were directly affected by the new marvels of technology such as those mentioned above. Habits, customs and ways of thinking die hard. To a majority of the people of the world, the future looked very much the same as the past. Their lives were regulated by the seasons and the sun, not by the railway timetable or the factory whistle. But the twentieth century would not leave them for long in their sometimes grim, and sometimes peaceful, ignorance of its novelties.

2 Lines on the Map

When you look at the map of the world you sometimes get a feeling that things have always been like that. The shapes are familiar: Italy is putting the boot into Sicily; Africa looks like a pear upside down; the two Americas float between two oceans; and Wales resembles a pig.

Geologists will tell you it hasn't always been like that: some of the free-floating bits were once joined together. But for historians that's neither here nor there. For them the shapes have always been the same. It has been the lines on those shapes – the frontiers or borders – which have altered, time after time. And the twentieth century has seen them change more often than in any previous century.

We in Britain have seen very little change. The only big change in the British Isles this century occurred when a line was drawn in the north of Ireland and the British kept the little bit at the top while the rest became the Irish Free State (and later the Republic of Ireland). In contrast, practically everything has changed in Africa – the names of countries as well as their frontiers. And there have been great changes in Asia too. For example, at the beginning of the century what we now know as Bangladesh was part of British India: in 1947 it became part of Pakistan; and only in 1971 did it become its independent self.

In Europe there has been an almost continuous game of musical borders. Take Czechoslovakia as an example. In 1901 it didn't exist; in 1919 it was created; in 1939 it was split into three; and in 1945 the pieces were put back together again. To the west of the River Rhine, in Alsace, there are towns and villages which began the century as German; they then became French, then German again, and now they're French. People were born, lived, worked and died in those places while the frontiers moved about them, first one way, then the other, and then back again. They may have thought of themselves as Bohemians, Slovaks, Germans or Frenchmen, but they were rarely asked for their opinions about where the lines should be drawn on the maps. It was the rulers who used armies, either to invade and conquer or to back up their demands in negotiations, who decided where the lines would run.

We have to accept that maps, like people's faces, change. We know that maps show us, roughly, where the Russians, the Poles, the Indians, the Chinese and the British live. But they also show us *power* – the

power of nations, of their armies, navies and traders. Power decides where the lines are drawn – and changes of power mean that those lines change too.

Nations and Nationalism

In distant times it hadn't mattered much to most people who ruled them – a king, an emperor, a native or a 'foreigner' – unless the ruler was unjust, cruel, or asked for too much in the way of taxes. The main business of life had been making a living; the main issues had been local.

At the end of the nineteenth century, such attitudes were still common. You have already seen that many of the world's people had their work cut out to scrape a bare living for themselves and their children in isolated communities. Yet by that time most people were at least dimly conscious (and many were keenly aware) of what they shared with some people and what made them different from others – for example, religion, language, customs, dress.

That feeling (or 'consciousness') of sharing a common past and the closeness of speaking the same language makes people into nations. We call the feeling itself *nationalism*. By the start of the twentieth century the lines on the map of the world had been drawn into patterns of power which didn't take all that much notice of many nations' feelings. But the time was coming when nationalism would be a very potent force in world affairs.

The World's Empires

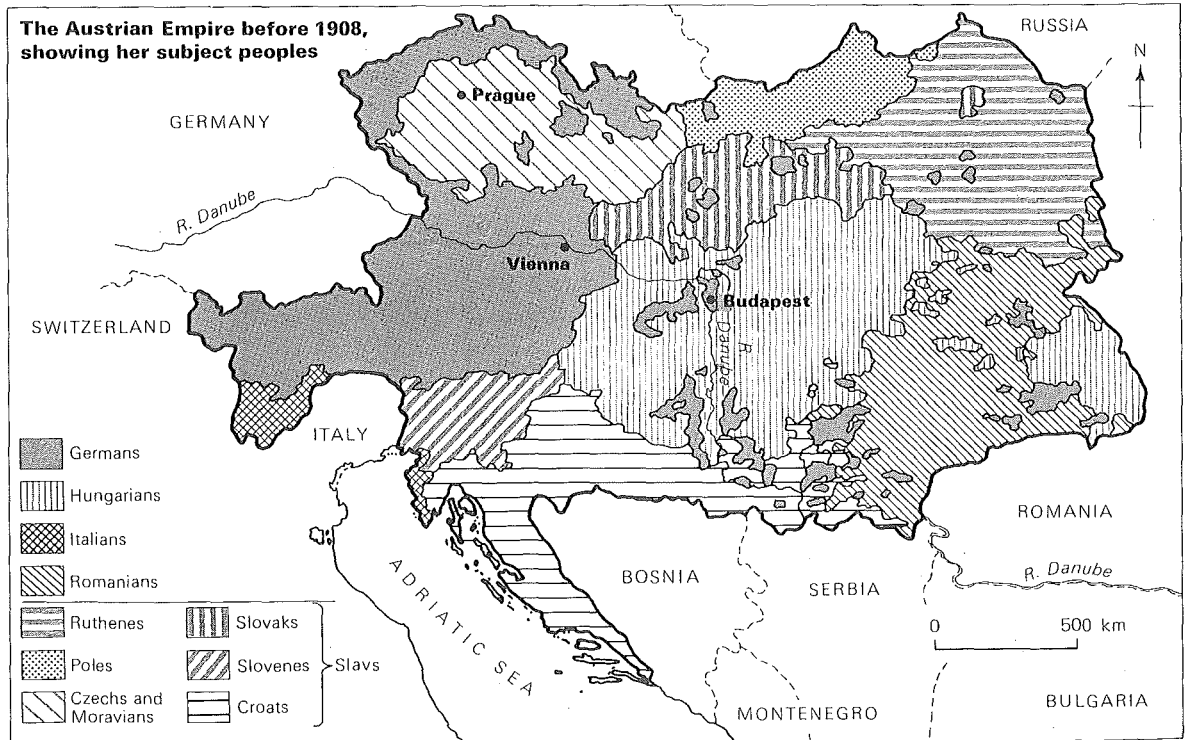
In 1901 the world seemed well stocked with emperors. Russia had one, Germany had one, Austria had one; China was ruled by an Empress; and Queen Victoria of England was also, by grace of God, Empress of India. And there were states whose rulers were not called emperors but which still had empires – for example, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal and Belgium.

The map at the top of the next page shows four of the world's great empires. You can see at a glance how they dominated most of the great land-mass of Asia and much of Eastern Europe, as well as the hundreds of different peoples living there.



The map below shows one of those empires in more detail. It reveals how it was made up of various peoples of different nationalities. It makes the idea of empire clear: a dominant nation or people (in this case, German-speaking Austrians) conquer and then rule over subject nations or people.

Unlike the Russians or the Austrians, the nations of Western Europe had nowhere to expand – except overseas. At first they had traded with foreign lands; then they had come to dominate the lands they traded with; and finally they had transformed many of those lands into ‘colonies’. In the second half of the nineteenth



Lines on the Map

century that gradual enlargement of the European empires had become a scramble to take over those parts of the world which had not yet been colonised – especially in Africa and Asia.

You can see from the map on page 9 that by the start of this century half a dozen nations in Western Europe ruled much of the rest of the world. Their white Christian rulers, soldiers and civil servants lorded it over blacks in Africa, Arabs in the Middle East, and vast numbers of Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists further east still. Lands had been claimed for this or that Western European nation with a total indifference to the wishes of their native populations (except that the local rulers often found that it paid them to do as the powerful foreigners wished.)

Why did the nations of Western Europe go on adding bits, and then yet more bits, to their empires? Sometimes they did it because it was easy to do. Naval and military commanders of expeditions from Europe often found that the locals made no great objection when they ran up their flags over Pacific atolls or African jungles. And once you had run up one flag it seemed only sensible to put up more flags over any other unclaimed land nearby.

Then there were the matters of power and prestige: the bigger you were, the better you felt and looked; and the more people you ruled, the more powerful you appeared. A Britain which could call on the resources (say in wartime) of not only Canada and Australia but on India too was much more imposing than a Britain which depended entirely on the English, Scots, Welsh and a minority of Irishmen.

Then came the matter of strategic security – which meant that you felt safer if your trade routes to distant parts of your empire were protected by colonies along those routes. Again, take the example of British India. After 1869 the main trade route to India was through the Suez Canal. What was more probable than the British then taking over not only Egypt but also other nearby lands to protect their Indian trade?

Underlying the steady growth of empires was also the fact that Western Europe had come to depend on them for its continued industrial development. To Europeans the expansion of plantations and mines had become essential to provide much of the food for the tables of their growing populations and raw materials to fuel their industries. Such considerations meant that no place in the world then seemed too small on which to stick a European flag. Their effect on Africa in par-

ticular was extraordinary. It was owned, practically lock, stock and barrel, by white Europeans.

If the behaviour of the Western Europeans now looks outrageous, we have to remember that they acted as they did not only for hardheaded commercial and strategic reasons, but also because they felt they were bringing advantages to their subject peoples. They believed they were better administrators, more just rulers than the native leaders they either displaced or worked with – and judged by Western standards, in many cases they were. When Joseph Chamberlain, Britain's Colonial Secretary, declared that "the British race is the greatest governing race the world has ever known", many Britons warmly agreed with him.

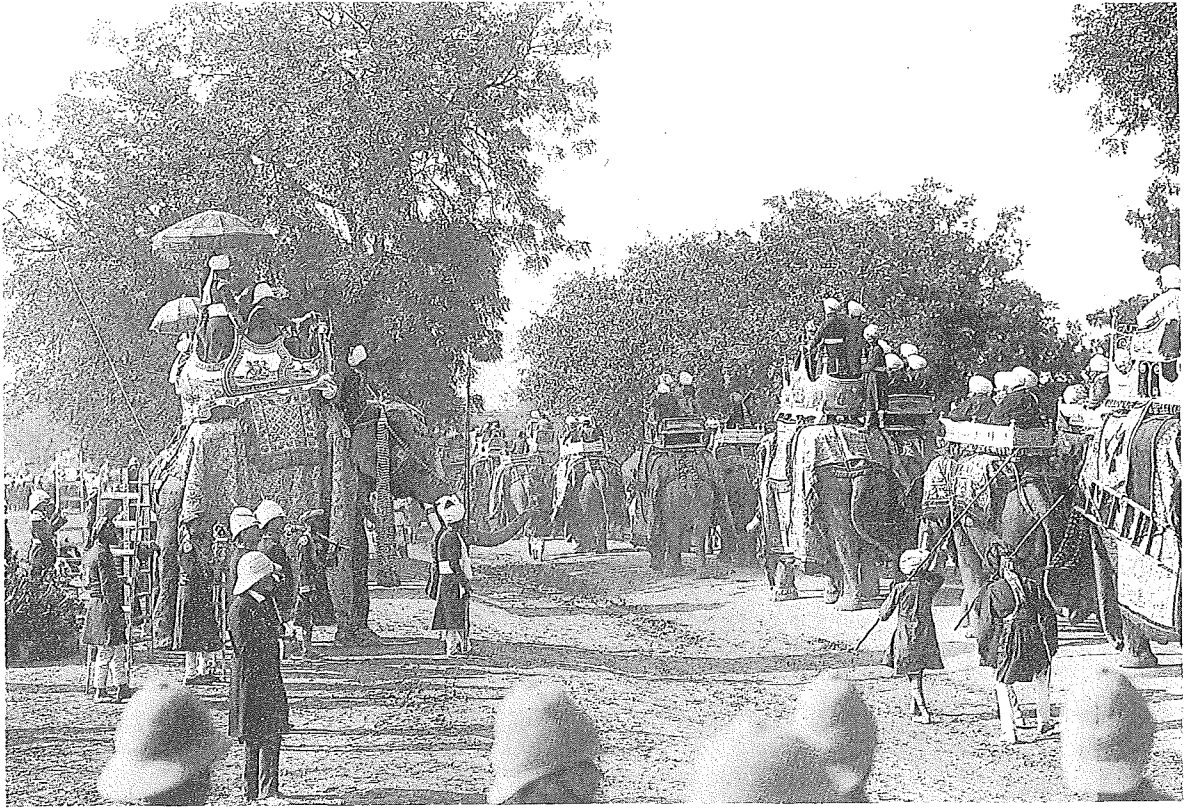
Finally, there were the missionaries – the men and women who set out to bring the word of Christ to the heathen. Deeply devout people (why else would they have gone?), they also believed their duty lay in taking the light of their civilisations to the 'dark' corners of the world. But the empire-builders followed in their footsteps. After all, the missionaries had to be protected – like the trade routes.

Profits and Losses

The Europeans who wanted to expand their empires thought that they could not only control sources of vital raw materials in the colonies but also use the colonies as markets for their own manufactured goods. But it is not at all clear whether that idea paid off as fully as the Europeans hoped. Certainly, as you saw in the previous chapter, the industrial nations, like those of Western Europe, imported cheap food and raw materials from abroad; but the countries which exported the rice, tea, sugar, tin, jute and rubber did not turn out to be an expanding market for manufactures. Quite simply, they couldn't afford all that many of them.

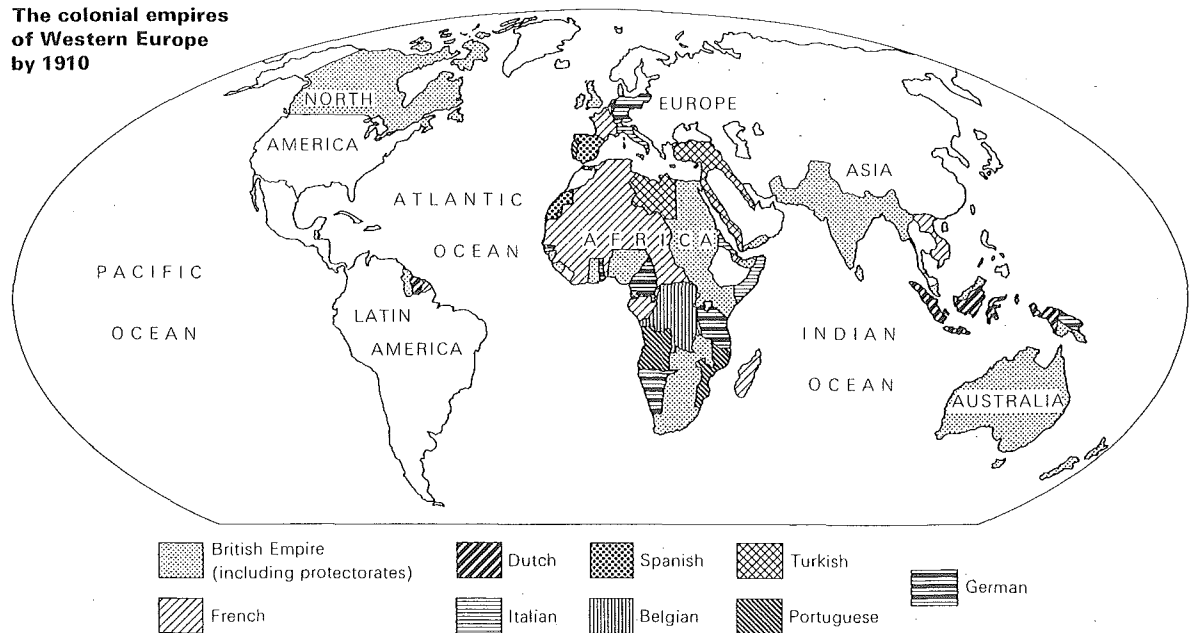
In general, what happened was that standards of living in the industrial nations rose more quickly than standards in the primary-producing countries. These were lands where almost the only work, apart from subsistence farming, lay in producing raw materials and/or food for export. Most of these primary-producing countries were colonies. If the colonies had had enough money to invest in the improvement of their own mines, farms and plantations, and *if* they had had more technical know-how, they would obviously have done better. But they didn't have the cash or the skills to

Lines on the Map



A snapshot of British imperialism: Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, seated in a gold-embossed howdah on an elephant (left), matches the arrival of his guests at the Delhi Durbar in 1903.

The colonial empires of Western Europe by 1910



Lines on the Map

go it alone. It was only recently, when they became independent, that some of them were able to band together and make the industrial nations pay higher prices for their products.

Meantime, the glories of empires were not cheap for the nations which ran them. It cost a great deal to employ civil servants to administer colonies, soldiers to defend them against internal disorder and threats from outside, and sailors to keep the trade routes open. Frequently, however, the colony, not the 'mother country', paid some of those salaries and wages. The British ruled and defended India: in return for those services they taxed the Indians.

Who, then, benefited from the colonial empires? You've met some of them already—the civil servants, the judges, the soldiers and the sailors, who benefited by being employed. And no admiral has ever grumbled about being given a bigger fleet to play with.

Among the others were European business men and investors who struck it rich—either in diamond mines, rubber trees or tea plantations. But investment in the cheap-labour colonies was not a sure way to riches: failures were more common than fortunes. Merchants prospered, in general, as they were bound to when world trade was expanding. And the missionaries benefited too. In the security of a colony they could begin to educate as well as to convert, to give medicine to the bodies as well as to comfort the souls.

Independence and Dominions

More than four thousand kilometres across the Atlantic from Western Europe, the USA had, in the nineteenth century, spread from the east to the west coast of North America. The Americans had behaved rather like the European 'imperialists'. The Mexicans, as well as the Apache, Shoshone, Cheyenne, Sioux and other 'Indian' peoples, had been pushed aside, resettled or simply exterminated in the Union's advance to the Pacific. As Red Cloud, a chief of the Sioux people, said, "The white man made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land, and they took it." But the conquered peoples and their lands were included in the enlarged Union, and that alone made the United States of America (think carefully about that name for a moment) very different from Russia or Turkey. It was *not* an empire. Indeed, ever since the original thirteen states had fought their way out of the

British Empire the Americans had been against imperialism, and especially against Western European imperialism. The 'Monroe Doctrine' (declared early in the nineteenth century) told Europeans to keep their noses out of the affairs of the whole American continent, and in that century the old Spanish and Portuguese empires in Latin America collapsed. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, Venezuela—all became independent countries.

If you look back at the map on page 9 you will see that the Europeans were left with a shaky hold on a few colonies in and around the Caribbean. Compare that with the grip they had on Asia and Africa, which lacked protection from a big brother like the USA.

During the early nineteenth century the former colonies of Latin America had freed themselves by war from Spain and Portugal. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries certain territories in the British Empire achieved a different kind of independence. They were the 'white colonies'. Canada, Australia and New Zealand were settled almost entirely by Englishmen and Scotsmen. There was no difficulty in allowing them to become virtually self-governing Dominions within the Empire.

South Africa, also a 'white colony', was different. Most of her white farmer settlers, the Boers, were Dutch, yet the commerce, the gold and diamond mines and the government of the colony were in the hands of the British. After the Boers had settled in new areas in the interior, they refused to submit to British government. In the Boer War (1899–1902) Britain imposed her will by force. In 1910 the British government persuaded the two Boer provinces of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to join together with the two provinces of the Cape and Natal in the Union of South Africa, to which Britain granted self-government. The Boers, or Afrikaners as they were also known, only agreed to join the Union, however, if the British agreed to their demand that only Europeans should be able to sit in their parliament, and that the qualifications for voting should be so strict that hardly any Africans would be able to vote. Britain agreed because she was anxious to keep the four provinces within the Empire, but she hoped that eventually the English settlers would outnumber the Boers and that they would be able to change the laws.

Lines on the Map

Japan and the USA: New Imperialists

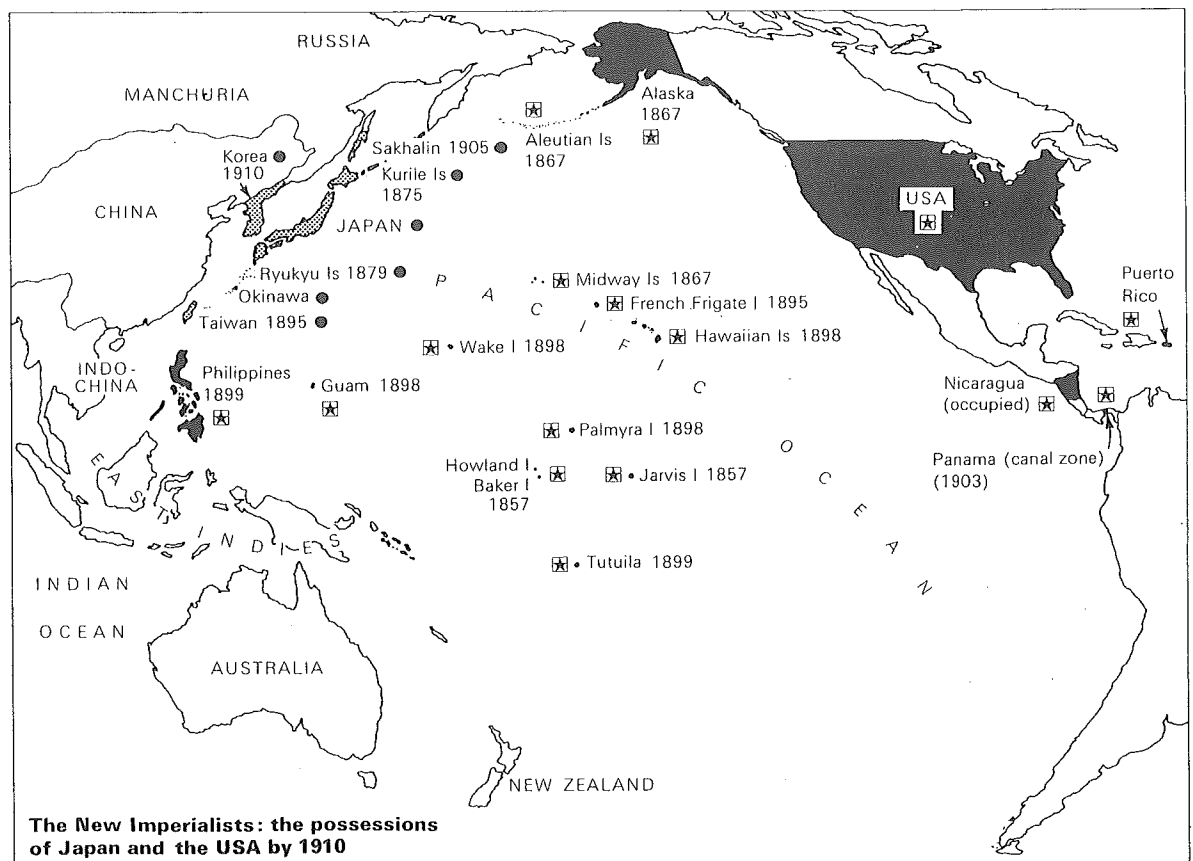
The traffic was not all one-way – out of empires. While the British were granting self-government to the white settlement colonies, they and other European powers were taking over more of Africa and Asia. Even China with her 400 million people was forced to allow European traders to settle in her cities, sail freely along the rivers, and build railway lines from which the traders took the profits.

But while Western European powers were still taking over foreign territories, two newcomers appeared in the empire-building business – Japan and the USA. Japan was the more extraordinary of the two. Midway through the nineteenth century, that country looked as if she would suffer the same fate as China and see her trading wealth trickle ever faster into the pockets of foreigners. The Japanese saw, however, that the best way to beat the Westerner was at his own game. By

the start of the twentieth century they had developed the industrial power and the military and naval strength to make war on – and defeat – the might of the Russian Empire in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905.

Like the British the Japanese could expand nowhere but overseas. By 1910 they had created an empire at the expense of the Russians and Chinese – and that had whetted their appetite for more.

If Japan's new empire was a startling development, America's policy of grabbing foreign land for herself looked like barefaced hypocrisy. While using the Monroe Doctrine to keep Europe at arm's length from the New World, the USA took over Hawaii, the Philippines and other Pacific islands and gained control of Cuba. Most of this was done in the name of 'liberating' these lands from Spanish rule. The US government backed up American business men and trading companies by openly interfering in the affairs of other Caribbean and Latin American countries.



Lines on the Map

The reason for American imperialism was much the same as that for European imperialism – the protection of commercial interests and of trade routes. At the very beginning of the twentieth century the USA negotiated with Colombia for the rights to build and fortify a canal through the Isthmus of Panama, which Colombia controlled. Colombia asked too high a price. In 1903 a convenient revolution in the Panama region against Colombia led to the setting up of a new independent state of Panama – which agreed to accept the USA's terms of ten million dollars for permanent rights over a sixteen-kilometre-wide canal zone. The waterway was opened in 1914 – under US control.

Hints of Things to Come

Earlier in this chapter we touched on feelings of 'nationalism' – people's sense of belonging to a distinct 'nation', of sharing the same history, traditions, religion and, above all, the same language. Administrators and soldiers of the great empires often trod heavily all over such feelings. Many of them believed they understood the culture of those they ruled, but such understanding as they had was usually very limited. The only nationalists who gloried in empire were the aggressive nationalists of the imperial countries themselves. Just as they imposed their taxes and laws upon foreign peoples, so they imposed their own languages too. Africans and Asians who wanted to do well found they had to leave their villages, take on European dress and customs and speak English, French or German.

But while the imperial countries were still redrawing the lines on the map in their own interests, nationalists were already undoing some of their old work. In Eastern Europe nationalists fought for and won their independence from the Turkish Empire. As that empire shrank back towards the east, the new nations of Serbia, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria were established. It would be Austria's turn next to deal with aggressive Balkan nationalists.

Nearer home, nationalists had almost succeeded in persuading Britain to give Ireland to the Irish – although the whole question of Ireland's future was about to be darkened by Protestant nationalists in Ulster, who threatened revolution if the British dared to leave them to sink or swim in an independent, mainly Catholic, Ireland.

Far away, in British India, extreme nationalists were already turning to terrorism – to assassination and bombings – in their attacks on the ruling foreigners. At the same time two moderate nationalist organisations, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, were pressing for a share in governing their country. But, as long as most Englishmen denied that Indians were their equals, there was little hope of much progress in allowing Indians to take a more responsible part in the government of their own country.

At the beginning of the twentieth century nationalism was stronger in Asia than in Africa. The Japanese defeat of Russia in the war of 1904–1905 provided Asian nationalists with a model of how to deal with Western imperialists.

The Japanese slogan of 'Asia for the Asians' was taken up by the Chinese nationalists. Their leader, Sun Yat-sen, was pledged to drive Westerners out of China, and after a revolution in 1911 he became the first President of a new Chinese Republic. In the following year a nationalist party was set up in Indonesia with the aim of driving out the Dutch colonialists. In Indo-China the French were trying to groom upper-class Indo-Chinese into Catholic, French-speaking rulers; but the majority of their subject people remained *Asian* Asians in culture, religion and language.

With few exceptions, nationalists did not yet pose a severe threat to the stronger empires, those of the British and the French. But their time would come, especially after a great war in which nationalists in Europe would help that continent to tear itself apart. But before we come to that we have to look at another aspect of the world as it marched into the twentieth century – its politics.

3 Politics Old and New

Critics of Capitalism

The growth of industry in the advanced countries of the West had affected not only the ways in which people earned their daily bread, their expectations of life, the survival rate of their children, their entertainments and habits of religious observance—it had also greatly altered their political attitudes, and it was beginning to change the forms of government under which they lived. The ‘industrial revolution’, which had made farm labourers into factory hands, was also developing, under its own steam, a political revolution.

The power of the old political masters—kings and queens, great landowners, bishops and priests—was fast fading. The capitalists, the men who owned the factories, mines and railways, demanded political power to match their economic power. And the workers they employed also had ambitions. For many of them, industrial employment, with its relatively high wages, was a distinct improvement on rural poverty. But city life could be grim, with its often squalid living conditions and long hours of disciplined work. They had been recruited into industry to create new wealth for their masters. Now they were beginning to claim their own share of that wealth; and some of them were seeking the political power they thought was their due.

The new political questions about how people should live and be governed in industrial societies were answered in different ways. There were reformers who wanted to improve working conditions in factories, to abolish child labour where it still existed, to develop ‘social welfare’ schemes and better housing to make city life tolerable and decent. Others, however, wanted much more radical changes. They saw capitalism as nothing but the exploitation of the many by the few. The capitalist was in business for profit, not to do good. The aim of the workers, or proletarians, should be, therefore, to destroy the capitalists, and then take over for themselves the means of production and distribution. That would be the next, and the last, political struggle. After the ‘workers’ revolution’, all property and all power would be in the hands of all the people.

Marx and the Workers

The man who had made the most eloquent and

forceful appeal for a workers’ revolution was Karl Marx, a German Jew. Chased out of his own country, he had finally settled down in London to write his book, *Capital*. But by the time of his death in 1883 the revolution he worked for had not happened in either Britain or Germany, the two most advanced industrial countries in Europe, where he had expected that the worst injustices of capitalism would goad the workers into action. Marx was dead, but he had left behind in his *Communist Manifesto* one of the great battle-cries of history:

“Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE!”

That call to action was taken up by Marx’s followers—Marxists—who believed that revolutions in the industrialised countries would lead, in the end, to the triumph of workers throughout the world. Such people would, in the twentieth century, be known as communists. However, in the late nineteenth century, Marx’s ideas also gave many industrial workers a sense that the working class was on the way up, and that they didn’t have to accept oppression and exploitation as part of an unchangeable pattern of life. They came to believe that if they were well organised and ably led, they could claim their right to a share in political power.

Such men were not out-and-out revolutionaries. They had little desire to turn the world upside down; but they were determined to improve the position of workers in their own countries. In Britain, in Germany and in France, they encouraged working men to band together in trade unions to press for higher pay and better working conditions; and in those countries there grew up non-revolutionary socialist parties, seeking to attract the votes of working-class men. These parties were independent of the small, revolutionary communist groups, and they proposed their own candidates for election to national parliaments.

Broadly speaking, the contestants in the struggles for power that we know as politics were changing. The new parties which claimed to stand for the interests of the workers began to compete with the old parties which represented the traditional ruling classes. Put in terms

which are easy to remember, the new parties of the Left began to challenge the established parties of the Right.

Patterns of Power

We can now look at politics in particular countries to see how, if at all, industrialisation had affected them; and see what other factors had given them their character by the beginning of the twentieth century.

In Britain, industrialisation had already had profound effects, for the great landowners no longer controlled Parliament. Some of them still sat in the House of Lords – by hereditary right, not by election – but that body was about to have its powers severely trimmed in 1911. The government was formed by the party which won most seats in a general election to the other House of Parliament, the Commons. At the start of the century that chamber was dominated by two parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, both of which had learnt how to appeal to a population in which most adult males had the vote. A third party was formed, which claimed to represent the demands of the working class for a share in law-making. Yet for a time that new organisation, known as the Labour Party from 1906, had little effect. Its representation in Parliament was small compared with over eighty Irish Nationalist MPs, most of whom had only one concern – to win Home Rule (self-government) for Ireland.

The politics of other industrialised countries in Western Europe looked similar to those of Britain. For example, both France and Germany had parliaments elected by the adult males in their populations. But there were important differences too, as we should expect, since each country had developed in its own way, politically as well as economically.

In France, organised religion still played an important part in political life. The Catholic Church's involvement in politics raised questions such as whether the state or the Church should control education; and France's political parties were either 'clerical' or 'anti-clerical', for or against the influence of the Church. There was nothing quite like that on the main island of Britain. Then again, there were more people who made their living from the land in France than in Britain. The interests of large numbers of conservative peasants were not the same as those of industrial workers; and French politics reflected that deep conflict of interests.

The British monarch had been stripped of power well before the beginning of the twentieth century and no longer played an active part in politics. In contrast, the German Kaiser (Emperor) wielded great power and appointed the ministers of his government without consulting the *Reichstag* (Parliament). Those ministers came from the old ruling class of Germany and most of them were from landowning families in Prussia, the powerful state which had forced the smaller German states to unite with her into one empire. The weak and divided opposition to the government came from the members elected to the Reichstag from the smaller states and from liberals who believed that Germany should be more democratic. There was also a fast-growing Social Democratic Party. The government had tried to prevent the spread of socialism in the industrial cities by introducing the first unemployment benefits and old-age pensions of any country in Europe, but it could not stop the industrial workers voting for the Social Democrats.

In contrast to both Britain and Germany, Russia had been slow to industrialise and most wealth was still in the hands of the imperial family, the landed nobility and the Church. The main business of the government of the Tsar (Emperor) was to keep law and order, to control the subject peoples of the Russian Empire, and to protect landowners against the frequent outbreaks of peasant violence. The Fundamental Law of the Russian Empire said: "The Emperor of all the Russias is an autocratic [all powerful] and unlimited monarch. God himself commands that his supreme power be obeyed. . . ." God might command obedience to the Tsar, but in that immense empire obedience had to be enforced by a large civil service, the Russian Orthodox Church, the secret police and the Cossacks – peasant warriors from south Russia who were allowed to rule themselves in return for helping out the Tsar in time of trouble.

The most spectacular opponents of the Tsar's government were the terrorists who wanted to smash the system, not tinker with it. In 1881 they blew up Tsar Alexander II, an act which merely made the next Tsar set his face against reform of any kind. The non-violent opposition to the power of the Tsar came from the Liberals, who believed that Russia should be modernised on the lines of France and Britain. That would have meant industrialising, improving public services such as schools and roads, and setting up a more modern form of government, responsive to the

Politics Old and New

needs of the people. Eventually, in 1906, after the Tsar's government had been weakened by disastrous defeat in the war with Japan (see Chapter 2, page 11), Russia did get a parliament, or 'Duma'. It was a sham, it had no real power and the Tsar sent its members away every time they tried to discuss political questions seriously. But the Duma was never finally disbanded.

Meanwhile, as industrialisation got under way in western Russia, workers in the cities formed trade unions; and a Social Democratic Party, influenced by the ideas of Karl Marx, was started – but it met in secret and had next to no effect on Russian politics. In 1903 a small group, calling themselves the Bolsheviks, and led by Vladimir Ilich Lenin, set off on their own to plan a Marxist revolution in Tsarist Russia. However, even Lenin thought they hadn't a hope of succeeding during his lifetime.

Across the Atlantic, or across the Bering Sea, was the USA, whose form of government was as unlike that of Russia as people could imagine. Many Russians did imagine it and promptly left Russia on a one-way ticket to 'the land of the free'. America was democratic: the people (provided they were neither female nor black) elected their President as well as Congress (Parliament). Indeed, Americans seemed addicted to voting, as they also elected their state governors and parliaments, their town mayors, sheriffs, police chiefs, judges and school boards.

There was, however, a darker side to American politics. The southern states, which had lost the Civil War against the more industrialised North only forty years before, were still plagued with a vicious racialism: negroes were systematically denied their civil rights. In the northern cities immigrant workers and children were ruthlessly exploited in factories and sweatshops. But there was little chance of Marx's ideas making much headway there. Trade unions found it difficult to recruit new members among a highly mobile working population, many of whom were recently arrived immigrants. And although hours of work in America were long, rates of pay were generally much higher than in Europe. Both main political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, supported a more or less unrestrained capitalist system. They believed that it offered unique incentives to hard work and opportunities for all – even though there was plenty of evidence that it left many people very poor and a few grotesquely rich.

As you saw in Chapter 2, much of the rest of the world had been gathered into the colonial empires of Western European states, such as France, Britain and Germany. Colonies were ruled directly by the mother countries, or indirectly through local princes and chiefs. Within the British Empire the exceptions were India and the white Dominions.

India was provided with a complete system of government and an army. Her people were controlled by British civil servants and British officers; and at the head of that system of rule was the 'Viceroy', appointed by the British government in London. The former white colonies of Australia, New Zealand and Canada had become self-governing countries (South Africa achieved the same status in 1910) and, reasonably enough, they adopted the British way of governing themselves, through elected parliaments. As in any other country whose government was not controlled from outside, the political struggles inside the Dominions were about their own peculiar circumstances and people. For example, in Australia the battle was about the powers of the federal government and the rights of the individual states which made up the 'Commonwealth of Australia'. In South Africa the struggle for power was restricted to a contest between the Boers and the English settlers, with the black population looking on to see who would be their eventual masters.

You have now seen something of the variety of the world's politics as it entered the twentieth century. You have seen how communism and non-revolutionary socialism were beginning to emerge as alternatives to capitalism; and how some Western European countries enforced their rule over much of the rest of the world. We ended the last chapter with a look at nationalist opposition to the European imperialists. Among the leaders of that opposition were men who admired much of what they saw or read of Western Europe. Some of the Asians who wanted the French out of Indo-China admired the French ideals of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. And many of the Indians who wanted to expel the British were deeply impressed by British parliamentary government. In a sense they wished to destroy the power of the West in order to spread what many of them believed to be good Western values – such as liberalism and democracy – in their own lands. We must now turn to see how the West tried to help them, unintentionally, by an attempt to destroy itself.

4 Towards Disaster: Causes of the Great War

Europe Under Stress

At the beginning of this century Europe was at peace and parts of it, especially in the West, were prosperous. No-one was fighting anyone else of importance. Indeed, ever since the defeat of the French Emperor, Napoleon, at Waterloo in 1815, there had been no war in which all the major powers of Europe—France, Austria, Russia, Britain and Germany (Prussia before 1871)—had been involved.

But if there had been no general continental conflict, there had been many smaller wars; and behind most of the troubles that had flared into fighting had been something we have come across before—nationalism. It had expressed itself in two forms: the nationalism of great powers, who wanted to extend their boundaries and their influence to make themselves even more powerful; and the nationalism of groups of subject peoples who wanted to set up their own independent national homelands and states. In the nineteenth century nationalism had provoked only local wars: in the early twentieth century it would drag Europe down the path to disaster.

In the West

Germany was a new country, a collection of German-speaking peoples forged into one state by Prussia. The rise of a united Germany, with its powerful Prussian army, had been feared and resented by the French; and hostility had erupted into war in 1870. The French lost the war; and in 1871, when the lines on the map were re-drawn, France lost the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Although only a minority of the people of those provinces was German, the Prussians decided that the new German Reich needed the territories to make its western frontier more secure. In the very act of creating their new empire, German nationalists had made for themselves a long-term enemy—France.

Over the next thirty years, German nationalists pressed for expansion overseas, for Germany to build the same kind of colonial empire that France and Britain already had. Their reasons were familiar: Germany needed colonies to provide raw materials for her new industries; and German prestige was at stake. When the young Wilhelm II became Kaiser in 1888,

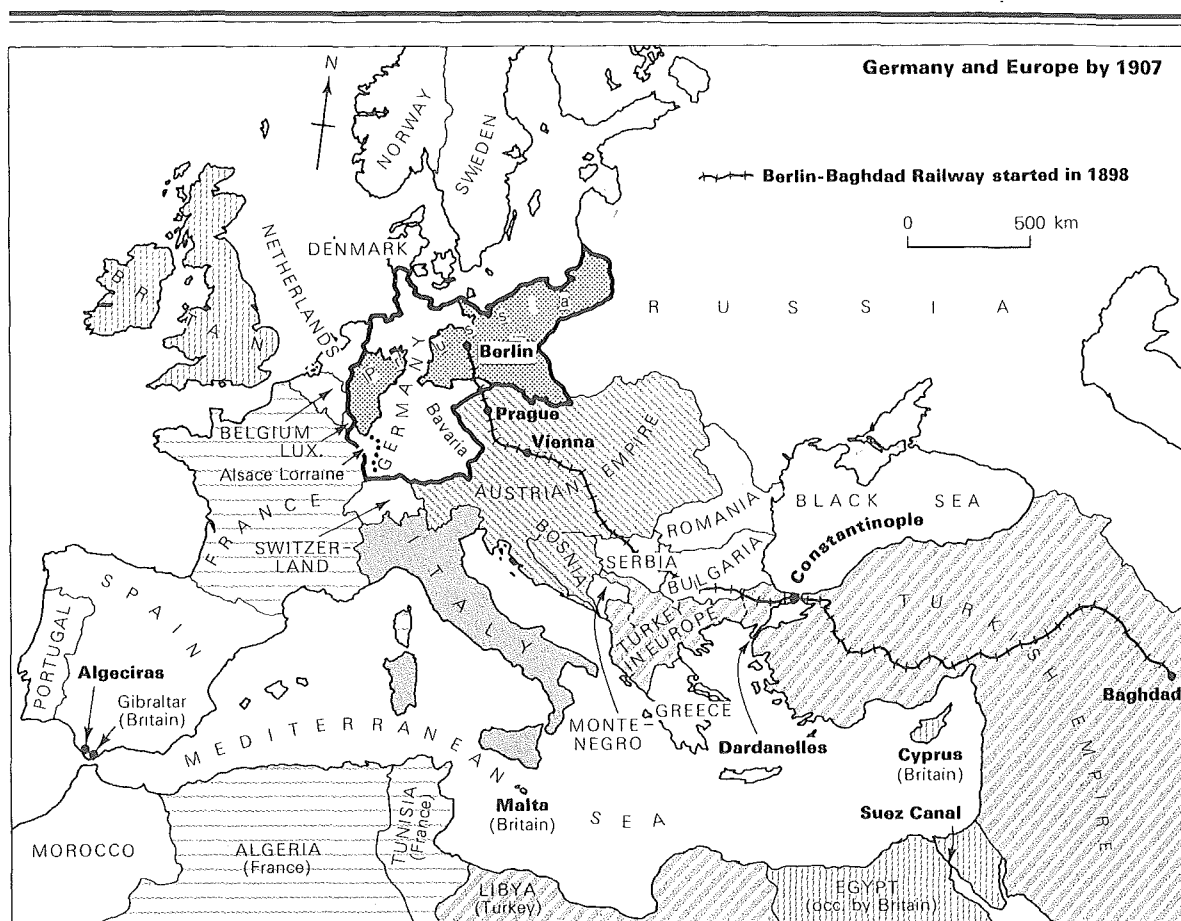
he actively encouraged the ambitions of German nationalists. While Germany claimed colonies overseas, in Africa and in the Pacific, Kaiser Wilhelm tried to persuade Britain and France that Germany was not out to compete with them.

For a time it seemed that the two established Western European empires and the newcomer could co-exist peacefully. But friction and rivalry were almost inevitable. Both Britain and France regarded the Mediterranean as an area of great strategic and commercial importance. Britain controlled the entrance to it at Gibraltar; France, whose empire included Algeria and Tunisia, controlled much of the coast of North Africa, and it had been generally agreed that she should also be the predominant European power in Morocco. In 1905 Kaiser Wilhelm stirred up the waters of the Mediterranean by claiming that Germany would guarantee Morocco's independence. At a conference in Algieras one year later it was agreed that Morocco should remain independent but that France should still retain her special position there. Five years later, in 1911, Germany plunged into Mediterranean affairs once again by protesting against a likely French takeover of Morocco. The French did complete their takeover—and Germany got nothing out of the two crises she had provoked, except the hostility of both France and Britain, now drawing ever closer together to protect their common interests.

In the meantime, another, more ominous, contest had developed: a 'naval race' between Britain and Germany. Early in the century Germany had expanded her navy, much to the delight and pride of German nationalists—and to the alarm of the British. As you have already seen in Chapter 2, Britain's economy depended on her trade routes, and the safety of those routes depended on the unchallenged supremacy of the Royal Navy. The British had a song, 'Rule Britannia', which they felt made their position perfectly clear to anyone who cared to listen:

"When Britain first, at Heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter of the land,
And guardian angels sang this strain:
'Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves;
Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.'"

Towards Disaster: Causes of the Great War



But German nationalists turned a deaf ear to that kind of music. Their protests that they were not competing with the empires in the West had already begun to sound hollow before 1906, when Britain launched HMS *Dreadnought*, the first of a new class of powerful battleships. In 1909 the Germans launched the *Westfalen*, which looked remarkably similar. The 'naval race' was becoming more and more expensive for both powers—and more dangerous.

★ In the East

You will see from a glance at the map above that there was no state of Poland at the start of this century. That doesn't mean to say, of course, that there were no Poles. The people of that nationality, without a state of their own, were subjects of the three great empires which met in Central Europe—those of Germany, Austria and Russia. Because the Poles were members of the Slav race they had more in common with their rulers to the east (the Russians were Slavs) than with

their Germanic overlords to the west and south. This did not mean, however, that the Poles preferred Russian rule to German or Austrian rule. On the contrary, Polish revolts against Russia in 1830 and 1867 had shown how powerfully they detested their eastern rulers. What it did mean was that German rule of Polish Slavs was already a sore point with Russia and that the issue of Polish independence was therefore a possible source of international discord.

The rulers of the new Reich had also begun to push German influence further into South Eastern Europe, into the area we call the Balkans, where Russia had long-standing interests. First, Russia's trade route from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean was through the Dardanelles: it was vitally important that control of those straits didn't pass from a weakening Turkish Empire into the grip of a power hostile to Russia. Second, two of the nationalities in the Balkans, the Serbs and Bulgars, were not only Slavs but shared the same religion as the Russians—Orthodox Christianity.

Towards Disaster: Causes of the Great War

To the Russians this seemed a natural justification for expanding their influence into the Balkans.

It was into that hotbed of Slav nationalism that Germany drove the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. Many Bulgarians were pleased by this new stimulus to trade in their poverty-stricken corner of Europe; it was also some guarantee against being swallowed up by Russia. The Russians saw the railway as a threat to their hope of influence in the Balkans.

By both ruling over Polish Slavs and penetrating into the Balkans, Germany made herself the natural ally of the Austrian Empire—that great Central European jumble of races and nationalities which was also ruled by Germans, included many Slavs and took a keen interest in Balkan affairs. The rulers of Austria were particularly disturbed by the second kind of nationalism we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—the nationalism of subject peoples. And if you refer back to the map of the Austrian Empire before 1908 on page 9, you don't have to look very hard to see why.

The most aggressive nationalists in the Balkans were the Serbs. The kingdom of Serbia had been set up late in the nineteenth century when its people had won their independence from the decaying Turkish Empire. But that was not enough for Serbian nationalists: they planned to create a Yugoslavia (South Slavia) by joining to Serbia all the Slav peoples who lived in the south of the Austrian Empire, and the northern tongue of the Ottoman Empire. To the German-speaking rulers in Vienna, the creation of a Yugoslavia would mean the end of their empire: if the Southern Slavs were allowed to break out it would be only a matter of time before the Czechs, Poles, Hungarians and Slovaks went their separate ways.

Two Power Blocs and a Plan for War

When countries share common interests, and especially when they feel they share common enemies, they become allies—they sign 'alliances' with each other. Shortly after Prussia had hammered together the German states, the new German Empire formed an alliance with Austria. That 'power bloc', stretching across Central Europe and later joined by Italy, scared the French and Russians into each other's arms. They signed an alliance in 1892: in the unlikely event of war, Russia promised to support France if she were attacked by Germany. But, as you have seen, aggressive nationalism in the early twentieth century began to

make war more, rather than less, likely.

The generals of the German army took the prospect of war in their stride. They believed they must plan to win it on two fronts—first, quickly in the west against France, and then in the east against Russia. Any plan which involves the movement of hundreds of thousands of men and their equipment, by rail, on horse and on foot, through the home country, then through enemy territory, and then back again, takes a long time to settle. When the German war-plan, named after General von Schlieffen, was finally settled, it set like concrete. Germany was stuck with it. Even if war broke out over a dispute in the east or the south of Europe, the German war machine could respond only by striking *west* first. And that would make a general European war far more likely.

Britain had tried to remain aloof from the two hardening power blocs. Separated by the sea from continental Europe, she had believed that her future lay in the development and protection of her overseas empire. But the growing menace of the German navy had forced the British to change their attitude. In 1904 and 1907 they had signed 'ententes' with France and Russia respectively. The 'ententes' were general agreements rather than firm alliances. For example, the entente with the French did not mean that Britain agreed to support France, unconditionally, against any enemy. But it did bring Britain and France closer together by clearing up disagreements between the two countries over colonial matters, and by encouraging the heads of their armed forces to discuss what joint action they might take if war did break out.

So, the five great powers of Europe had aligned themselves in two opposing blocs; and the great power in the centre of it all—Germany—had already developed a war-plan capable of turning a local conflict into general disaster. That local conflict would eventually break out between Austria and Serbia; and the incident to spark it off would happen in a place called Bosnia. The people who struck the spark would be what you would expect—extreme nationalists.

The Bosnian Connection

In the year 1908 Austria extended her boundary to the south by taking over the province of Bosnia from the Turks. The people of Bosnia were Slavs; and since most of them were Serbian Slavs, the takeover was a slap in the eye for Serbian nationalists and for their

Towards Disaster: Causes of the Great War

Russian sympathisers. Russia reacted by increasing her support for Balkan nationalism and encouraging Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece to form the 'Balkan League', an instrument which Russia hoped to turn against Austria. The members of the League, however, turned instead on Turkey in the First Balkan War of 1912; and then on each other in the Second Balkan War of 1913. The most important result of those struggles was that Serbia, the most intensely nationalist of the Balkan states, had roughly doubled in size by the end of 1913. It appeared that the Serbian dream (and the Austrian nightmare) of an independent Yugoslavia might be coming true.

On 28 June 1914, in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, Serbian nationalists shot dead the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and his wife. The man who pulled the trigger, Gavrilo Princip, was a Bosnian Serb, but the Austrian government blamed the killings on the kingdom of Serbia. It was convenient to do so: encouraged by Germany, the

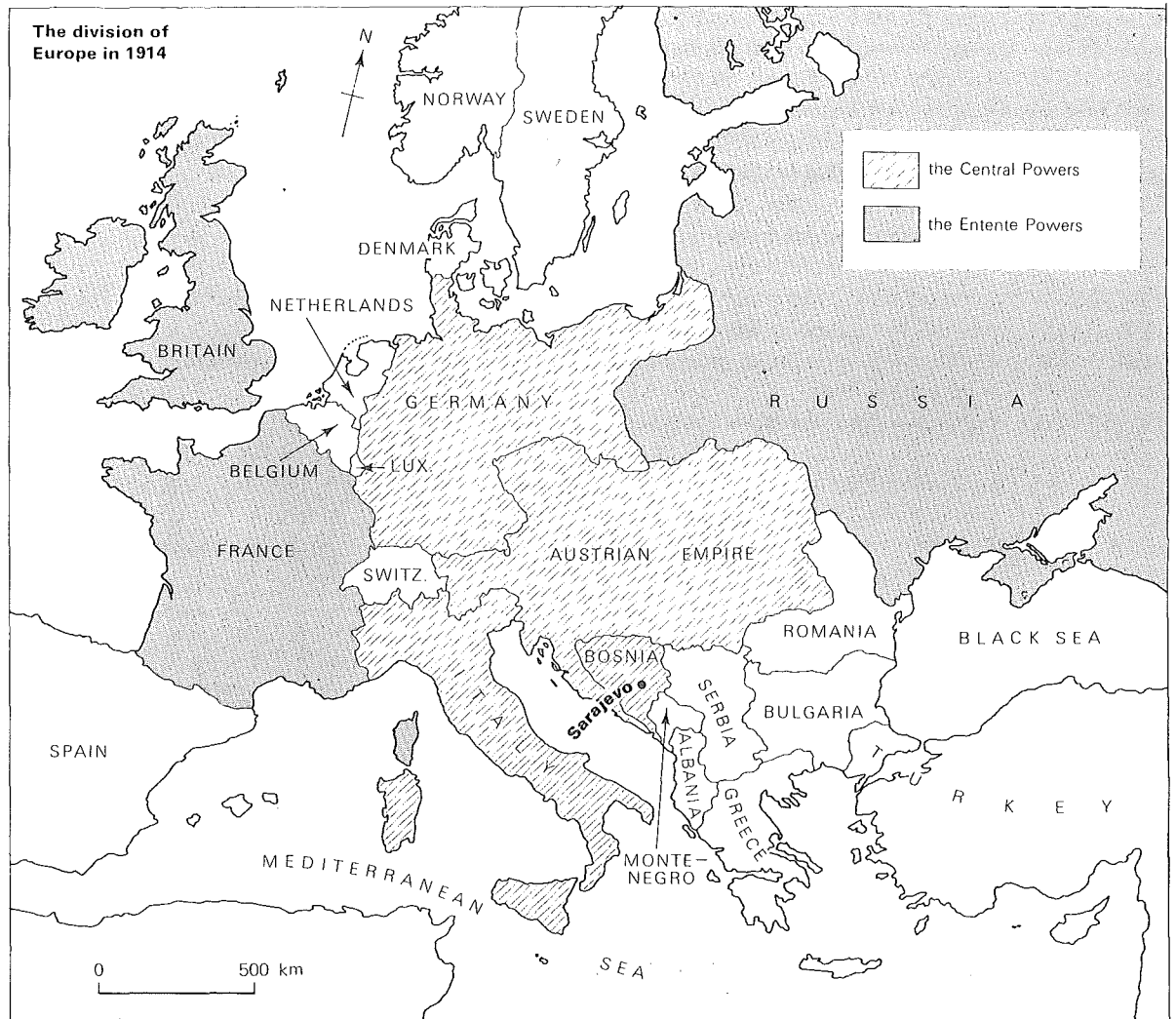


Austrians decided to use the murders as the excuse to smash the homeland of Serbian nationalism. After making unacceptable demands on the Serbian government, Austria declared war on 28 July.

Suddenly, the two power blocs found themselves eyeball to eyeball, unable to prevent a war down in the south-east spreading like a plague across the continent. As Austria opened fire on Serbia, Russia prepared all her armies for war – the one in the north which would attack Germany as well as the central and southern armies which could help the Serbs. Austria's ally, Germany, promptly declared war on Russia and then (remember General Schlieffen's plan?) attacked France. The easiest line of attack in the west was through the lowlands of Belgium, well equipped with roads leading to France. By invading neutral Belgium on 4 August, the Germans not only shocked public opinion in Britain; they threatened to occupy the ports on the other side of what was, after all, the *English Channel*. On the same day Britain declared war on Germany.

Whatever their political opinions, whatever the form of government they shared in or endured, most of the people of the five great powers of Europe greeted the

Towards Disaster: Causes of the Great War



outbreak of war with loud enthusiasm. Each country had its reasons for thinking the war was just and necessary. The soldiers went forth joyfully to do battle, and

their mums and dads and children proudly waved them goodbye. They expected them to be back in time for the Christmas pudding.

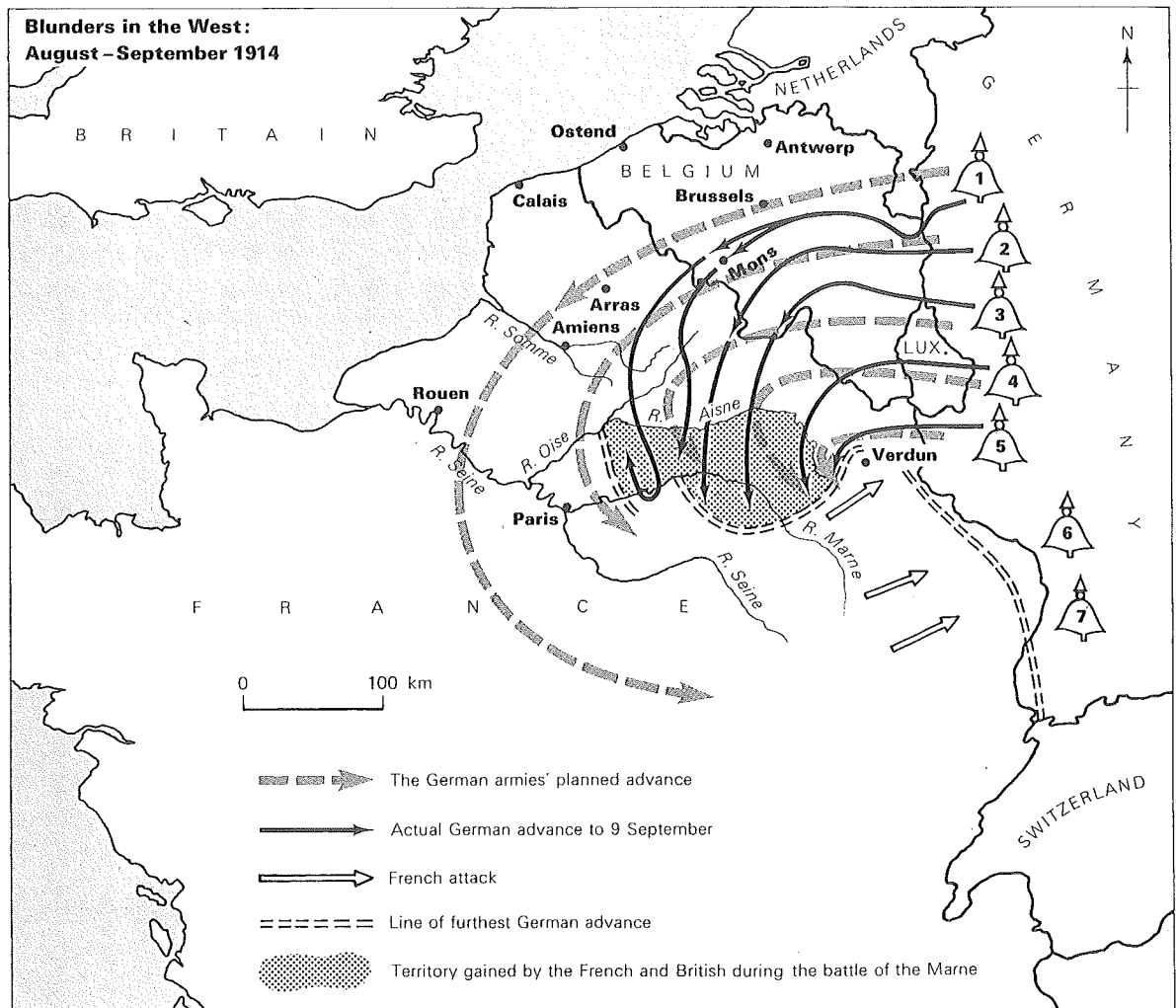
5 The Great War of 1914-18

The Making of the Fronts

The Great European War began with three great blunders. First, after a successful start to the Schlieffen Plan when the Germans marched confidently through Belgium and into northern France, their armies were slowed down and a change was made in the great war-plan. Instead of sending their First Army to the west of Paris and then rolling up the French armies from the rear, the Germans attacked with all their forces to the east of Paris and were stopped dead in their tracks at the Battle of the Marne.

Despite their success at the Marne, the French generals didn't have the strength to follow it up. This was because they had made the second mistake of the war in the very first week. Believing that attack was the best form of defence, they had thrown their best troops against the Germans in the centre and the south. They had suffered appalling casualties and had been beaten back.

The Russians made the third mistake. Their two northern armies lumbered into eastern Germany, with little idea of what to do once they got there, except to occupy German territories along the Baltic coast. But



they had no plans for defending the land they had occupied and were promptly clobbered by the Germans in the battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes.

In the west, the two sides searched for each other's weak points to break through. They found none. By November 1914 they faced each other along a line which stretched from the Channel to the Swiss frontier. The Western Front had been drawn on the map. In the east, the Germans advanced into Russia, the Russians advanced into Austria, and then the armies of the three powers paused for the winter. The Eastern Front, much longer and in places much more vague than the front in the west, had been only roughly sketched out.

A New Kind of War

Over the next three years the great powers of Europe fed their men, money and munitions into those two fronts. There were plenty of men available—and mostly willing—to fight. At first the densely populated countries of Western and Central Europe recruited millions of soldiers without much difficulty. Russia was a human reservoir. Governments of the great powers spent all the money they dared to raise in taxes and then borrowed more—from their own citizens and from any other countries prepared to lend it. They geared their industries to the new markets of human destruction and turned out weapons and ammunition in unbelievable quantities. In those three long years the Germans pushed part of the Eastern Front further east and the Russians pushed another part further west—neither overwhelmed the other. And the shorter Western Front stood still.

A modern historian has described the reason for the stalemate of the Great War like this: "There was ... a twentieth-century delivery-system, but a nineteenth-century warhead." The delivery system of the armies was the railway network of Europe. Trains could deliver masses of men speedily to the fronts and supply them with food, armaments and equipment. But beyond the railheads the armies could move only at the speed of a marching man or of a horse pulling a wagon or gun. And if an army did threaten to break through at some point on the front, the opposition could rush its reserves by rail to reinforce that point. Just one example should help you to appreciate the scale of railway operations. When the German Fourth Army came

under attack in Flanders between June and November 1917, it used a total of 6,591 trains, pulling 242,185 wagons to feed, supply and reinforce itself. The railways, which, in the nineteenth century, had brought the people of Europe closer together in peaceful trade, now held them fast in war—and the generals could think of no way out, except to demand more men, more guns, more shells to hammer the enemy.

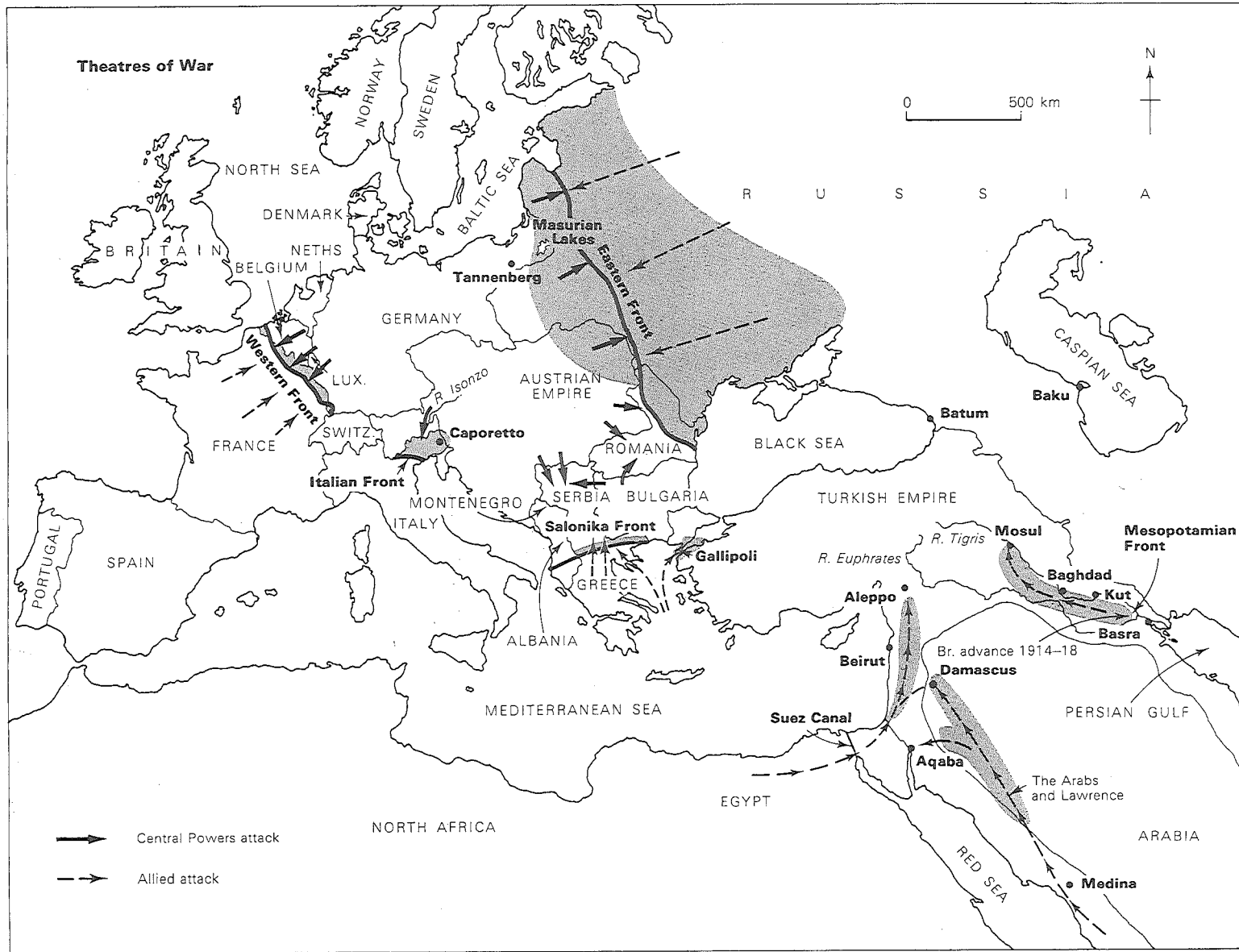
To protect themselves from rifle and machine-gun fire and the explosions of artillery shells, the soldiers of the front-line armies sheltered in trenches, which were soon extended into elaborate systems of defence and communication. The Western Front became probably the most extraordinary spectacle in the history of warfare. The two sides, each made up of millions of men, confronted each other, below ground level, in trench systems so complicated that only the birds and daring young men in their flying machines could fully appreciate them.

Generals planned the most deliberate battles the world had ever witnessed, monotonously following the same pattern of intense artillery bombardment of enemy barbed wire and trenches before the PBI (Poor Bloody Infantry) were sent 'over the top' into the attack. And the enemy reinforced the sector of their line under stress and eventually the attack would stop, after gaining maybe a few kilometres of worthless territory. With few exceptions, the great battles of the war ended in neither victory nor defeat, but in exhaustion. Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele—they were all massacres whose futile horrors sickened the imagination. "We shall bleed the French to death", said the Germans before the battle of Verdun; and the world watched, astounded, as the 'civilised' countries of Europe opened each other's veins.

The Sideshows

The Great European War was not restricted to the five great powers and little Serbia and Belgium. Anyone could join in. In time a number of the lesser powers either seized the opportunity of war to pay off old scores against their neighbours, or were bribed to enter the fighting, or jumped on the bandwagon of the side they thought would win. The most important of the new entrants were the Turkish Empire and Italy.

Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany and Austria, mainly with the intention of halting Russian expansion around the Black Sea. The British attacked



The Great War of 1914-18



British soldiers resting in a captured front line trench at Ovillers on the Somme in July 1916.

the Turkish Empire in three separate campaigns. The first, the Gallipoli Campaign, was intended to force a way through the Straits of the Dardanelles into the Black Sea. This would have enabled Britain to attack Germany and her allies from the east and to send supplies to Russia. Just as important, the Gallipoli Campaign seemed to offer the possibility of a quick and unexpected success, in contrast to the deadly stalemate which had already set in on the Western Front. It was an attractive alternative to what Winston Churchill (then the Minister in charge of Britain's navy) described as "sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders".

The first stage, a naval bombardment of the Turkish forts protecting the narrow Straits, was a failure. So

to provide the navy with a safe passage through the Straits the British now planned to invade the Gallipoli Peninsula and clear the Turks out altogether. But the build-up was slow; some commanders were too timid and back at home the government was no longer confident that the scheme would succeed. Not enough troops were sent (many of those who were came from the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps—the ANZACS) and the Gallipoli Campaign ended in total failure and withdrawal.

The second campaign was perhaps the first in history which was fought to win control of oil supplies. The expedition to Mesopotamia was to bring the oil of the countries we now know as Iran and Iraq under British control. The Turks resisted fiercely at first, but by the

end of the war British forces were in control of the three cities of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. The third campaign was more glamorous, though its outcome was not at all honourable. The British planned to support the Arabs in a revolt against their Turkish rulers and promised that after the war they would help to create independent Arab states in Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Arabia (today's Saudi Arabia). T. E. Lawrence, a British Intelligence officer, became a military adviser to the Arabs, and helped the Arab rulers to build and lead a guerrilla force in attacks on Turkish railways and supply lines. The daring exploits of this young officer, who became known as 'Lawrence of Arabia', were a strange, romantic episode in the war. In the end, the Arab units linked up with the British force which set out from Egypt, and drove through Palestine and Syria to the frontiers with Turkey. However, that joint Arab and British success was spoilt by news of the Sykes-Picot agreement (signed in 1916) in which the British and the French governments planned to divide much of the Middle East between them with little thought for the interests of the Arabs.

Britain and France enticed Italy into the war by promising her a share in the spoils which would come from the defeat of Austria. The Italians had a miserable war fighting the Austrians along the Isonzo river. After a crushing defeat at the battle of Caporetto in late 1917, the Italian war effort had to be propped up by the British and French.

We left little Serbia back in July 1914, threatened by the might of the Austrian Empire. The Serbs held out until the autumn of 1915 when they were crushed from the north by Austria and Germany and from the east by Bulgaria, whose dislike of the Serbs made her a natural ally of the Germans.

The defeat of Serbia by overwhelming force was the tragedy of the war in the Balkans. Light relief was provided by the British-French force which was sent to Salonika to help the Greeks to help the Serbs: however, the Allies could not persuade Greece to enter the war until 1917. But the full comic turn was put on by the Romanians. Encouraged by Russian successes against Austria, Romania entered the war in August 1916, hoping to get out of it Transylvania (from Austria) and the Dobruja (from Bulgaria). Here was an example of a small nation seeing war as an opportunity for expansion. But Romania was poorly served by a large, almost completely illiterate army—a very odd army in which “officers above the rank of major had the right to use

make-up”. It took the Germans, Austrians, Turks and Bulgarians just a little over three months to defeat them at the end of 1916.

Empires at War

The conflict in Europe was bound to affect countries outside. Just as the Russians and Austrians conscripted soldiers from the mixtures of nationalities which made up their great land empires, so the British, French and Germans involved their colonial territories in the war.

The British Dominions entered the war of their own free will. British India, too, fought for the mother country—though the Indian people were not asked whether they loved mother well enough to go to war for her. Taken together they made a vast contribution of nearly three million troops to the British war effort—made up as follows:

India	1,400,000
Canada	640,000
Australia	417,000
New Zealand	220,000
South Africa	136,000

Many of them fought and died on the Western Front. The Indian army manned the expedition to Mesopotamia; and the ANZACS suffered great losses in the futile Gallipoli Campaign. In a grisly kind of way, the graveyards of Gallipoli were the most remarkable of all memorials to the Western European empires. Men from 'down under' died in a remote corner of south-east Europe, fighting for a king and country many of them had never clapped eyes on.

If the Dominions entered the war freely, the colonies were dragged in. France, Britain and Germany all had colonies on the continent of Africa; and in the German colonies the world was treated to the spectacle of great European powers fighting each other with armies made up largely of Africans, with some Indians added by the British. German South-West Africa was attacked, for the British, by the South Africans. It turned into an even more interesting struggle when large numbers of Boer soldiers decided they preferred to fight for the Germans rather than against them. In the Far East, Japan joined the war on the side of the British, French and Russians, and took the opportunity to occupy German colonial possessions in the Pacific and to seize the

The Great War of 1914-18

Chinese port of Kiaochow, previously controlled by Germany.

The campaigns in colonial Africa, like those in the Middle East, were side-shows to the main events on the two fronts in Europe. But before we turn back to those vast killing grounds we must look at one more aspect of the European conflict which spilled over the borders of that continent.

War at Sea

You will remember that the original reason for Britain drawing closer to France and Russia had been the growing naval threat from Germany. On the outbreak of war in 1914 many people expected that a battle between the two naval giants, Britain and Germany, might decide the outcome of the war. By any standards, the two navies were colossal: between them they had over a hundred battleships, not counting cruisers, battle-cruisers, destroyers and torpedo-boats.

The great fleets clashed once—at the Battle of Jutland in the North Sea in 1916. And that was enough

to convince them they were better off threatening each other than actually fighting. Defeat for one side would have meant much more than the loss of a fleet: it would have given to the other side complete control of the trade routes to and from Europe.

So, instead of a naval war waged by the bull elephants of the seas—the battleships—there developed a war of blockade. Both sides tried to disrupt each other's trade routes and prevent vital foods and raw materials reaching the enemy by laying minefields at sea and by using a new kind of warship—the submarine. The raids of German submarines on British merchant shipping caused havoc until by mid-1917 the British had organised their ships into 'convoys', escorted safely across the seas by warships. The British blockade of Germany tightened as the war went on. While the German navy forced the British government to ration their people's food, the British navy ensured that Germany's people suffered even worse shortages. In the last bitter year of the war that was to be one of the factors that tipped the scales in favour of Britain and her Allies.

6 Peoples at War I

The importance of the steam locomotive on land and the steamship on the world's sea-routes was part of a larger pattern. For this was the first great war fought between industrialised countries; and as soon as the hopes of a quick finish disappeared, it became a struggle in which the stamina of the armies depended largely on the industrial strength of the economies behind them.

The soldiers often complained that they were merely things to hang other things on—helmets, rifles, ammunition pouches and bandoliers, grenades, water-bottles, packs, groundsheets, gas-masks and entrenching tools: the list seemed almost endless. Dressed to kill, the soldier of the Great War looked more like a pack-mule than a warrior.

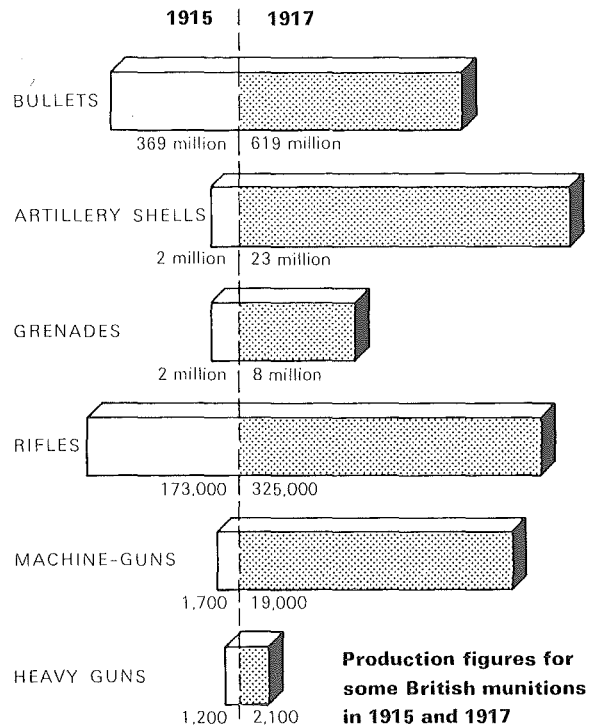
There were millions of such pack-mules spread out along the Eastern and Western Fronts; and industry made it all possible. The European soldier of 1914–1917 was dressed, booted, armed, blinded, gassed and blown to bits by mass-produced articles from the factory lines. Industry protected him with barbed wire, stuck him with best-quality bayonets and carried him from the field on the very latest line in stretchers. In other words, industry adapted itself to the demands of a new kind of warfare as quickly as the conscript soldier did. The figures for British munitions production on the right tell their own tale.

Throughout Europe industry advanced to meet the requirements of armed forces. Russia, previously regarded as industrially backward, greatly expanded her chemical, engineering and munitions industries. The numbers of workers employed in the cities grew rapidly. Russia's imports of machine-tools and other sophisticated products of Western European countries declined. The war was beginning to make it possible for the industrialists of Petrograd and Moscow to look forward to the day when Russia would be a modern, self-sufficient, industrialised country.

Old and New Technologies of War

Inevitably, the Great War stimulated the application of human intelligence to the development of more efficient methods of killing people. The most spectacular development was that of the aeroplane.

The Wright Brothers had first flown in a powered



machine in 1903. Now the war transformed the primitive 'kites' of wood, wire and canvas into a range of fighting machines with distinct purposes: the scout-reconnaissance 'plane, the fighter and the bomber. It didn't take men long to realise that if you could fly above people, you could also drop things on them. Although casualties and damage caused by bombs in the Great War were not extensive, for the first time in history civilian populations far away from the front lines of battle became vulnerable to enemy attack.

In 1914 the British air services could muster a total of 272 primitive aircraft. By October 1918 the newly formed RAF would possess over 22,000 'planes. Fighters could reach a height of over 4,000 metres, fire deadly accurate machine-guns through their propellers, harass ground troops, and photograph enemy positions. The Great War gave birth to new branches—or, if you prefer, wings—of the world's armed forces.

For the war at sea modern industry added to the *Dreadnought* class of battleships the super-dreadnoughts and hyper-super-dreadnoughts. The last of

these were steel monsters of over 27,000 tonnes, armed with eight guns, each of which could hurl a high explosive shell more than fifteen kilometres. For submarine warfare the factories of the great sea-powers produced the moving sea-mines (torpedoes) to sink enemy vessels, while the shipyards built more ships to replace those destroyed—and more submarines to do more damage.

The generals of the European armies believed that the only way to open up the enemy front was by a massive artillery bombardment followed by an overwhelming infantry attack. As you have seen, they demanded, and got, vast quantities of 'conventional' artillery and infantry weapons and ammunition. It was quantity they were after—not novelty.

They were prepared to use poison gas—after all it could be fired in shells from guns. They were even prepared to use it when the wind was blowing the wrong way. But most of them could not appreciate the new weapon which lurched on to the battlefields of the Somme in 1916—the tank. Perhaps they were right to distrust it at first: it moved very slowly, often broke down, and almost suffocated its crews with petrol fumes. The tank was a revolutionary weapon which required generals to think out new battle tactics—and generals preferred to stick to what was familiar rather than experiment in the middle of the strain of war. The tank, like the bombing plane, was a weapon for future wars.

Paying the Price

War is the most expensive of all human activities. It costs money to train and equip men to take other men's lives; it costs money to support the living casualties when war comes to an end; and it involves the cost of lost production—that is, what countries could have produced if they had not had to concentrate most of their efforts on supplying their armed forces. In this chapter we are concerned only with the 'immediate' costs of the war—the money spent to wage it at the time. Any government which is suddenly faced with the need to take on millions more paid employees (soldiers), to feed them, arm them, transport them here and there, suddenly needs a lot more money.

There are three ways in which a government can raise the enormous amounts needed; by taking money from its people, in taxation; by borrowing it from them; and by borrowing it from other sources.

The governments of all the countries engaged in the Great War used all those three ways of getting money.

The proportion of the total sum spent on war that was raised in taxes varied greatly from country to country. People throughout Europe had long been used to paying 'indirect' taxes on the things they bought. Some of them were now made to pay a 'direct' tax on their earnings.

The British had long been used to this 'income tax'. The Russians had their first experience of it in 1916 and the French in 1917. To be fair, a government should have taken more money from citizens with large incomes to pay for the war; and that was the case in Britain, where the government got a quarter of all its money from direct taxation. In Russia, where the gap between the well-off and the poor was very wide, the new tax on high incomes was hardly noticed. In one year it brought in a pitifully small sum, "less than enough to pay for a weekend of war". The Russian war effort was financed by borrowing and by 'indirect' taxes which bore heavily on the poor. The burden of the Great War was not being fairly shared.

All governments borrowed immense sums to finance their war efforts. For example, the Russians, French and Italians borrowed heavily from the British; they and the British borrowed heavily from the USA. The governments of all combatant countries borrowed from their own people through 'war loans', which would be repaid with interest after the war.

In some cases government borrowing to meet vast increases in government spending led to rapid inflation as the amount of money in circulation increased. In Russia, by 1917, people's need for more money with which to buy goods at inflated prices was so great that the State Bank did not have time to cut and number its notes: the money was paid out by banks in printed sheets for the customers to cut up. In the end the heaviest burden of all fell on the German people, although few realised this until the war was over. The Kaiser's undemocratic government never told the people the true cost of the war they were waging. Instead of asking the Reichstag to agree to extra taxes, Kaiser Wilhelm ordered his finance ministers to raise the money for the war almost entirely from loans and government savings bonds which would be repaid when victory came. The government never seriously considered the possibility of defeat. But when that defeat came and Germany was bankrupt, there was no hope of repayment. Hundreds of thousands of Germans lost all their savings.



The 'new woman' in London in 1917: short hair, knee-length skirt, gaiters, and a job on the No. 19 bus.

Changes on the Home Fronts

You have seen some of the effects of war on Russia by 1917—the rapid growth of industries making use of a previously neglected labour-force; and mounting inflation. The already industrialised countries of Western Europe experienced changes too.

As the men went to fight, women took over their civilian jobs. Although some men objected to the employment of females in engineering and munitions works, on railways and buses, there was really no alternative if the war effort was to be maintained. In Britain, women's organisations which had been de-

manding the right to vote now demanded the 'Right to Serve'. The war was undermining many old notions about women as the inferior, weaker, gentler sex. In contrast, in rural villages throughout Europe there was no need to claim the right to work. Who else could have farmed the land but the women, assisted by the children and old men who were left behind?

You will remember from Chapter 3 that the people of Russia and Germany were used to living under powerful 'authoritarian' governments. Now the governments of Britain and France gave themselves new powers to mobilise their peoples in the war effort. In particular they established controls over industries,

and especially over vital industries such as munitions, coal and railways. News from the fronts was officially censored. In Britain the Defence of the Realm Act (known unaffectionately as DORA) gave the government wide powers over the individual citizen, including not only the power to take over private land and property for military purposes, but also to control, and change, the hard-drinking habits of the people (the opening hours of pubs were severely restricted). The French government took similar powers into its own hands, directing the economic life of the country and closely regulating the behaviour of its citizens. The people of Britain and France, two liberal democracies, were getting their first real taste of 'state control'.

Changes in Attitudes

The longer the war went on the more it separated whole peoples from each other in hatred. Governments used propaganda to whip up people's cruder emotions and direct them not only against the vile, inhuman enemy but also against the 'shirkers' and 'conshies' (conscientious objectors) at home. Civilians were, by and large, the fiercest haters—it was their substitute for actually fighting. At the fronts the war sharpened men's wits, infested them with vermin and maimed them. It killed them every day and night, without warning; and in that awful uncertainty they lived as close as men could be to each other, as 'mates', and wondered why they were there at all. They knew whom they were fighting against, but whom and what were they fighting for? Some of them came to believe they were fighting not to defeat 'the enemy' but to ensure a better future for themselves and their children in a world without war.

By 1917 the bright and spirited patriotism of the

distant summer of 1914 had taken a bloody beating. The loss of millions of men had brought merely the prospect of further agony—repeat performances of failed offensives by unimaginative or incompetent generals. In the west, the British army was disillusioned. The French army fell apart under the strain. Some soldiers simply packed up and went home; others mutinied. The habit of obedience had been stretched beyond endurance; and traditions of respect for superiors, duty, loyalty, all lay in tatters. The army was pulled together by General Pétain: the ring-leaders of the mutinies were shot; the complaints of the rest of the troops were treated with some sympathy. The French army held its positions on the Western Front—but it was never the same again as a fighting force.

The German army was still held together by remarkably tight discipline, despite shortages of food and other supplies. But the Austrian army had not recovered from the shattering blow of losing over a third of its men as prisoners of the Russians in the summer of 1916. Many of the men had surrendered willingly for they were not German-speaking Austrians but Slavs from the subject peoples of the Austrian Empire. They hoped that the Empire would suffer a defeat which would bring freedom to its nationalities. Czech and Ruthene soldiers came to despise their incompetent Austrian commanders. Only those Austrian battalions and divisions stiffened with German troops could now be considered effective units. If Germany lost the war, there would be nothing left to hold the Austrians' army or empire together.

In the east the war was about to shatter the government of an empire even bigger than Austria's. We must now turn to look at how the war brought about the end of the rule of the Tsars in Russia and at the beginning of something quite new.

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Russia in Crisis

By the winter of 1916 there was a serious military crisis in the Russian armies. From the beginning of the war there had been repeated complaints (most of them genuine, some of them invented by generals playing at politics) about shortages of ammunition and equipment for the soldiers at the front. By July 1915 about nine million men had been called into the Tsar's forces. It was not enough to stop a terrible series of defeats and retreats. Morale sank to rock bottom. Ill-trained, under-fed troops surrendered to the enemy in their thousands. Generals took revenge on their own men by cancelling leave, by floggings and by murder. For example,

“at Opatow [in Poland] in June 1915 a battalion, ordered to attack, fell into uncut wire and enemy machine-gun fire. The survivors fell into shell-holes and were bombarded by enemy artillery. A few white flags then appeared above the shell-holes; and Russian officers, in the rear, ordered Russian guns to fire on the troops, as well as the German ones.”

In the autumn of 1915 the Tsar had taken over as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies; and since then he had been in charge of the war effort from his headquarters at Mogilev, far to the south of Petrograd. His presence made not the slightest difference to the performance of the Russian army. In the military campaigns of 1916 more than two million Russian soldiers were killed or wounded, and a third of a million were taken prisoner. Furthermore, Nicholas's absence from Petrograd quickly led to a serious government crisis. His German-born wife, Tsarina Alexandra, had taken control of the imperial government; and she, in turn, had been taken over by Gregory Rasputin, a drunken, lecherous 'holy man', who claimed that he had the power to cure the Tsarina's only son of haemophilia, an incurable disorder of the blood.

In Rasputin's heyday the imperial government had been turned into a farce. In under two years, twenty-one ministers were sacked and replaced by Rasputin's favourites—most of them incompetent old men. Eventually, in December 1916, Rasputin was murdered by a group of noblemen; but by then a great deal

of damage had been done. The Tsarina's foolish antics had brought accusations that the imperial government was, of all things, pro-German!

The crisis in government was accompanied by a growing economic crisis. By the start of 1917 prices were, on average, four times higher than they had been in August 1914. One of the main reasons for this rapid inflation was that the government had put heavy taxes on goods to pay for the war. In all the towns and cities food became scarce and more expensive; and there were now more mouths to feed since great numbers of peasants had left their villages to work in the munitions industries. In the countryside the poorer peasants demanded land, while the better-off ate or hoarded much of their surplus food rather than sell it to the towns for paper money which quickly lost its value.

The war-time economic crisis was the final disastrous peak in changes that had been eating away at traditional society for twenty years before 1914. There had been a massive migration from the countryside to the towns. Some peasants had uprooted themselves because a rising population left too little land to feed everyone in the villages of their district. Others had abandoned cottage industries, such as making rope and sacks or weaving cloth, which had been ruined by competition from town factories. Yet others had been attracted by the higher wages paid in the booming centres of industry. Whatever the cause, an urban working class (or, as Marxists called it, a 'proletariat') was growing steadily and irresistibly. The extra war-time demand for labour in arms factories and on the railways swelled the numbers while inflation and food shortages deepened the discontent. Nearly all of this new working class, by 1917 seething with discontent, was concentrated in the cities and towns of European Russia, west of the Urals, and especially in Moscow and Petrograd.

The March Revolution

Petrograd (whose pre-war name of 'St Petersburg' had been changed because it sounded German) was an extraordinary place. Its industrial areas were all that a revolutionary communist could hope for—filthy, disease-ridden, bulging at the seams with the families of poor workers. Yet the city was also the centre of Rus-

sian high society, the hive of the civil service, and the city of the Tsar's court. From Petrograd the Tsar ruled Russia through an unholy combination of church, bureaucracy and brute force. His power to rule was unlimited, and he shared it with no group or class of the Russian people; although since 1906 he had had to accept the existence of a Duma, a sort of parliament with no real law-making powers. The Duma's chief importance was as a training-ground for politicians who sought liberal reforms in the way Russia was governed. They wanted a genuine parliament, a cabinet and ministers able to take their own decisions, and the modernisation of the country's educational and economic systems.

Before the war it had been easy for the Tsar to ignore the opinions of liberals. But, as the military failures became evident, there were widespread demands for a more democratic and efficient system of government to cope with the problems made more acute by the war. By the end of 1916 the Duma had ceased to be a mere 'talking-shop' and liberal politicians openly criticised the Tsar and Tsarina. In March 1917 (according to the Russians it was February, but they were still using that old calendar—see Chapter 1, page 1), serious disorders began in Petrograd. The managers of the gigantic Putilov steel works in the south of the city locked out 20,000 workers after pay talks between them broke down. This put 20,000 tough, angry steelmen out on the streets with nothing to do and in a mood for trouble. Workers in nearby factories quickly came out on strike in sympathy until some 90,000 were out on the streets.

The next day, 8 March, bakeries in some parts of Petrograd ran out of bread. Bread rationing had already been introduced, bringing discontent and long queues with it. Now the queues of hungry shoppers began smashing up the empty bakeries.

By the weekend, 250,000 workers were out on strike, surging around the streets in giant demonstrations. Although police managed to disperse one crowd by firing on it, Cossacks in another part of the city refused to attack a procession of strikers when ordered to do so. The President of the Duma, Michael Rodzianko, sent off an urgent telegram to the Tsar:

"The situation is serious. The capital is in a state of anarchy. The government is paralysed; the transport system is broken down; the food and fuel supplies are completely disorganised. Discontent is general and on

the increase. There is wild shooting on the streets; troops are firing at each other. It is urgent that someone enjoying the confidence of the country be entrusted with the formation of a new government."

Rodzianko believed that such a government would come from the Duma. But the Tsar behaved—as he often did—as if he lived on a different planet from his people: he ordered the Duma to stop meeting. Early next morning, however, on Monday 12 March, soldiers in Petrograd joined the workers' protests. They were sick of a war in which the army had suffered enormous casualties; they were also hungry. Riots were turning into revolution.

For the first time in its short history the Duma had a real political choice to make. It could either take the leadership of the revolution or be swept away by it. Twelve of its members disobeyed the Tsar and formed a Provisional government which demanded that Nicholas should abdicate. Nicholas, still in army headquarters at Mogilev, 500 kilometres from Petrograd, at last decided to return to take control of the situation. However, the leading generals of the army informed him that he no longer had their support. Nicholas had no real alternative but to abdicate. On 16 March he gave up his throne and power. There was suddenly a great political hole in Russia.

Between Revolutions

There appeared to be no shortage of answers to the question of who would fill the hole. The Provisional government planned to rule the country until the people elected a Constituent Assembly which would work out a new system of government. But there were rivals to its claims to power. In Petrograd a Council of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers (the Petrograd Soviet) was determined to share power with the Provisional government. The Soviet was dominated by Marxists, mostly trade unionists from the *Menshevik* groups who believed that the workers should band together to defend their rights but that they were not yet powerful enough as a class to run the state. At this time the Soviet included only a few of the *Bolsheviks*—revolutionary communists whose leader, Lenin, believed in overthrowing the liberals at once and setting up a new government which would rule in the name of the working class.

The Soviet declared in Order No. 1 that soldiers

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in the Russian army should not take their orders from officers but from committees elected by each regiment. The government's control of the army was thus weakened. But beyond that the parties in the Soviet didn't know how far to go. Although popular opinion was in favour of an end to the war, the government planned to continue the fighting on the Eastern Front; and the Soviet accepted that Russia must be defended from German aggression. Neither the government nor the Soviet had a clear idea of what to do about the peasants' demands for land.

The Bolsheviks' leader, Lenin, had been in exile in Switzerland, planning a revolution on paper. When the real revolution broke out he made a deal with the Germans who allowed him to pass through their land from Switzerland in a sealed train, not inspected by police or customs officers who would otherwise have arrested him as a citizen of an enemy country. Lenin, the hard, professional revolutionary, was now appalled by the unwillingness of the Soviet to declare open war on the Provisional government. Most Russian Marxists were still saying that their revolution, when the working class would seize complete control, could come only after a long period of capitalist development. Lenin couldn't wait that long. His arrival at the Finland Station in Petrograd in April 1917 was one of the decisive moments in the history of the twentieth century. He brushed aside the committee that had turned up to welcome him and the next day, 17 April, made it clear what he intended the Bolsheviks to do. In a speech to a meeting of Bolshevik leaders he outlined a set of new policies for them to follow—the 'April Theses'. There must be an immediate end to the war, he said; Bolshevik agitators must go to the trenches and persuade soldiers to desert. There must be no cooperation with the Provisional Government: the Soviets must have all power. Industry must be put under the workers' control. Land must be nationalised, along with all banks. And a new Communist International must be set up to spread revolution outside Russia.

The April Theses alarmed other Bolshevik leaders. Most thought that Lenin was being hopelessly unrealistic and that they could achieve more by working with the Provisional Government. Lenin replied in a famous slogan that 'Peace, Bread and Land' were what the peasants, workers and soldiers wanted, and that the Provisional Government could not, or would not, meet those wants. If the Bolsheviks

told the people that they could give them what they wanted, then the people would support the Bolsheviks in elections to the Soviets. After that, Lenin said in another famous slogan, the Bolsheviks should demand 'All Power to the Soviets!' and confront the Provisional Government from their new position of strength.

Events ran out of Lenin's control. In June the Russian army launched a major offensive against their enemies. Within days it was halted and turned into a miserable retreat. In mid-July, mutinous soldiers and sailors joined hungry workers in demonstrations in Petrograd. Their slogan was 'All Power to the Soviets!'—Lenin's new battle-cry: but they were shouting it before the Bolsheviks were strong enough to do battle with the Provisional Government. On 16 and 17 June government troops restored some kind of order to the streets at the cost of 400 deaths. The government and the majority of the Soviet seized the chance to label the Bolsheviks as traitors. Many were arrested, and Lenin escaped only by putting on a wig and slipping out of Russia to Finland.

Lenin's Revolution

Conditions in Russia grew worse. Neither the government nor the Soviet could control inflation. The government failed to announce schemes for the transfer of lands to the peasants, and by harvest time many peasants were seizing landlords' fields and crops for themselves. The government sent troops to stop them while, in contrast, Lenin deliberately supported the peasants. As the war went on, the Bolsheviks spread their propaganda view that the struggle against Germany and Austria benefited only the ruling class in Russia. Peasant soldiers were already deserting from the army in their thousands.

General Kornilov, the new army Commander, decided to put a stop to all this revolutionary nonsense and march to Petrograd. He intended to replace the Provisional government by a military one which would act firmly against the Soviet, and especially against the Bolsheviks. The government, however, had no desire to be kicked out: it turned for help to bands of Bolsheviks in the large factories (the Red Guards), and distributed weapons among them. Kornilov was defeated. Shortly afterwards, in the elections to the Soviet, the newly popular Bolsheviks won control. Leon Trotsky, Lenin's right-hand man, was already chairman of the Soviet.



Bolsheviks guarding the Smolny Institute in Petrograd, their military headquarters in the November Revolution of 1917.

Lenin slipped back into Petrograd. He now had over 20,000 armed men to command. The government couldn't even rely on its own troops in the capital (remember Soviet Order No. 1?). The Bolshevik Revolution began on 6 November. Under Trotsky's leadership, bands of Red Guards took over key points in the city – the telephone exchange, the arsenal, government buildings. There was hardly any resistance. By the evening of the next day the Red Guards controlled the city. Within a week, Bolsheviks had seized power in Moscow and other major

centres, and so had control of most of European Russia.

Straightaway Lenin announced two decrees. The decree on land gave the land to the peasants: they would divide it up among themselves. Although the decree gave the peasants the right to do what they were doing already, it brought Lenin the support of many people in the countryside. The decree on peace declared that the war would be ended at once. To the amazement and anger of her allies Russia was abandoning the Eastern Front.

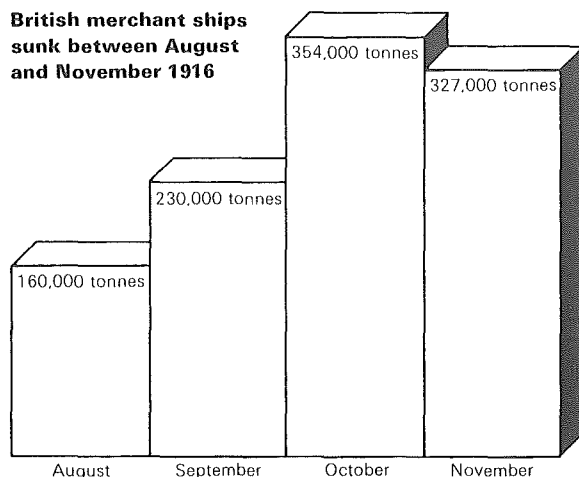
8 The End of the Great War

The USA Enters the War

In March 1917 no-one could have foreseen the outcome of the bread riots in Petrograd—that within eight months Russia would have a communist government which would take Russia out of the war and take the pressure off Germany's Eastern Front. Perhaps if it could have been foreseen, the German admirals and soldiers who persuaded their government in March 1917 to unleash unrestricted submarine warfare on the high seas would not have had their way. Their argument was simple. Britain and France could not be beaten into submission by the German artillery and infantry on the Western Front: but it was just possible that they could be starved into defeat.

For a time, in the winter of 1916, the war's most important new naval weapon, the submarine, had looked as if it might turn the war in Germany's favour. British merchant ships were being sunk at an alarming rate:

British merchant ships sunk between August and November 1916



In November there was a time when London had only two days' supply of wheat left.

Soon the British government under Lloyd George would take steps to counteract the U-boat menace: merchant ships would be organised into convoys protected by the Royal Navy; British shipbuilding would be speeded up, and farmers would be encouraged to plant more wheat. But, in the meantime, Britain survived only because of a steady flow of shipping from outside the UK—from the Dominions and, above all,

from the USA. Woodrow Wilson, the President of this great neutral power, favoured Britain but was reluctant to enter the war unless the action of the USA could lead to an early compromise peace—which was unthinkable to Britain and France.

Long before, in May 1915, a German submarine had sunk the British liner *Lusitania*: 128 American civilians (and 1,073 other passengers and crew) had gone down with her. Few people knew that the *Lusitania* was also carrying arms to Britain. That sinking had provoked outrage but not war. Since then, however, the Germans had sunk a number of American ships—and every attack brought Woodrow Wilson closer to military action against Germany.

Now, in 1917, the German High Command could hardly doubt that if they set out to destroy *all* American shipping making its way to Britain, they would drive the USA into war. But to desperate men who believed that the war could not be won on land, it seemed a risk just worth taking. In the early months of unrestricted submarine warfare enough American ships might be sunk to destroy the British war effort.

The USA declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917. She had no army worth speaking of, but a quick glance at Chapter 1 will tell you what Germany had taken on—the world's greatest industrial power, with a population fast approaching one hundred millions. In 1917, while she trained her recruits, America was only a distant threat to Germany. By 1918, when the Eastern Front had collapsed and it was obvious that the war would be decided in the west, America was ready to feed her fresh young men into the line of battle.

More than any other event, the entry of the USA into the Great European War appeared to turn it into a *world* war: indeed, we often refer to it as the 'First World War'. In fact, what happened was not that the fighting spread further afield, but that Americans crossed the Atlantic to help settle Europe's problems for her. The soldiers would come first, and later their President would follow. The Americans were coming—fit, confident and, of course, with the very best intentions.

Fourteen Points for a Just Peace

Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war would

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send hundreds of thousands of American boys to face death and mutilation in Europe. The causes for which he was asking them to put aside the view that the USA was a refuge from the misery and hardship of Europe had to be good ones. In January 1918 he announced them—his Fourteen Points. The first five, taken together, suggested a complete change in the ways governments should deal with each other in the future.

- 1 There should be no more secret treaties: governments should make their deals openly with each other.
- 2 They should allow freedom of navigation on the high seas.
- 3 They should encourage free trade between countries.
- 4 They should reduce their armaments.
- 5 When future claims for colonies were made, the interests of the people must be taken into account.

The other nine showed clearly that in Wilson's opinion the war had been caused by disregard for the right of every man to live in his own national home. The first step was to make it clear that Germany would not be allowed to hang on to any of the lands she had conquered.

- 6 German troops should move out of Russian territory.
- 7 German troops should move out of Belgium.
- 8 Alsace and Lorraine should be handed back to France.

The rest of the Fourteen Points showed that Wilson sympathised with the principle of national self-determination and that he had listened to the committees of Poles, Czechs, Serbs and other minority peoples who had been campaigning in the USA for the right to set up their own independent national states.

- 9 Italy's frontiers should be restored along clear lines of 'nationality'.
- 10 The peoples of the Austrian Empire should be given the opportunity of self-government.
- 11 Serbia, Montenegro and Rumania should be restored, and Serbia given access to the sea.
- 12 People in the Turkish Empire who were not Turks should be given the opportunity of self-government.
- 13 An independent Poland should be created and given access to the sea.
- 14 An international organisation should be set up to protect the independence of all states.

Before America came in, the war aims of the Allied powers had been vague, to say the least. They boiled down to something like defeating Germany and her supporters, rubbing their noses in it, and then sharing out the spoils of victory. The governments of Britain and France had not considered the possibility of breaking up the Austrian Empire (Point 10) or re-creating a free Poland which had disappeared from the map of Europe nearly 150 years before (Point 13). The effect of the Fourteen Points on the people of Europe was even more shattering. Until then only a handful of men, mostly Marxists, had said that the war had been caused by the greed of governments for more territory and power. Now Wilson was saying just that and offering the chance of a peace which would make future wars impossible. But in the spring of 1918 the chances of that just peace coming about seemed as slim as ever, as German successes thrust the war into a new phase of danger for the Allies. In March Germany forced Russia into signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk: it was more like an act of rape than an agreement. A vast portion of western Russia, containing a third of the Russian people, a third of the railway system, most of the coal mines, and the rich grain-lands of the Ukraine, were torn away from the new Bolshevik republic. In the same month the Germans attacked on the Western Front and drove the Allied armies back towards Paris.

Break-up of the Austrian Empire

Germany and Austria had refused Wilson's peace proposals. Germany now hoped that the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk would take the pressure off Austria. She would no longer have to face Russia in battle: and the grain from the Ukraine could be used to feed the millions of non-Germans in the Empire who had been brought to the edge of revolt by their sufferings in a war started by their masters. But bread was no longer enough. Throughout 1918 Austria's chances of survival as an empire were being undermined by a series of promises which Wilson made to the Slav nationalities.

In June 1918 he declared that "all branches of the Slav race should be completely freed from German and Austrian rule" (compare that clear statement with his rather cloudy Point 10 earlier in the year). In September he went further and recognised a group of men who called themselves the Czechoslovak National Council as a separate government. In October America

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recognised "in the fullest manner the justice of the nationalistic aspirations of the Yugoslavs for freedom"—in other words, the Serbs and Croats should be free to form their own independent state. The President of the USA was writing out the death warrant of the old Empire. Late in October, the Czechs and Slovaks and the southern Slavs signed it—they declared their independence.

Revolt in Germany and a Cease-fire

Meanwhile, the Allies had launched a counter-offensive on the Western Front in August and had driven the German armies back. The Allied blockade had already weakened the will of the German people to continue their war effort. Weary and hungry, they saw their allies surrender in quick succession. Bulgaria caved in on 29 September, Turkey on 30 October. By then the Austrian Empire had broken up with the declaration of independence by the Slav peoples. There was nothing for the German Austrians to do but sign an armistice (cease-fire) on 3 November.

A month earlier Germany's military leaders had told the Kaiser, but not the people, that there was no hope that the armies could fight on. The Kaiser's chief minister, the Chancellor, saw one faint chance of avoiding total disaster, by making peace speedily before the advancing Allies pursued retreating armies on to German soil. He asked Wilson for an armistice to be followed by a peace made on the basis of the Fourteen Points. Wilson consulted other Allied leaders, but they could see no reason why Germany should be treated to an equal share in the better world promised by Wilson. The British would not accept the second Point: the nation which sang 'Rule Britannia' would not accept that the seas should be free to all nations. Italy's claim on some Austrian territory was at odds with Wilson's principle of self-determination. France was determined to get compensation for the damage the German armies had done.

So the terms of the armistice which were offered on 5 November were harsh. Germany should compensate all the Allies for the damage done to their civilian populations and property. Further, the Germans should agree to get out of all occupied territory, to withdraw from their overseas colonies, hand over vast supplies of armaments and railway rolling stock and surrender their navy and merchant fleet to the Allies. Those terms would mean that Germany would no longer be able to

fight on and her people would depend absolutely on the goodwill of the Allies—even for supplies of food.

Wilson had made it clear that he would not sign a peace with the Kaiser, but only with a government which he thought more truly represented the German people. By November such a government was available. A wave of strikes, revolts and mutinies had swept the country. They had begun when the sailors at the Kiel naval base refused to put to sea and control of the town was taken over by a Council of Sailors, Soldiers and Workers, modelled on the Soviets in Russia. Other cities followed that lead, and in a series of revolts the kings and princes who had ruled the provinces of Germany were replaced by republican governments controlled by socialists. In the capital, Berlin, socialist politicians forced the Kaiser to abdicate, declared they had set up a new Republic with a provisional government headed by Friedrich Ebert—and were ready to sign the armistice. At 11 o'clock on the morning of 11 November 1918 the guns on the Western Front fell silent.

The people of the victorious powers let themselves go in a frenzy of relief and delight. They celebrated their own survival and their victory, and they looked forward to their first taste of vengeance. The German people were depressed and confused. Their old form of government had collapsed under the weight of their own suffering and anger; and their new one had signed away the means of protecting Germany against hurt. The generals had advised the government to ask for an armistice before their armies had been pushed back on to German soil. In that way the generals had avoided taking responsibility for defeat and could blame the politicians for asking for peace. It was all very puzzling for the German people to see their armies marching back from France in good order and yet to learn that their supplies of daily bread depended on the Allies who now controlled their shipping and their railways.

Casualties and Creditors

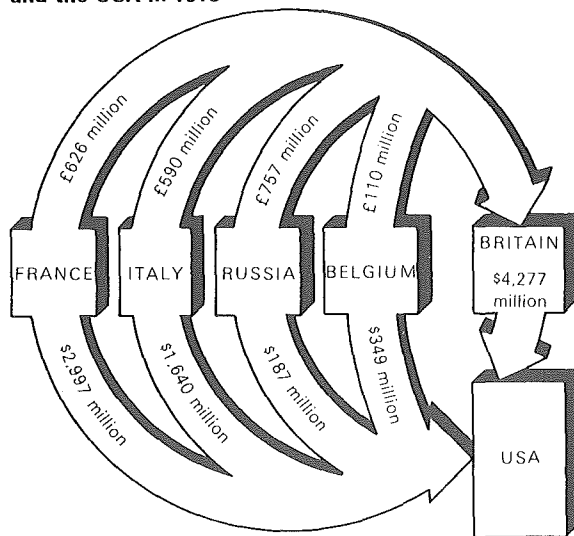
Before the war, the slaughter of *millions* of people would have been unthinkable. The war did slaughter them, but *millions* were, and still are, unthinkable. No-one can imagine a million, or five million, or ten million dead human beings.

If you do want to know how many died, you will have to put up with guesses. We know that Britain and her Empire suffered nearly 950,000 deaths, France

The End of the Great War

1,400,000, Germany, 1,800,000. We estimate that Turkey lost 300,000 people—though it may have been twice as many as that, or three times. Maybe two million Russians died, or maybe it was four or even six millions. In Petrograd they didn't count deaths as carefully as in London or Paris—and for the Russians the Great War was followed by a Civil War between Reds and Whites—the Bolsheviks and their opponents. Who's to say for certain whether Ivan was killed by the Germans, the Austrians, the Bulgars, the Turks, the

Allied debts to Britain and the USA in 1918



Reds or the Whites? Obviously it mattered to Ivan; to his wife, his parents, his children—or maybe they were destroyed too. But the exact figures, even if we had them, could not tell us any more than this—that in the Great War, Europe was sick, and that recovery would take a long, long time.

You will remember from Chapter 6 that the Great War was paid for on the never-never. Compared with their rough estimates of the numbers of people killed or wounded, governments had kept accurate records of how much money they had borrowed and lent. By the end of 1918 most of them owed vast sums to their own people. The Allied states on the mainland of Europe were deeply in debt to Britain and the USA. Britain was in a special midway position: she had borrowed heavily from the USA, partly so that she could lend money to her continental allies.

Russia was no longer an ally and the Bolshevik government had no intention of repaying the debts of the old Tsarist government. The rest were expected to pay back what they had borrowed.

There were all kinds of accounts to settle, claims to be made, old scores to be paid off. Central Europe had fallen apart; Eastern Europe and the Middle East were in turmoil; Bolshevism could no longer be dismissed as the raving of a few exiled cranks. So far there was only a cease-fire. Europe was no longer at war, but neither was it at what you and I would call 'peace'. The making of the peace would take nearly as long as the waging of the war.

9 The Peace Settlement of 1919–20

In January 1919 the representatives of twenty-seven countries came together in Paris to begin drawing up the terms they would impose on the defeated powers in the form of 'treaties of peace'. As usual, at the end of a war, the first prize for the winners was the right to use their pencils on the map. The winners were France, Britain and the USA—the Big Three who would make the major decisions in Paris. For the present, their armies were the masters of Europe.

The lesser allies and the nationalities of Central and Eastern Europe were in Paris to press the Big Three to confirm that they were independent and to draw the most favourable boundaries for their states. But the first question that had to be answered was the same one that Britain and France had faced before the Great War began—what to do about Germany?

The Road to Versailles

Although the leaders of the three great Allied powers believed Germany was to blame for the war, they disagreed about what to do with her in defeat. The French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, and the French people knew what they wanted to write into the treaty of peace—revenge, compensation for all they had suffered, and guarantees that a similar war would never happen again. For four years they had believed that the only good German was a dead German. Now they felt that the only safe Germany would be a crippled Germany, stripped of her wealth and most of her armed forces, and separated from France either by the creation of a new state between them or by making sure that what remained of the German army stayed well away from the French border. In the east, a line of new states able to defend themselves would take care of any future German ambitions in that direction.

Woodrow Wilson had already revealed, in the Fourteen Points, what he wanted to see emerge out of the war—a Europe whose nationalities would rule themselves as open, democratic societies. Before the end of the war he had declared that the peace should show "no discrimination between those to whom we wish to be just and those to whom we do not wish to be just. It must be justice that plays no favourites . . ." But any Germans who thought that Wilson's 'justice' meant that they would be treated generously were in for a shock. In the President's eyes Germany had

been wicked, and 'justice' demanded that Germany be punished.

The British had probably never before felt so close to the mainland of Europe: most of them knew someone lately buried there. Now they too wanted revenge on Germany; and the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, appeared to agree with them. But at the Paris Conference he had no time for those who wanted to put the boot into Germany. It didn't matter *now* that the Germans had been wicked. What did matter was that Germany should not be humiliated or made bankrupt, for then she would not be able to help get European industry and trade moving again. Britain had fought the war to destroy the German threat to her navy and overseas Empire. It was now in her interests to help rebuild a healthy *continental* Germany.

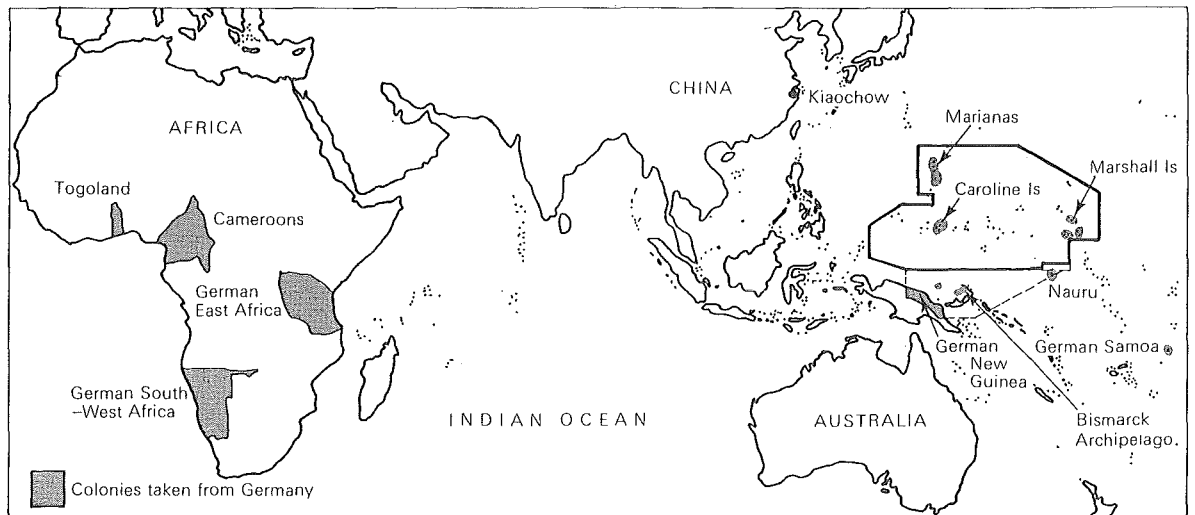
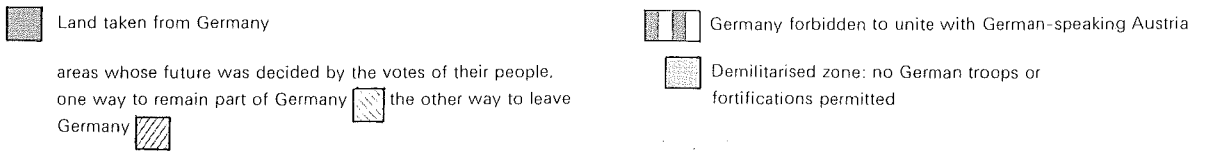
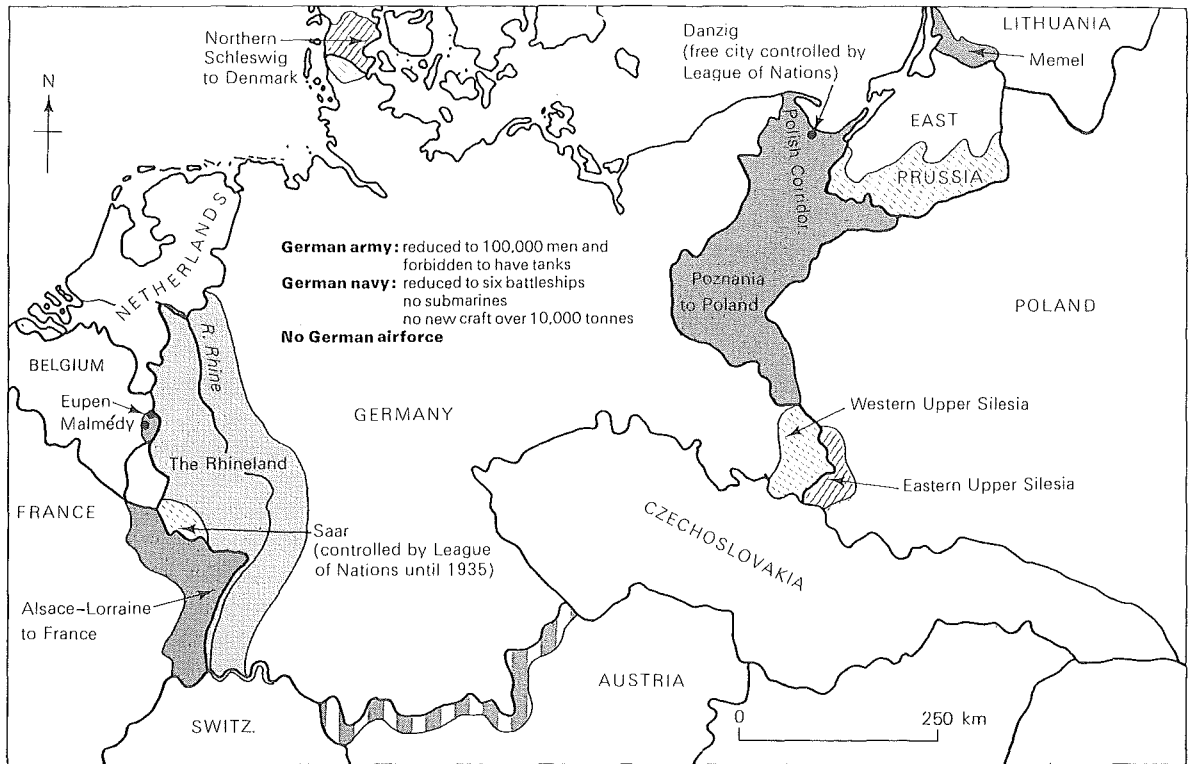
Above all, Lloyd George feared the spread of communism in Europe. In January 1919 there had been a communist uprising in Berlin. In March there was a short-lived communist government in Hungary. In April communists took control of the state of Bavaria in southern Germany. Obviously, it couldn't make sense for a British government to send help to the White armies fighting the Reds in Russia, and at the same time to make Germany so poor that more of her people would be driven into the arms of her home-grown Bolsheviks.

After several months of haggling the Big Three proposed their terms to Germany on 7 May 1919. The German Chancellor resigned in protest. German sailors made a more spectacular protest: they sank their warships in their watery prison camp at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, rather than see them turned over to the Allies. It was all very patriotic to protest; but that was all the Germans could do while Europe was in the grip of the Allied armies. They were hardly in a position to re-start the war. Instead, two representatives of the German government took the road to the Palace of Versailles, not far to the west of Paris. There, on 28 June 1919, they signed a treaty of peace with Germany's former enemies.

For many Germans, especially those who had lost fathers, sons and brothers among the 1,800,000 soldiers killed, additional distress was caused by Article 231 of the treaty which laid all the blame for starting the war on Germany and her allies:

The Peace Settlement of 1919-20

The Treaty of Versailles



The Peace Settlement of 1919-20

“The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected to as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.”

Further, Germany would have to pay for her sins. The full amount to be paid would be decided later by a Reparations Commission.

The treaty satisfied no-one. It didn't cripple Germany—as the French had hoped. It was at odds with Wilson's principle of nationalities ruling themselves—otherwise, why were so many Germans being forced to live in the new Poland? And most Germans bitterly resented the treaty—as Lloyd George had feared. It seemed to them that all the talk of justice had been a sham. Hadn't the famous Fourteen Points now come to mean (in the real world, not in Wilson's Wonderland) that the defeated countries should be permanently stripped of their power to defend

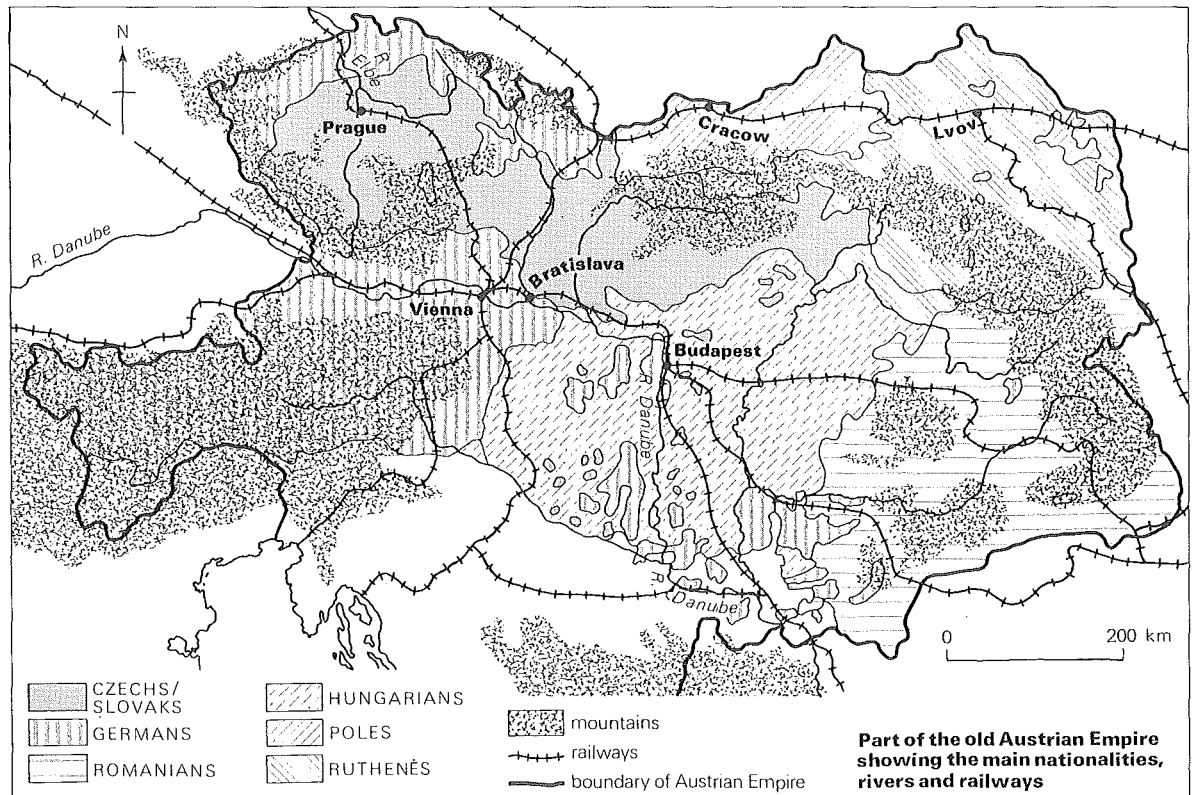
themselves? The Germans felt humiliated. The ‘peace’ they had been offered was not generous: worse than that, it was not even sensible.

In Place of Empires

When their arms were not being twisted by Italians, Poles, Czechs and Greeks, the Big Three tried to deal sensibly with the rest of Europe. The trouble was that the continent's problems were too knotty to be unravelled quickly and to everyone's satisfaction.

The principle of national self-determination meant that new frontiers should be drawn according to the wishes of the peoples concerned. But the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe did not all live in tight compartments labelled ‘Polish’ or ‘Czech’ or ‘Hungarian’ or ‘Italian’. There were places in which a few people of one nationality (for example, Hungarians) dominated a majority of, say, Romanians. One man's idea of a part of Poland could very well be another man's idea of a part of Czechoslovakia.

There was also the question of whether the frontiers



The Peace Settlement of 1919–20

proposed for a new state made military and economic sense. Surely, wherever possible, a country should have access to the sea or to a major navigable river? Surely it made military sense to draw lines on the map along 'natural' boundaries such as rivers and mountain ranges? But what if, for example, by granting Czechs and Slovaks access to the River Danube, you included in their new state lands where most of the people were Hungarians? What kind of self-determination would that be?

Try the exercise for yourself. On page 41 is a map of the northern half of the old Austrian Empire, showing its nationalities and physical features. Imagine that you (like the Big Three) have agreed that there shall be an independent Czechoslovakia. Copy the map and then draw on it what you think should be the frontiers of the new state. Whose interests do you put first when drawing your lines? Does your state have 'natural' or 'artificial' boundaries? Does it have outlets for its trade? Later you can compare it with the Czechoslovakia drawn at the Paris Conference.

There was little that was wrong with the principle of national self-determination – on paper. Europe was going to be re-shaped, in the interests of her nationalities – or in the interests of as many groups of them as possible. Under great pressure, the statesmen in Paris did their best. To their credit they didn't try to solve awkward problems by ordering minorities out of their homes and shunting them to lands where most people spoke their language. Indeed, the Allies insisted that the governments of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Romania should all sign treaties in which they promised to treat their 'minorities' on the same terms as the rest of their citizens.

Eventually, between the summers of 1919 and 1920, the Allies imposed their new frontiers on old Europe in the peace treaties which they signed with the other defeated powers: the Treaty of Saint-Germain with Austria; the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary; and the Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria. The settlement they had worked out was not brutal: it was just shortsighted.

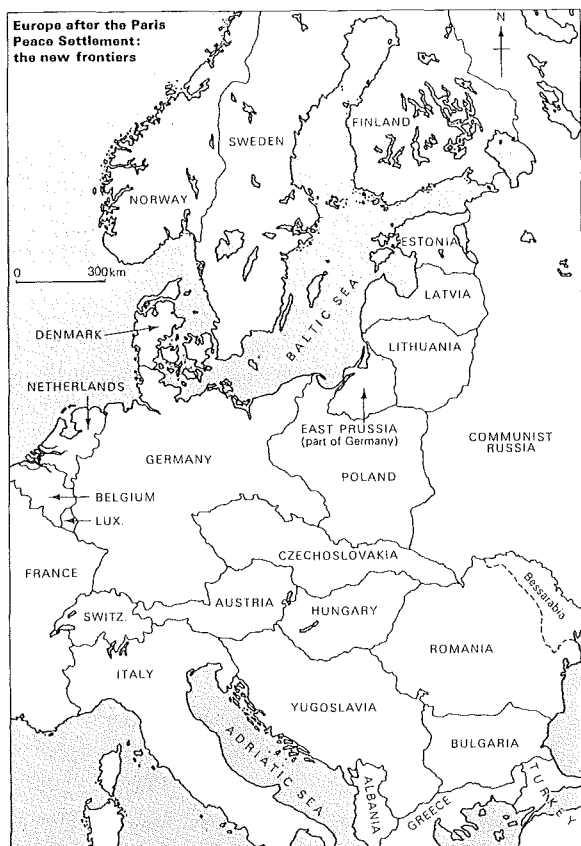
Central and Eastern Europe were cut up and parcelled out to the nationalities. In place of the two old, multi-national empires of Austria and Russia, there were now no fewer than ten 'successor' states. The corpse of the Austrian Empire was dismembered to form three whole new states (Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) and parts of three others (Poland, Yugoslavia and Romania). From Russia were carved

the Baltic states and part of Poland: Bessarabia was cut off and given to Romania. Russia was not only separated from the Balkans: she was isolated from the West by a barrier of newly independent countries.

Looking at the map of Europe after the Paris Peace Settlement on page 43 you could convince yourself that at last the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Latvians, Lithuanians and all now ruled themselves. It appears that they should have been satisfied. But already an alarming number of the new states were eager to bite chunks out of each other. As you will discover later in this chapter, some of the conflicts which flared up among the new nations were almost inevitable. Much of the dissatisfaction arose simply because the Big Three were unable to form new countries which did not include minorities. The problems were particularly acute when minorities found themselves forced to live in a country alongside people who had perhaps been their enemies before the war; for example, many people from eastern Hungary were placed in the new enlarged Romania.

Let us take just one example of the Big Three at work. As you know, they had encouraged the break-up of the Austrian Empire during the war, and they had confirmed it afterwards. But the Empire had not been just a collection of oppressed nationalities dominated by a government in Vienna: it had also been a complete economic system, held together by a railway network and free trade between all the regions. The Paris Conference carved up the Empire but could find no way to preserve the economic system which would have pleased everyone. Under pressure from those against the idea, the Conference would have nothing to do with a proposal that all the states which had been formed from, or had gained land from, the old Empire should form a free trade area. (You might care to look back at the third of Wilson's Fourteen Points on page 36, and wonder, as the government of the Austrian republic wondered in 1919, what it was supposed to mean.) If the small powers concerned had agreed to the proposal, and if the Big Three had also been prepared to push it through, the scheme might have changed the whole history of Central and Eastern Europe. It would have made economic and political sense by giving the new states a cause for cooperation in place of reasons for conflict. The opportunity was thrown away. Europe would have to wait nearly forty years and pass through another great war before its first 'common market' was set up.

The Peace Settlement of 1919-20



Cracks in the Peace

The Big Three in Paris proposed no new forms of economic cooperation or other ways in which the newly independent states might work together to take the heat out of European politics. Individual countries claimed, and in some instances tried to grab, what they could. If the name of the game was not cooperation to build a new peace, then everything was to be played for and won. Even while the Paris Conference was still going on, serious conflicts broke out between Germans and Poles, Czechoslovaks and Hungarians, Romanians and Hungarians.

For example, both Poland and Czechoslovakia felt they had strong historic claims to the area around Teschen, its railways and coalfields. The Czechs needed Teschen's coal for their industries, but most of the people in the place were Polish. Early in 1919 the Czechs moved into the area, and the Poles were bullied by the Big Three into accepting the situation. But the dispute poisoned future relations between the two states, and made it unlikely that one of the Con-

ference's hopes for the future would be realised – that the new states would stand together in the event of a threat from Germany.

In contrast, the Poles were not stopped by the Allies when they tried to extend their frontier to the east at the expense of a Russia still licking the wounds of civil war. In April 1920 the Polish army attacked and by early May had penetrated deep into western Russia. The Red Army counter-attacked, collapsed near Warsaw and was driven back a second time before the two sides agreed to a cease-fire in October. The war satisfied Poland: she had pushed her frontier further east than the line laid down in Paris. It rammed home a hard lesson to Bolshevik Russia – that she would have to grow much stronger if she was to survive in a hostile world.

The statesmen in Paris created separate, vulnerable states, whose peoples had long histories of mutual dislike and whose very creation gave them new grievances to quarrel over. To their west lay Germany, deeply offended but by no means crippled. To the east was massive, unpredictable Bolshevik Russia, whose interests had been ignored by the Big Three. There would be no certainty that Eastern Europe would not once again provide the flash-point for the outbreak of another general European war once the Allies no longer controlled Germany or Russia renewed her strength.

The Polish land-grab: new frontiers in Eastern Europe



10 The Fourteenth Point: a League of Nations

Wilson's League

President Woodrow Wilson arrived at the Paris Peace Conference with a draft of an agreement by which the powers would bind themselves by solemn promises into a new body to be called the League of Nations. Wilson called this agreement the Covenant of the League; it was, in effect, his grand scheme for the international organisation he had proposed in the last of his Fourteen Points.

Lloyd George and Clemenceau were not enthusiastic about the League, but Wilson pressed home his view that there had to be some organisation to make the peace permanent and to deal with future disputes between nations. In the end Wilson had his way and the Covenant was included in each of the peace treaties. This meant that the powers which signed the treaties were therefore bound to support the League.

The League was to be a guarantee against war. The terms of the treaties might leave a lot to be desired by some countries: but the League would see to it that all the powers, great and small, would no longer set about achieving desired changes, or any others, by war. And the League was to be a *world* organisation. Wars could and did flare up between countries outside Europe; so there was every reason for making the new body truly international.

The Covenant set out the League's aims. Among them were the reduction of armaments "to the lowest point consistent with national safety"; and mutual respect for all countries' frontiers and independence. Aggressors would be dealt with, first by the peaceful weapon of economic sanctions, such as refusing to sell them fuel or other vital supplies. But if all else failed, the League would be justified in using armed force.

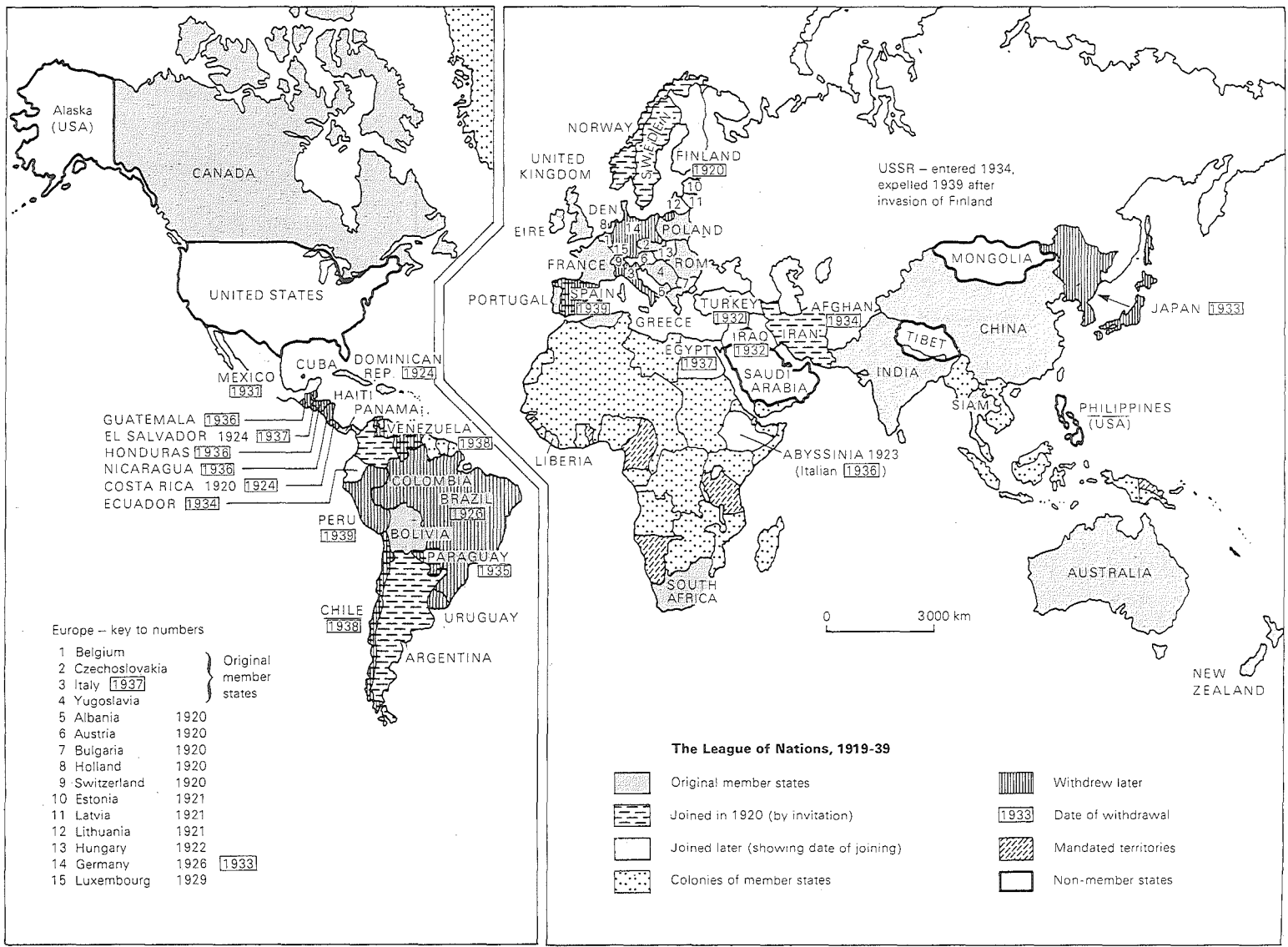
Rather like our present-day United Nations Organisation, the League was to have an Assembly, in which all its members would be represented; and a smaller Council, whose permanent members would be the representatives of the great powers. The Permanent Court of International Justice would settle arguments between countries; and the League would have its own permanent staff of employees which was called the Secretariat. Unlike UNO, the League of Nations emerged out of a belief that *all* wars could be avoided if world opinion was mobilised against an

aggressive nation. Wilson was not the only believer: there were many other people who shared his optimism. In the present-day UNO there are few signs of such idealism, but it works with some success and we don't expect it to prevent all international disagreements ending up in war: first, because we realise that there are some quarrels between countries which are too bitter to be settled by talk and compromise; second, because no one any longer seriously believes that there is a 'world opinion' which can be brought into effective, threatening action—even against the evils of war.

The United Nations has become useful because, unlike the League, it has not been asked to do an impossible job. Wilson's organisation, however, was a 'League Against War'. It grew out of a terrible conflict and it carried the hopes and good wishes of many people in many countries. In the end it failed to match up to their hopes.

A League of Some Nations

A body which was set up to defend international order and guarantee world peace obviously needed the support of the great powers. Yet only two of the Big Three became members: the USA, of all countries, refused to join. While Wilson was making the peace and the League, American public opinion hardened against any further entanglement in the affairs of Europe. America had brought the Great War to an end and she had helped the European nationalities towards independence. But many Americans believed that membership of the League would turn that temporary involvement into a permanent responsibility for the affairs of a continent from which many new Americans had only recently fled. The American Senate refused the USA's signature to the Treaty of Versailles; and by that refusal, of course, they rejected the American President's League of Nations. Without America the League was unlikely to be strong enough to stand up to a powerful aggressor. Yet Wilson had persuaded the other powers at the Paris Peace Conference to make the League the only body responsible for seeing that the terms of the treaties they had drawn up were observed. The USA's absence from the League might therefore be very serious if any power chose to challenge, for example, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.



The Fourteenth Point: a League of Nations

The Fourteenth Point: a League of Nations

Russia, too, was out. In 1919 no state in the world recognised Lenin's Communists as the lawful government of Russia; so Russia was not invited to sign the treaties drawn up at the Paris Peace Conference. The world's first, and at the beginning of the 1920s the world's only, Communist state could hardly be invited to join a body which promised to preserve the peace while the official policy of the Russian government was world revolution. Unlike Russia and the USA, Germany had signed the Treaty of Versailles, but she too was excluded from the League. Who could believe that Germany was interested in keeping the peace until she accepted her responsibility for starting the Great War and learned to live with the conditions of her defeat?

The League began its life with forty-two members: by 1924, that number had increased to fifty-five. But the admission of new members like Finland, Luxembourg, Latvia, Hungary and Ethiopia could not make up for the absence of three world powers. Their absence meant, in practice, that the duties of preserving peace and of guaranteeing the frontiers and independence of small nations depended on the only two great powers actually in the League – Britain and France. From what you already know of those two countries before, during and after the Great War, you can well imagine that neither of them was able, or even willing, to take on the job of 'world policeman'. The 'League Against War' had to include all the great powers, or it was nothing.

However, the very fact that it had been set up, even in a limited fashion, encouraged many people to believe that it *had* to work. Another Great War was unthinkable: even if the League could not solve every problem, it could persuade nations to disarm and to settle their quarrels openly. The people who believed that – and set up League of Nations Associations in their own countries – were neither stupid nor blind, but they might be criticised for thinking that there were no ways of working for peace other than through the League.

The League at Work

The new organisation settled into temporary accommodation in Geneva, Switzerland. There it set up agencies for forms of international social work, such as dealing with the plight of refugees and prisoners-of-war. Later it would try to get nations to cooperate in the control of dangerous drugs and in the abolition of slavery and forced labour. The International Labour Organisation aimed to improve conditions of work, to raise the minimum age at which children could be

employed, and to encourage the development of social welfare schemes. In those ways the League concerned itself with matters which had previously been the business of individual countries and their governments.

You will remember that as a result of the peace settlement Germany and Turkey had been stripped of their colonies and that those former possessions had been shared out between the victorious powers as 'mandates'. That arrangement was intended to mean that the new ruling powers were responsible to the League for the development of the former colonies. In other words, they held the lands 'in trust', and the League set up a special Commission to which the powers reported each year on the mandates which had been entrusted to them. That was all very proper in theory. In practice, the powers did not regard their new territories in quite the same way as the League. And how could the League enforce changes in the ways in which, for example, Britain and France ran their Middle Eastern mandates when those two European countries were the backbone of the League itself?

In the 1920s the League succeeded in settling some territorial disputes between countries; for example between Finland and Sweden in 1921, between Turkey and Iraq in 1924, and between Greece and Bulgaria in 1925.

In 1923, an incident took place which seemed just the sort of event which the League was designed to stop escalating into war. Five Italian officers were shot by Greeks while investigating the frontier between Greece and Albania. The Italian dictator, Mussolini, used this as an excuse to attack and then occupy the Greek island of Corfu. The Greek government appealed to the League. The British and French governments helped Mussolini to save face by arranging a compromise settlement in the name of the League. Italy agreed to leave Corfu, while the Greeks paid heavy compensation for the incident which had sparked off the quarrel.

By the late twenties the League had achieved some modest successes and nothing had yet happened to shake the confidence of people who saw the international organisation as the best hope of mankind. In 1929 work began on the building of the League's new permanent headquarters in Geneva – the Palace of the Nations. By 1936, when that great symbol of international cooperation and harmony was complete, the League had already failed to prevent two wars and was powerless to stop the great powers re-arming for the next great war in Europe.

11 Make Germany Pay!

Threats to the New Republic

Long after the armistice of November 1918 the German people found it difficult to adjust themselves to the fact of their defeat in war and to the changes which quickly followed. The peace treaty had declared them solely responsible for a war in which very many had lost relatives; it had reduced their nation's wealth and strength; and it had left them with Allied armies of occupation on German soil.

In place of the old authoritarian government of ministers chosen by the Kaiser, they were now ruled by an elected President and ministers who needed the support of the democratically elected Reichstag. But the system did not work smoothly, for a bewildering range of new parties appeared on the scene. Among them were extremist groups who wanted to overthrow the new democratic constitution agreed at Weimar in mid-1919. The attacks came from two anti-democratic extremes: on the left were those who wished to set up a communist system modelled on that of Bolshevik Russia; and on the right were those who yearned for a return to the old authoritarian régime controlled by a handful of ministers and generals. Several times a naked struggle for power took place.

In 1920 bands of extreme nationalists, people who supported the idea of an enlarged and militarily strong Germany, were led by Wolfgang Kapp in the Berlin *putsch*—an attempt to seize power from Ebert's government. Kapp's men were reinforced by ex-soldiers who had formed themselves into groups of Freikorps (free corps), led by officers of the old Imperial Army. They were men who hated the new Weimar Republic, who felt its politicians had betrayed the German Empire when they had called for an armistice in 1918. The Freikorps despised these parliamentary democrats as men unfit to rule the German nation.

Kapp's putsch was only checked by the trade unions, who called a general strike and paralysed the city. The workers and the civil servants—the people who made the city tick—refused to cooperate. Kapp was left with a dead Berlin on his hands, not an active centre of power. Four days after they had marched into Berlin, Kapp and his supporters fled.

In the years after the Kapp putsch, the citizens of German cities would be regularly treated to the spec-

tacle of parades of uniformed party supporters barely troubling to hide the fact that they were the private armies of the Nationalists, the Communists, the Socialists. Political murders became commonplace.

All that was bewildering and frightening enough for comfortable and respectable Germans—the shopkeepers, the clerks, the middle-aged craftsmen—but what was left of their confidence in their country and its rulers was being shaken by rapid inflation. Prices of goods were rising faster than wages or salaries and cutting into the value of savings and pensions. And over the heads of the German people hung the threat of the reparations they would, as a nation, be forced to pay to their former enemies. Eventually, in 1921 they were told the sum they would have to pay—132,000,000,000 gold marks (the equivalent of £6,600,000,000)—in cash and in deliveries of goods. Not surprisingly, they were not enthusiastic about keeping up their monthly payments.

In the Allied countries attitudes to reparations varied. John Maynard Keynes, an English economist, thought they were a brutal nonsense:

“The policy of reducing Germany to servitude for a generation, of degrading the lives of millions of human beings, and of depriving a whole nation of happiness should be abhorrent and detestable . . . Some preach it in the name of justice. In the great events of man's history . . . justice is not so simple.”

To some people, however, there *was* a simple justice in Germany being made to pay for a war she had started. And, in any case, if Allied governments had to repay the money they had borrowed to fight a war started by Germany, surely they had the right to make the German people share the cost? As you have seen (on page 38), the French owed money to Britain and both countries had borrowed from the USA. An obvious solution to that was to appeal to the Americans to wipe out all war debts. The British government suggested exactly that, and the Americans turned them down. The money would have to be repaid; and if the British and French couldn't screw money out of Germany, they would have to find it some other way.

To the French government the issue was very clear.

Make Germany Pay!

They had not been permitted to trample all over Germany at Versailles, and now there were many people agreeing with Keynes that the Germans should be let off reparations altogether. Germany may have lost the war, but France was in danger of losing the peace. Early in 1922 Raymond Poincaré became Prime Minister of France. He had no intention of letting Germany off the hook. Later that year the Germans informed the Allies they could not keep up their payments. The scene was set for the extraordinary events of 1923.

1923—The Year of Reckoning

On 20 February 1923 the President of the Reich Department of Health made his report to the Reichstag, the German parliament:

“... health levels are deteriorating ever more seriously... oedema is re-appearing, the so-called war dropsy, which is a consequence of a bad and overly watery diet. There are increases in stomach disorders and food poisoning, which are the result of eating spoiled foods. There are complaints of the appearance of scurvy, which is a consequence of an unbalanced and improper diet... .

In medical circles, there have been complaints about specially sharp increases in infant mortality particularly for the time since August 1922—that is, since the especially steep rise in the price curve. There are also frequent reports of an increase in sicknesses among infants, of rickets and digestive disorders... . In some places up to twenty per cent of the children who register to begin school must be turned back, because they can be regarded as not yet ready for enrolment in view of their bodily weakness... .

In the selection of children for supplementary meals at school last year, it was found that on the average no less than fifty per cent of the children were undernourished... . A municipal school inspector from Leipzig reports that during an unannounced visit to a school class of twenty-seven girls, only three had proper shirts, only two had stockings without holes in them and only four were nourished in a moderately satisfactory way.

... Tuberculosis is on the increase... tuberculosis, like hunger, is known to be a slow murderer, which does not kill its victims immediately... . A municipal welfare officer from western Germany reports that the

spread of tuberculosis and scrofula is especially great among the children... .

... From week to week, the table of medicine rates lists higher prices for medicines. 100 grams of surgical cotton in 1914 cost 45 pfennigs,* today 2,552 marks; a bandage in 1914, 20 pfennigs, today 1,270 marks. This clearly indicates that many thousands of sick people must at present do entirely without medicines or be only very marginally supplied with them... .

Now all this misery is doubly and cruelly sharpened in those parts of the fatherland which have already been subjected to foreign occupation for four years, but more particularly for the inhabitants of *the Ruhr region, which has recently been invaded by French and Belgian troops in violation of the peace treaty of Versailles.*”

French ‘patience’ had run out. On 11 January 1923 French and Belgian troops had marched into the Ruhr, the major coal and steel producing region of Germany, to extract reparations for themselves. Suddenly, the German people and politicians were united in a common cause—hatred of the French. The people of the Ruhr refused to cooperate with the enemy; the government supported their passive resistance, and refused to pay any reparations to the Allies.

Fritz Thyssen, a leading German industrialist, described what followed:

“The government had forbidden the coal deliveries. The officials had been instructed to refuse to obey the order of the occupation authorities. The railway employees went on strike. Navigation on the Rhine was stopped. The French themselves had to provide the means of transporting passengers and goods by rail, road and water. The French army occupied the mouths of the mine pits belonging to the Prussian state. When this happened, the miners quitted work. In the other collieries the work continued, but the coal accumulated in great heaps on the surface. No train, no boat transported any of it to Belgium or France... . In order to break the resistance, the occupation authorities established a customs cordon between the occupied territories and the rest of Germany. No merchandise was allowed to leave.”

Another kind of traffic penetrated that ‘cordon’ in the opposite direction. Konrad Heiden, then a German student, told how

* 100 pfennigs=1 mark.

Make Germany Pay!

“in the Ruhr, little troops of men crept at night through the industrial territory. They laid dynamite on railroad trestles, bridges and junctions. French military trains were blown up. In the canals ships sank, and for days the westward stream of coal was interrupted.”

There were outbreaks of violence between French troops and German workers. The French expelled or imprisoned the leaders of the resistance. The British tried to persuade the French that this was no way to make the peace work, but Poincaré said:

“Since the signature of the peace, England has always tried to seek a basis of conciliation on which Germany could negotiate as an equal with the Allies. . . . We are persuaded, on the other hand, that if Germany, so far from making the slightest effort to execute the treaty of peace, has only sought to evade her obligations, it

is because she has not yet been convinced of her defeat. . . . In fact, the Allies have never got anything from Germany, except when, together, they have threatened to use force.”

This time, the use of force had a grotesque side-effect. To pay for the upkeep of their people in the Ruhr, the German government printed more and more paper money. You already know that the German people were troubled by inflation, but nothing had prepared them for the disaster which now hit them. Konrad Heiden described how:

“On Friday afternoons in 1923, long lines of manual and white-collar workers waited outside the pay-windows of the big German factories, department stores, banks, offices . . . staring impatiently at the electric wall clock, slowly advancing until at last they reached the window and received a bag full of paper notes. According to the figures inscribed on them, the paper notes amounted to seven hundred thousand, or five hundred million, or three hundred and eighty billion, or eighteen trillion marks—the figures rose from month to month, then from week to week, finally from day to day. With their bags the people moved quickly to the door, all in haste, the younger ones running. They dashed to the nearest food store, where a line had already formed. Again they moved slowly, oh, how slowly, forward. When you reached the store, a pound of sugar might have been obtainable for two millions; but, by the time you came to the counter, all you could get for two millions was half a pound, and the saleswoman said the dollar had just gone up again. With the millions or billions you bought sardines, sausages, sugar, perhaps even a little butter, but as a rule the cheaper margarine—always things that would keep for a week, until next pay-day, until the next stage in the fall of the mark. . . .

The printing presses of the government could no longer keep pace. . . . You could see mail-carriers on the streets with sacks on their backs or pushing baby carriages before them, loaded with paper money that would be devalued the next day. Life was madness, nightmare, desperation, chaos. . . . Communities printed their own money, based on goods, on a certain amount of potatoes, of rye, for instance. Shoe factories paid their workers in bonds for shoes which they could exchange at the bakery for bread or the meat market for meat.”



Germany, 1923, when money was worthless. Two young German women use the family silver to buy flour.

Make Germany Pay!

Germany was sliding rapidly towards economic disaster as she defied the French. It looked brave and patriotic, but it couldn't go on. A new Chancellor, Gustav Stresemann, came to power, and at the end of September he called off passive resistance in the Ruhr and announced that Germany would resume the payment of reparations.

It was the only sensible thing to do, but to the extreme nationalists in Germany it looked like another pathetic surrender to the enemy. First the armistice, then Versailles—and now this! Early in November there was an attempt at revolution by various small nationalist parties gathered in Munich, the capital of the state of Bavaria. The extremists failed: their leader, Adolf Hitler, was sent to prison.

Stresemann's government could now concentrate on solving Germany's most urgent problems. At the end of 1923 a new currency was introduced—the *rentenmark*—and the old paper money was destroyed.

Stresemann also had success in the international field. Having proved his intention to make Germany financially respectable again he could count on the support of the British—and of the Americans, who had an interest in the payment of reparations to France and Britain, since much of the cash was passed on by them to repay American war loans. The real power of the USA in international trade and finance was shown by the appointment of an American banker, Charles Dawes, to head a committee to put reparations on a sensible footing.

The Dawes Plan and the Locarno Pact

In August 1924, Germany and the other powers agreed to the Dawes Plan—a new scheme for the

payment of reparations by which Germany paid over a proportion of her industrial output each year. At the same time the French agreed to withdraw their troops from the Ruhr within twelve months.

In October 1925 the Western European powers signed new agreements, together called the Locarno Pact. Germany, France and Belgium promised to respect the frontier between them, the line on the map which had been drawn in 1919 at the Paris Conference. Britain agreed to come to the aid of any one of those countries attacked by its neighbours. On the face of it, Locarno looked like a good deal from everyone's point of view. But in fact it meant different things to different people—depending on whether they lived in Western or Eastern Europe. It meant safety to some and it provoked anxiety in others. In the West, in contrast to the years before 1914, the French now had a guarantee of British support if the Germans should attack. The Locarno Pact removed the sense of fear felt by Germany's western neighbours and it was possible for the French and British foreign ministers to treat Stresemann as a friendly equal. Of even greater importance to Germany was the fact that Locarno protected her border in the west: there would be no repeat of the French invasion of 1923. But if Stresemann had soothed the powers in the West with promises of Germany's good behaviour, he had promised nothing of the kind to the countries in Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia. The result of the Pact was to divide Europe into a guaranteed West and a newly insecure East. If you look at the map on page 43 of Europe after the Paris Peace Conference, you will see how this division could become of vast importance to the future peace of the continent, particularly if Germany became powerful and ambitious enough to demand the return of those lands in the east which the Treaty of Versailles had taken from her.

12 The Establishment of Fascism in Italy

The story of Italian politics in the twenties is a very sorry one. We shall look at it in some detail, not because Italy was a particularly important continental or colonial power, but because it was the birthplace of a new 'ism' of the twentieth century—fascism.

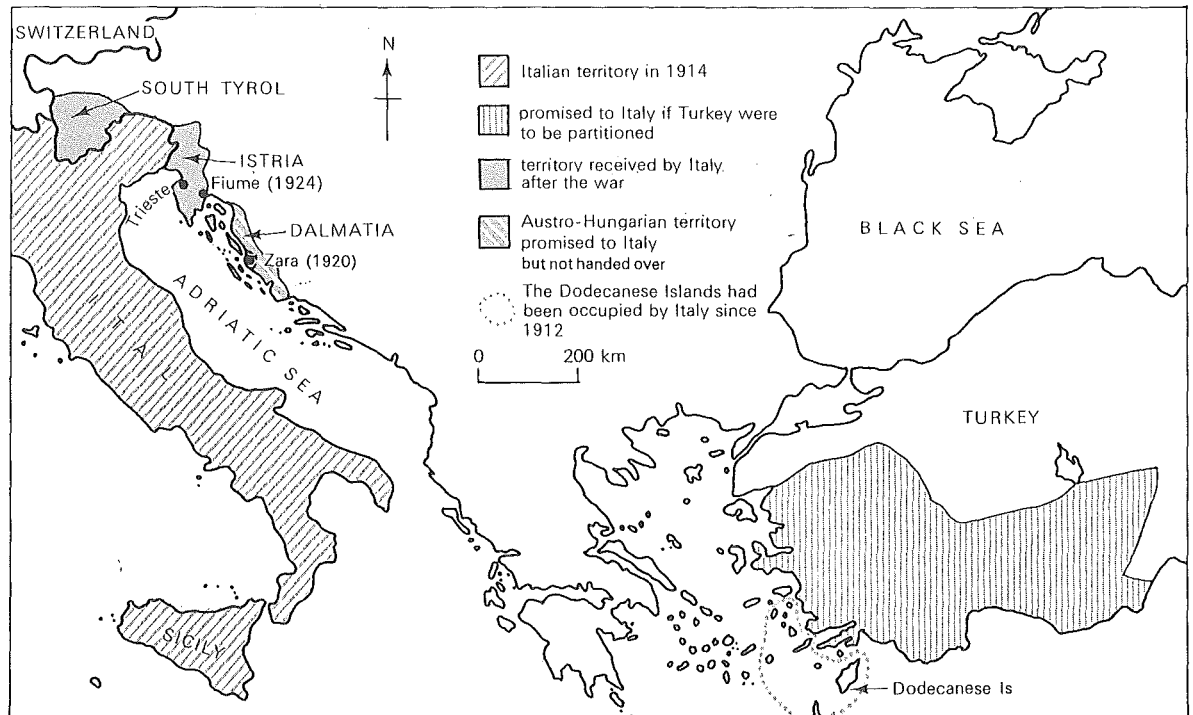
Italian Fascism was an ugly, violent political movement. Unfortunately, the term 'fascism' itself has since been used to describe a variety of political movements and forms of government in other countries, in recent times as well as in the 1920s and 1930s. The result has been that the word has become overloaded—it has been made to describe too much—and has ended up as a vague term of abuse. When we hear the slogan 'fascist!' these days, it usually tells us more about the ignorance of those who shout it than about the nature of the people, the party or the government they are against. This part of the book is about Italian Fascists. When we come to deal with other movements which have been labelled 'fascist'—for example, the German National Socialists in Chapter 23—we shall describe

them for what they were—in some ways similar to the Italian Fascists, but by no means just late developers north of the Alps: there were important differences.

Problems of Italian Democracy

The Italian state, like the pre-war German Reich, was a fairly new creation, pieced together in the 1860s and early 1870s. Like the Germans, the Italians were touchy nationalists, quick to feel offended; and at the beginning of the twenties many Italians felt that their country had done badly out of winning a war which had cost them an immense military and economic effort. As you can see from the map below, some of the lands which had been promised to Italy by Britain and France as rewards for entering the war in 1915 were not handed over in the Paris peace settlement. Italian nationalists felt that they had been slapped in the face by the Allies, and that they needed a strong government with the muscle and the nerve to slap back.

Italy's war gains



The Establishment of Fascism in Italy

If the Italian state was a recent creation, a democratically elected Italian parliament was an even newer development: only in 1912 had the vote been given to almost all adult males. The traditional ruling classes had had little time in which to learn how to live with and use a mass electorate to their own advantage. Now they were being asked to come to terms with parliamentary democracy in times of widespread social unrest in a semi-industrial country which had Fiat car factories in the north and a mediaeval system of agriculture in the south. In the countryside peasants were being driven by hunger and over-population to reform the pattern of land ownership by simply taking land for themselves; rural labourers banded together to force employers to pay them more and improve their conditions of work. In the towns workers went on strike and occupied factories in attempts to push up wages which had been eaten away by the inflation of the war years. Both inside and outside parliament Italian socialists spoke of the revolution that was bound to come – though without any real idea of how they would bring it about. By 1920 those people who feared that there was a chance that they might lose their property and power – landowners, industrialists, the owners of small businesses – were strongly anti-socialist. They would be prepared to abandon democracy (much good that had done them!) if only someone would come and set all their fears at rest.

The Rise of the Fascists

They found him, or, to be more accurate, he found them in 1920. Benito Mussolini, former revolutionary socialist and journalist, ex-soldier, ambitious rogue, liar and bully, had set up a national organisation of *Fasci di Combattimento* (combat groups) in the troubled Italy of 1919. At first its programme for action was vaguely socialist, and opposed to big business, its behaviour strikingly violent. It gained no support among the workers and Mussolini was still far from the power he craved. He drew the obvious conclusion: if the workers wouldn't have him, the enemies of the workers would. Suddenly the anti-socialists were offered a leader and an organisation which would strike back at their enemies. The leader (*Il Duce*) made that clear:

“One hears it said that the masses must be won over. We do indeed wish to serve them, to educate them, but we also intend to flog them when they make mistakes.”

Mussolini had made the startling discovery that there was considerable support for a movement *against* the masses of the people.

That was the start of Fascism. It was against socialism, against liberalism, against democracy, against people thinking for themselves. It had perhaps only two positive principles – and both of them were mean, and in the end despicable: aggressive nationalism, and a belief in the superiority of action over thought. And last, but by no means least among the attractions the Fascists offered their supporters, was the uniform – the black shirt of the *Fasci*. For many of its active supporters Fascism was dressing up in black to look and feel more important than they were either at work or at home. Psychopaths and sadists joined the movement too, of course: they came for the blood.

Mussolini's rise towards power in the state was fast and violent. At the end of 1920 there were 88 Fascist groups, with 20,615 members: exactly one year later numbers had grown to 834 *Fasci* and over a quarter of a million members. In four and a half months at the beginning of 1921, Fascist attacks on their opponents resulted in 207 deaths and over 800 woundings. As a general rule the police and army didn't interfere: they tended to believe that they and the Fascists shared the same enemies. The Liberals in the government didn't crack down on the *Fasci*, partly because they were frightened more by the threats of a Red revolution than by the murderous activities of the blackshirts; and partly because they thought they could control Mussolini, if and when he agreed to join in a coalition government.

In the elections of May 1921 the Fascists gained only thirty-five seats out of a total of 535 seats in the Italian Parliament. But at the end of October 1922 Mussolini threatened to march on the Italian capital with 26,000 armed Fascists to insist that the country was given strong government: “either the government is handed over or we take it by attack on Rome”. The government hesitated, then prepared to resist and asked the King to sign a decree declaring a state of emergency. Victor Emmanuel III refused to sign. Perhaps he feared that resistance to the Fascists would lead to civil war; and in addition there was the threat that Mussolini might turn him off the throne and put in his place the king's pro-Fascist cousin, the Duke of Aosta. On 29 October the King asked Mussolini to form a government. The leader and his Fascist bands then made their ‘march on Rome’ in true twentieth-century fashion: Mussolini

The Establishment of Fascism in Italy

arrived by overnight sleeper and 25,000 of the Black-shirts by local trains.

Mussolini's Dictatorship

Although the Fascist revolution had begun, Mussolini remained head of a coalition government made up of Fascists and representatives of the old parties, until in 1923 a new electoral law, the Acerbo Law, was forced through Parliament, which ensured that the party which got the most votes in a general election would receive two-thirds of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies (the Italian version of our House of Commons). After the general election of April 1924 the Fascists became by far the largest party in parliament. On 30 May, one of the Socialist leaders, Giacomo Matteotti, openly denounced Fascist corruption and violence: eleven days later he was murdered. Socialists, Christian Democrats and Communists called on the King to restore the rule of law and dismiss Mussolini. Victor Emmanuel, the supposed guard-dog of the Italian constitution, behaved like the *Duce's* lap-dog; he refused to bite.

Mussolini was now sufficiently confident to establish his dictatorship. In 1925 the freedom of the press was destroyed. In 1926 all anti-Fascist political parties were suppressed, and the free trade unions followed them into oblivion. In 1927 a secret police force, the OVRA, was set up; and in 1928 what was already a mockery of a parliament was turned into a farce—its members were no longer elected but chosen by the Fascist Grand Council, presided over by the *Duce*. In 1929 the Roman Catholic Church set the seal on Mussolini's success by signing the Lateran Pacts with the Fascist government. The Church got what it wanted: virtual control over religious education in schools and recognition of Roman Catholicism as "the only State religion" in Italy. The Italian government also acknowledged the Pope's right to rule over his own state—Vatican City in Rome. Mussolini got much more: in many people's eyes he had the approval of the head of the Catholic Church. If the Pope found Mussolini acceptable, why should ordinary Italian Catholics turn up their noses?

It is often worth asking the question 'what might have happened if ...?' It is certainly worth asking what might have happened in Italy in the late 1920s and 1930s if the Church of Rome had openly opposed the moral corruption, the brutality and the sickening emptiness of the Fascist régime. Since the Fascists

could not have crushed the Church, we are entitled to wonder why the Church lent its authority to a government of thugs led by a self-confessed anti-clerical.

Italy entered the 1930s under the control of a man whose only fixed principles were his belief in his own importance and in the effectiveness of violence as a form of persuasion. Obviously, not all Italians took at their face value the Fascist slogans they heard on the radio, read in the newspapers, saw on the cinema screens and street posters:

'Believe! Obey! Fight!'

'War is to the male what childbearing is to the female!'

'A minute on the battlefield is worth a lifetime of peace!'

They saw, they could hardly fail to see, that these were remarkably silly messages. The urban workers and the rural labourers, whose standards of living improved very little, were being terrorised into obedience. The anti-socialists who had welcomed the *Duce* in 1920 had not the slightest desire to spend even half a minute on the battlefield: they had believed the *Fasci* would do all their fighting for them, against those whom they thought were enemies of a stable, orderly and respectable society. They had prayed for a strong man to take away nasty politics, rather as small children ask Daddy to take away the pain. Once the struggle to control the masses of the people was over, they found themselves in the grip of a political loudmouth who asked them to accept the absurdity that 'Mussolini is always right'. By that time of course, as we have seen, they had thrown away their right to disagree.

Yet there was an appearance of order about what the Fascists called the 'Corporate State', in which industries, agriculture and even film-making were each run by a Corporation which supposedly was made up of both owners and workers. In fact those organisations were largely shams, aimed at taking away the rights of workers to join trade unions. But despite the sham, Mussolini's Corporate Fascist State appealed to some Europeans outside Italy. He seemed to them to have succeeded in abolishing fruitless political argument and the violence which entered politics in times of stress. He had replaced it with another kind of violence and repression. *Il Duce* had his admirers in industrialised countries such as Britain, but in the end the style of Fascism would appeal most in poor countries where political violence was common.

13 The Establishment of Communism in Russia, 1917-24

The government which Lenin and the Bolsheviks set up after the revolution of November 1917 was called 'Sovnarkom', short for Council of People's Commissars. During the next few weeks, Soviets all over Russia joined in the revolution and took control of most towns and cities. By the end of 1917 nearly all Russia was in Soviet hands.

This did not mean, however, that the Bolsheviks controlled Russia. Far from it: only fourteen of the twenty-five members of Sovnarkom were Bolsheviks; not all Soviets were run by Bolsheviks; and in the countryside most peasants supported the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Even more awkward from the Bolshevik point of view, the long-awaited elections for a Constituent Assembly (arranged by the Provisional Government earlier in the year – see page 32) gave a large majority to the Socialist Revolutionaries.

Lenin had no intention of sharing power with others in an elected parliament. When the Constituent Assembly met for the first time in January 1918, armed Bolsheviks closed it down – for good. In Lenin's view, his first tasks were to establish the authority of Sovnarkom and to crush any other parties or organisations that either demanded a share in government or threatened to undermine the Bolshevik Party.

Sovnarkom had already put an end to the private ownership of land (see page 34). It had gone on to issue a decree on work, establishing an eight-hour day and a forty-eight hour week; a decree on unemployment insurance, outlining plans for workers' insurance against injury, illness and unemployment; a decree on workers' control, putting all factories under the control of elected committees of workers; and a decree on banking, putting all banks in Russia under state control. Now Sovnarkom issued more decrees which pointed the way to the kind of Russia that Lenin intended to create. All titles and ranks were abolished: from now on, people were to call each other 'Comrade' or 'Citizen'. Women were declared to be the social equals of men. The Orthodox Church, which had already been stripped of its lands, was to stop teaching religion.

Some of this was merely tinkering with the old Russia. The new Russia could not be built until the

Bolsheviks had swept away the enemies within, who were already recruiting armies for the struggle. Even more urgent was the problem of the German armies still on Russian soil. For any Russian government that continued the war would risk losing whatever support it had among the people. The Provisional Government had made that mistake and Lenin was determined not to repeat it.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

Late in 1917, Trotsky, now Commissar for Foreign Affairs, led a team of negotiators to the headquarters of the German army in the Polish town of Brest-Litovsk. The German demands were so savage that Trotsky returned and advised Lenin to carry on with the war. But the Bolshevik leader was convinced that the future of Bolshevik Russia depended more than anything else on peace. He said to Trotsky:

"You yourself say that our trenches are deserted . . . At the moment there is nothing more important in the world than our revolution; the revolution has to be safeguarded no matter what the price."

In February 1918 the German armies rolled forward again: the Russians were unable to stop them. On 3 March the Russian negotiators were back in Brest-Litovsk to sign a peace treaty whose terms were even more humiliating than the Germans' original demands. Russia had to give up all her western territories – Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Ukraine and Georgia. As these were the richest areas of the country, Russia lost 62 million people – 26 per cent of the entire population – along with 27 per cent of her farm land, 26 per cent of the railway system and 74 per cent of her iron ore and coal. Russia also had to pay an indemnity of 300 million gold roubles to Germany.

Reds and Whites: the Russian Civil War

No sooner had the Russian people shaken off the horrors of the Great War than they were plunged into the most vicious of civil wars. The new government

was attacked from all sides by the 'Whites', the enemies of the Bolsheviks, who included supporters of the former Tsar, landowners and Tsarist generals, as well as groups such as the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks with whom the Bolsheviks refused to share power. In the Ukraine, nationalists formed their own army and government to resist the Bolsheviks as well as the Germans who occupied their land. In the north, the Socialist Revolutionaries set up a government in Archangel, and troops led by General Mannerheim cleared the Bolsheviks out of Finland; while by the end of 1918 much of Siberia was controlled by a former Tsarist admiral, Kolchak, and his forces.

Sovnarkom was merely one government among many by the middle of 1918. Even the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk seemed to have backfired on Lenin. It had bought off the Germans but it had also aroused the wrath of Russia's wartime allies. They feared that the Germans would now be able to transfer their eastern armies to the Western Front. So, hoping to bring down Lenin and to establish a new, friendly government which would start fighting the Germans again, the British, French, Americans and Japanese sent troops to Russia to help the White armies fight the Bolsheviks.

The story of the fighting in the Civil War can be quickly told. The White armies were never a united force. They fought separate campaigns against a Red Army, created and commanded by Trotsky, which had the great strategic advantage of controlling the heartland of western Russia. The allied armies of intervention, made up of the odds and ends left over from the Western Front, fell into disorder when mutinies broke out among the French forces in Odessa, and were withdrawn early in 1919. The war lasted nearly two years. Both sides committed terrible atrocities, on each other and on the suffering people.

The Bolsheviks were prepared to use any means to survive and win the Civil War. One of those means was a new security police force which had been established in December 1917, the 'All-Russian Commission against Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation', known and feared by its short name—the Cheka. Led by Felix Dzerzhinsky, the Cheka organised a 'Red Terror' during the summer of 1918. Cheka units in the countryside hanged, beat, shot and tortured anyone who helped the Whites or fought for them. They spied on the Red Army and drove its soldiers into battle with

machine-guns trained on their backs. Probably 50,000 people, Reds as well as Whites, died at the hands of the Cheka.

War Communism

The Bolshevik government was equally harsh in its direction of the Russian economy. Sovnarkom took strict measures to organise industry and agriculture in the areas under its control. Its aims were to keep the Red Army supplied with food and with weapons, and to introduce a system of communism—the equal sharing of wealth. Under this 'War Communism' of 1918–21, Sovnarkom banned private trade, took (not bought) surplus food produced by the peasants to feed the hungry towns and the Red Army, and nationalised all factories and workshops which employed more than ten workers. The Supreme Council of National Economy (VSNKH) took over the management of industry, the Commissariat of Transportation managed the flow of goods and foodstuffs on the railways and waterways, while the Food Commissariat (Narkomprod) organised the rationing of food in the towns.

War Communism kept the Red Army going but it had grim, sometimes appalling, effects on the people in the towns. The Russian newspaper *Pravda* summed up the situation in an article on 26 February 1920:

"The workers of the towns and of some of the villages choke in the throes of hunger. The railroads barely crawl. The houses are crumbling. The towns are full of refuse. Epidemics spread and death strikes to the right and to the left."

The figures below will show you how near the Russian economy was to complete collapse in 1921.

Pig-iron production was only 2.4 per cent of the 1913 figure.

Iron ore production was only 1.7 per cent of the 1913 figure.

Coal production was only 27 per cent of the 1913 figure.

The harvest of food crops was 40 per cent below pre-war levels.

For every 100 horses in 1916, there were now only 75.

For every 100 cattle in 1916, there were now only 79.

For every 100 pigs in 1916, there were now only 72.

For every 100 sheep and goats in 1916, there were now only 55.

Then, in March 1921, the sailors in the port of Kronstadt, near Petrograd, rebelled against the government. The sailors demanded free elections for new soviets, freedom of speech, freedom of association and the right for peasants to farm their land freely. Trotsky, still Commissar for War, sent loyal Red Army troops against the sailors and after a battle that raged for ten days in blinding snowstorms, the mutineers were defeated and their leaders were shot.

The New Economic Policy

The Kronstadt mutiny had failed; but it was, in Lenin's words, "the flash which lit up reality better than anything else". Lenin could see that government controls must be relaxed, and War Communism brought to an end. So in March 1921 the New Economic Policy (NEP) was launched. Private trade was permitted once again, peasants were allowed to sell their surplus produce, and many small factories returned to private ownership.

If we measure the effects of the NEP on agriculture by looking at how much more food was produced, then the following statistics show definite improvements:

	1922	1925
Grain harvest (million tonnes)	50.3	72.5
Horses (million head)	21.7	27.1
Cattle (million head)	45.8	62.1
Pigs (million head)	12.0	21.8

However, these figures don't tell the full story of what was happening to the Russian peasants. For a start, NEP came too late to affect the sowing of crops in 1921, and a dry summer ruined what was already a disastrous harvest. The result was a massive famine. Over five million peasants died of starvation. According to Pravda, more than 27 million people were living at below subsistence level. Cannibalism became common in the worst affected areas.

Even after the famine of 1921-22, NEP did not solve the problem of food shortages in the towns—and that was its primary aim. Although there was an increase in the amount of grain produced, the amount of grain sold by the peasants remained low—about 20 per cent of the total output. One very obvious reason for this was that as the peasants produced more, they also ate more—a very natural thing to do. They were using the NEP to fill their own bellies.

Just as the NEP benefited the peasants, it also encouraged those industries which produced goods for the peasants to buy. So, in the early 1920s, the leather and textile industries made good recoveries; while the heavy industries, on which the country's strength was built, progressed little, if at all. Russia's development as an industrial power was therefore severely retarded in the early 1920s. For this reason Sovnarkom felt it necessary to sign trade agreements with some of the industrial countries, including Britain and Germany. Imports of German steel were vitally important to the Russian economy, so Germany and Russia signed the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922: Russia was to get German steel and help with the reconstruction of her armaments industry; and a secret part of the Treaty arranged for Germany to manufacture in Russia the weapons the Treaty of Versailles forbade her to make openly in her own factories. For the first time, but not the last, necessity had brought together those strange bedfellows.

Party Control

We should now look briefly at the way in which Russia was governed if we are to understand later developments in that country in the 1920s. In 1922 Bolshevik Russia was re-named the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR or the Soviet Union)—a federal state in which each of seven republics had, although mostly only in theory, some degree of control over its own internal affairs. (Today there are fifteen republics in the USSR.) In theory, government was the business of elected Soviets, or Councils, at every level—from the village to the government of the republics. At the centre of the system of government of the whole Soviet Union was the Supreme Soviet and a Council of Ministers.

The Soviet Union had only one political party, so you won't be surprised to learn that Russian voters had only the choice of electing either Communists or Communist sympathisers in Soviet elections. Of course, not everyone in Russia was a Communist, and the members of the Communist Party were a political élite who had numbered a quarter of a million by the end of 1917. By 1922 there were over a million members but, more important, the number of full-time Party officials had risen to twenty-five thousand—enough to fill every important post in the USSR, from the Council of Ministers down to the position of



War, civil war, and now starvation. Just four victims among the millions, during the famine of 1921.

Chairman of each of the Soviets of remote villages in the back of beyond.

The Party could say that it operated a Soviet democracy: people stood for election; people turned out to vote. It was just that the result of any election was bound to be a Communist victory. Real power lay in the hands of the Party officials—the ‘apparatchiks’. The man who hired and fired those officials, who could promote a man’s career in the Party ‘organs’ or ruin him, was the real ruler of the new Russia.

Lenin established a dictatorship which he and the Communist Party claimed to exercise on behalf of the Russian workers and peasants, but in doing so he established a system which could be corrupted into a dictatorship of one man.

Lenin died in January 1924, Petrograd was renamed Leningrad in his honour, and his mortal remains were embalmed and placed in a mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow—where they have remained on public display ever since.

14 Europe in the Twenties

The Search for Security

The new Europe of the early 1920s was an explosive mixture of dissatisfied, angry and anxious states. In the three years after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, violent disturbances continued to shake Central and Eastern Europe. A chain of new states, from Finland in the north to Yugoslavia in the south, had been created to satisfy nationalists' demands for the right to govern themselves—yet there were still well over 20 million people living as minorities in states ruled by other nationalities. Out of Czechoslovakia's total population of some 14 millions, well over 4 millions were Germans, Poles, Hungarians and Ruthenes. Among 12 million 'Yugoslavs' were nearly 2 million Germans, Romanians, Albanians and Hungarians. As a direct result of the peace settlement Romania had taken over more than a million and a half Hungarians.

It was obvious that neither Germany nor Russia would be prepared to let things stand as they were. Both powers had lost lands which had been extremely valuable to the economies of their pre-war empires. For example, Russian oil fields had been given to Romania, and German coalmines in the east now belonged to the Poles. No European statesman could fail to see that one day Germany and Russia would try to re-draw the lines on the map which had taken land, people and power from them. To a casual observer, the Europe of, say, 1923 would have looked a much more dangerous place to live in than the Europe of June 1914. But the continent did not explode into war in the twenties—mainly because neither Germany nor Russia was strong enough to use force to alter the map. Instead those years were a period in which European countries tried to make themselves more secure by seeking alliances to protect themselves against likely enemies.

It was inevitable that the majority nationalities dominated the new states of Central and Eastern Europe: the Czechs in Czechoslovakia, the Serbs in Yugoslavia, the Poles in Poland. In some places minorities were treated fairly, as equal citizens: in others they got a raw deal. In good times—when most workers in the towns and cities had jobs, and when peasant farmers received a decent price for their surplus produce—minority peoples shared in the general well-being. When times became hard, as they did at

the end of the twenties, it would be a different story—of job discrimination in the interests of majorities; of new grievances on both sides to sharpen old dislikes.

Meanwhile, although complaints about the ill-treatment of minorities were often to be heard (especially from Germany, where a propaganda campaign was started against the treatment of brother Germans living in Poland), the new states survived and searched for friends who would guarantee their survival. In 1921 Poland formed a defensive alliance with France: a glance at the map of Europe on page 43 will tell you the enemy they would defend each other against. In 1922, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia came together in a 'Little Entente' to discourage Hungary from trying to take back the lands and peoples they had all seized from her at the end of the war. Two years later Czechoslovakia also formed an alliance with France. It looked as if a determined effort was being made by France in the West and four states in the East to make the new lines on the map permanent.

France wanted Britain to support the effort. But while Britain was willing to go to almost any lengths to defend her empire in Asia, she was not prepared to guarantee frontiers in 'faraway' Eastern Europe. Britain still thought of herself first as a great imperial, sea-going power: the idea that her future could be closely bound up with the goings on of Poles and Czechs came a very bad second.



Any disagreement between Britain and France was good news for Germany: it weakened the alliance against her in the West. Germany's aim in the mid-twenties was to separate France from her new friends in the East, the Poles and the countries of the Little Entente. That separation began with the Locarno Pact of 1925, which at first sight seemed to put an end to more than ten years of hostility in Europe, but which alarmed the leaders of the Eastern European states.

At the end of Chapter 11 (page 50) we noted that the agreements signed at Locarno included a promise by Germany, France and Belgium to respect the frontier between them which had been set down in the Treaty of Versailles. The results were that France at last began to feel safe from the awful possibility of a German attack; and Germany at last looked sufficiently respectable to be invited to join the League of Nations (an invitation she accepted in 1926). But you also saw on page 50 that the Locarno agreements did not carry a German guarantee to respect the frontiers of Poland or Czechoslovakia. And now that France's frontier with Germany was guaranteed by the Locarno Pact, some French politicians began to think that France would be safer if she avoided alarming Germany by becoming too friendly with Poland and Czechoslovakia. In 1929 the French began to build massive fortifications—the Maginot Line—along their border with Germany, just in case the Germans didn't take the Locarno Pact as seriously as they had promised. And as they felt themselves more secure from attack, they attached less importance to their treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia. The French were turning their backs, instead of their bayonets, to the East.

Communist Russia and the Comintern

Far to the East lay the great new unknown factor in European politics—a Russia which had lost much of her territory but which now lay under communist rule. Perhaps only two things were certain about that country—its desperate need for breathing space in which to rebuild a shattered economy, and its leaders' fears of attacks from the West. The Western intervention in the Civil War of 1918–20 strengthened the communist belief that the state could not survive for long if the industrial countries of the West decided to patch up post-war quarrels and turn on Russia in an

attempt to destroy communism before it could seriously threaten their capitalist societies.

Following the example set by the Bolsheviks, communist parties quickly developed in several Western European countries—especially in Germany and Italy—and you will remember from Chapter 9 (page 39) that there were very real fears among the Allies of a wave of communist revolutions sweeping over Europe while the Big Three were still trying to agree on a peace settlement. Early in 1919 the Comintern (Communist International) was set up to oversee the actions of Marxist parties throughout the world. Socialist groups from most European countries joined the Comintern, calling themselves 'communist' parties, and committed to international revolution. After all, Marx had called for workers of *all* countries to unite and overthrow their masters. The Russian Soviet leaders may not have believed that international revolution would happen immediately, but they certainly hoped that the countries of the West would be weakened by strikes and disturbances in which the new communist parties would play a leading part.

The leadership of the Comintern was clearly in the hands of the Russians, who saw it as an instrument for weakening their European enemies. At the second congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow (the new capital of Russia) in 1920, a number of conditions were laid down for the parties who wished to join. Each party must be tightly disciplined and obey its leaders; all the parties must agree to the decisions of the Comintern; and every party was "obliged to give unconditional support to any Soviet republic in its struggle against counter-revolutionary forces". 'Soviet' here meant communist, and at that time the only communist republic in the world was Russia.

There was nothing very surprising about the Russians taking over the leadership of the international communist movement. But it meant that what the Comintern did in future would be decided by the policies and personalities of the Russian Communist Party. However, as early as 1921 communist rebellions had been defeated in Hungary and Germany and it was becoming clear that the non-revolutionary socialist parties (which were not members of the Comintern) had far more support than the communist parties among workers and peasants outside Russia. Despite the strenuous efforts of its Chairman, Grigori Zinoviev, the Comintern never stood any real chance of lighting the spark of revolution in Europe.

The New States of Eastern Europe

Between 1914 and 1918 European governments had called on their peoples to join in the immense military, economic and financial efforts which the new kind of warfare demanded. Whole peoples had taken part in war—as soldiers, as workers, as lenders of money. Subject peoples had used the war as an opportunity to claim their independence and freedom. And, as you saw in Chapter 6 (page 29), the war had weakened old traditions of respect for superior authorities. When the slaughter ceased and statesmen began to make the peace, it was not possible to put the clock back to 1914 and deny most people the opportunity of taking part in their own government.

Democracy became the new fashion in Europe. Even in an old parliamentary democracy such as Britain there were changes: in 1918 the Representation of the People Act gave the vote to nearly all men over the age of twenty-one and women over thirty. The changes in Central and Eastern Europe appeared much more remarkable. The new states began their lives with new systems of parliamentary government and their creators and well-wishers (such as President Wilson) expected that they would, before too long, develop into true working democracies—governments of the people, by the people, for the people. But things were not to turn out as simply and neatly as that. If the masses of the people were now going to have a much greater effect on government, the critical question to be answered was this: who was going to get control of the masses?

There were plenty of people with answers ready. In the mainly peasant lands of Eastern Europe the traditional rulers—such as the landowners, the churches, the army leaders—were not going to give up their power without a struggle. In the West, non-revolutionary socialist parties (such as the Labour Party in Britain and the Social Democrats in Germany) saw their opportunity to reform and improve industrialised societies. In both the East and West of Europe, as you have already seen, there were also the new communist parties, planning to imitate the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

In most of the new states of Central and Eastern Europe the democratic forms of government with elected parliaments, which had been imposed by the Paris peacemakers, soon proved to be unworkable. There the people and their leaders had no tradition of

government through freely elected parliaments, no sense of the duty of majorities to protect the rights and property of minorities. Their politics were struggles for power between different national and social groups—between Poles and Germans, Serbs and Croats, Romanians and Hungarians; between peasants and landowners, and between peasants and the middle classes of the towns.

The struggles were often violent and strongly tinged with anti-Semitism—for Jews were a minority to be found in every country in Europe and had no state of their own. Because they rarely owned land Jews valued education as a way of entering city occupations, as doctors, lawyers, civil servants and journalists. In the main cities of Austria, Hungary and Poland there were often more Jews in those professions than other groups of people. That had led to resentment from educated non-Jewish people, and sometimes to restrictions on the numbers of Jews allowed into universities. In the countryside many Jews lived in desperate poverty, but the activities of some of them as moneylenders earned the hatred of the peasant farmers. All that was nothing new: the Jews were long used to persecution. But the point was that in most of the new states the Jews had little more protection than they had had under the old empires. It was just one more indication that traditions of intolerance and illiberalism could not be wiped out, or even weakened, by a pretence of parliamentary government.

In some of the states even the pretence at democracy was soon given up. In the late 1920s Poland (1926) and Yugoslavia (1929) were taken over by dictators who ruled with the aid of the upper classes and the army, and who used their control of the state to reward their supporters with jobs—in the civil service, in the professions, and on the state-owned railways. Often these supporters came from one national group. In Yugoslavia there were six nationalities, but almost every important post in the government service and the armed forces was held by a Serb. With few exceptions, such as Czechoslovakia (a more industrialised country in which the leaders of the various national groups agreed to cooperate in making parliamentary government work), control of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe passed into the hands of small, unrepresentative cliques. Elections continued to be held, but the use of bribery and terror meant that no government in Eastern Europe lost an election in the twenty years after the Great War.

**Völker Europas,
wahret Eure heiligsten Güter!**

**NATIONS
EUROPÉENNES**
Defendez vos
biens sacrés!

Rusland zusammengebrochen, Ungarn brennt,
Flammen züngeln gen Westen!
Kämpft gegen den größten Brandherd!
Hütet Euch vor einem Sklavenfrieden!
Er reißt den Damm im Osten weiter ein,
und ganz Europa stürzt ins Chaos!
Osthilfe e.V.

**NATIONS
OF EUROPE**
Join in the defence
of your faith
and your home!

Vertriebsstelle Berlin 20, Köpenicker Str. 46,
Christoph 54231, Berlin N. 1917

Völkchen

Telegramme: Ostschutzhilfe Berlin,
Fernruf: 2109, 2181, 2055

This German poster of the early 1920s warns of the menace of Bolshevism. The Archangel Michael cries; "People of Europe! Protect your most sacred possessions!" – property and religion.

Competitors for Power in Western Europe

In contrast, the societies of the industrialised West seemed capable of accepting big political changes. Mass electorates were not new; old established parties might not welcome the participation of more of the people in government, but they didn't fear them. As a result, the struggle for political power in the West became a three-cornered competition between the communist parties, the non-revolutionary socialists, and the old parties who had accepted democracy as something they had to come to terms with. In France, in Britain and in Germany, most of the people who still regarded themselves as the 'ruling classes' had long since realised that the surest way to commit political suicide was to try to ignore the voting power of the working classes. A fourth competitor for political power—the revolutionary nationalist parties, such as the National Socialists in Germany and the Fascists in Italy—waited in the wings. Their time would come if and when democracy no longer seemed capable of coping with social and economic distress.

The nearest the communists came to success was in their short-lived revolutions in some of the German states in 1919 and the early 1920s. Thereafter, although the German Communist Party (the KPD) was supported by a large minority of the electorate (it had over three million votes in each of the elections of May 1924 and May 1928), it was never within reach of coming to power by democratic methods. The Social Democrats, the communists' chief rivals for the support of the working class, did much better. Friedrich Ebert, President of the German Republic from 1919 until his death in 1925, was a Social Democrat. His party, the SPD, always won more votes than any other party in the elections of the twenties; and the leaders of this non-revolutionary socialist movement became ministers in coalition governments with other parties from 1919 to 1923 and again in 1928.

You may have gathered by now that there was no love lost between communists and non-revolutionary socialists. They were rivals for the workers' affections; and the Comintern, which wanted to weaken other states, forbade its member parties to enter into alliances with any other parties which claimed to represent the interests of the working class. Thus, in France, as in Germany, the communists and the socialists were enemies, not allies. Both groups were smaller

than in Germany because France was less industrialised and had a smaller working class; but political disagreements between communists and socialists were no less bitter. The communists refused to consider sharing power with any other group, while the more popular socialists were willing and able to form alliances with other parties. In the elections of 1924 they made an alliance with the Radicals (a non-socialist, anti-clerical party of the centre) to defeat the coalition of conservative parties led by Poincaré, and then supported the new Radical government led by Edouard Herriot. (It was this government which agreed to end the French occupation of the Ruhr and to accept the Dawes Plan which revised Germany's payments of reparations—see Chapter 11, page 50.)

The conservative parties regained power in France in 1926, but the socialists were given little to criticise in the new government's policies, which included 'socialist' measures such as higher public expenditure on social services. The old parties had not only come to terms with democracy; they had learned that to appeal to the masses it was sometimes necessary to pinch their opponents' political clothing.

In Britain the Communist Party was too small to make serious threats of revolution. After the war the Labour Party in the House of Commons steadily overtook the Liberals as the main opposition party to the Conservatives. Conservative newspapers and politicians frequently raised alarms about communists penetrating the trade unions and the Labour Party—'the Reds under the bed'. But neither the unions nor Labour wanted revolution: both were committed to the reform of British society through a democratically elected Parliament which could make changes in the law.

In January 1924 Labour leaders had their first taste of power when Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister of a government which did not have an absolute majority in the House of Commons. This meant that the number of all MPs in the opposition parties was larger than the total number of Labour MPs. The minority government lasted only until November, when a general election not only gave the Conservative Party a landslide victory but pushed the Liberal Party into a very poor third place behind Labour. It appeared that the British, unlike the French and the Germans, preferred a two-party system, with clear winners (who became the government) and equally obvious losers (who formed the Opposition). The next general election, in May 1929, appeared to confirm that pre-

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ference: Labour won 288 seats, the Conservatives 260, and the Liberals only 59. On the other hand, Liberals could complain that the British electoral system of 'first past the post' didn't give them a fair representation in Parliament. Then, as today, in each constituency the winner was the candidate who won most votes, even if a majority of electors in the constituency voted for the other candidates. In May 1929 both Labour and Conservative parties received over eight million votes, and their MPs dominated the new House of Commons. The Liberals looked done for with fewer than sixty MPs—yet they had polled over five million votes throughout the country in the election.

But whatever could be said for or against the elec-

toral system, one thing was clear—a new force in British politics had matured: a non-revolutionary socialist party. The main support of the Labour Party and most of its funds came from the trade unions, who accepted the British system of parliamentary democracy. Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister again, and the Conservatives duly became His Majesty's Opposition. The system of government had been proved strong and flexible enough to contain the struggle of new and old parties to gain the support of the people. Except for some isolated incidents, British politics remained a contest of votes, in polling booths and in Parliament—not a conflict of broken heads in the streets.

15 The Middle East between the Wars

In the last chapter we looked at Europe in the 1920s; at a continent deeply scarred by the Great War, where one great empire had been dismembered and another severely cut about. The new states made for the nationalities had not become the sturdy democracies their creators had hoped for: nationalism was still the most powerful disruptive force in European politics; and the post-war political struggles for control of the people had already produced authoritarian régimes in much of Eastern Europe and the vicious, anti-democratic backlash of Fascism in Italy. In the new countries of the Middle East many of the same forces were at work in the 1920s. We can begin our survey of this region by looking at a country where nationalists were determined on the one hand to reject European imperialists, and on the other to welcome European ideas.

The Break-up of the Turkish Empire

You have seen (Chapter 4, page 17) that the Turkish Empire was in retreat well before the Great War began. In the First Balkan War of 1912 Turkey was expelled from most of her European territories, retaining only Thrace, on the tip of the Balkans, and the Turkish Straits. Although in the Great War the Turks scored some major victories over the British at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia (see Chapter 5, page 24), they were driven out of their Arab territories in the south by the Arab Revolt of 1917, and by the joint Arab-British offensive in 1918. When Turkey signed an armistice on 30 October 1918, there was no prospect whatever of the Empire remaining intact: Emir Feisal, the military commander of the Arabs, was in control of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, while the British controlled Iraq and Palestine.

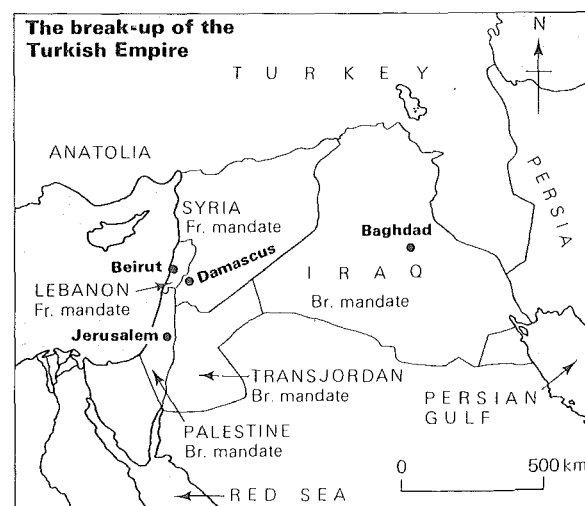
Although the defeated Turkish Empire was not European (except for Thrace) the British and French felt free to divide it between them. Despite Feisal's pleas at the Paris Peace Conference for Arab independence, the British and French had already made arrangements for the Arabs in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 (see page 25). As you can see from the map opposite, the British took the lion's share of the land. However, they didn't want to spend money on troops and officials to rule directly over their new

territories (except in Palestine), and so they set up Arab governments under their protection in Iraq and Transjordan. The French took a firmer grip on Syria and the Lebanon, deposing Feisal, who had proclaimed himself King of Syria earlier in 1920.

Oil was not the motive that prompted Britain and France to assert themselves in the Middle East: in 1920 the Middle East produced only about one per cent of the world's oil. But you will remember from Chapter 2 how seriously the great colonial empires regarded the protection of their trade routes. The British, in particular, were determined to secure control of an area which included the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and which was vital for the protection of their traffic to and from India.

Turkish Nationalism

Allied plans to take over the Turks' homeland of Anatolia completely misfired. In 1919 the Big Three encouraged the Greek government to send troops to Anatolia to control not only the Turks but also the Italians, who were already at work in Anatolia trying to snatch a large chunk of Turkey for themselves. The Greek government had grand ideas of re-creating the ancient Greek Empire in a land in which there were large numbers of Greek-speaking people. Turkish nationalists, led by General Mustafa Kemal, had the simpler intention of kicking out all Europeans.



The Middle East between the Wars

Then, in August 1920, the Allies presented the Turkish government with the Treaty of Sèvres, the fifth and last of the Paris peace treaties. You can see from the map below that it dealt harshly with Turkey. Anatolia, the Turkish heartland, was divided into French, Italian and American spheres of influence, with Smyrna becoming a Greek protectorate. The Turkish Straits were made into an international zone under the League of Nations, while Thrace was given to Greece: this meant that Turkey's western border now extended only a little further than the suburbs of Constantinople, bringing the capital within range of Greek artillery in the event of war.

Rather than accept the dismemberment of Turkey by the Allies, Mustafa Kemal and the nationalists had already set up a breakaway government in Ankara, in the heart of Anatolia, in March 1920. Their survival looked doubtful when a large Greek army suddenly advanced from Smyrna in June 1920, defeating Kemalist forces in a series of battles, and occupying the province of Brousa.

The war which followed between the Greeks and the Turkish nationalists ended in total victory for Kemal in 1922. Kemal smashed the Greek army in a major battle at Afion Karahissar on the River Sakarya (26–30 August 1922), and drove the remnants of it back to Smyrna. There, Turkish civilians promptly set upon the Greek population of the city in a series of massacres. Pursuing the Greek army northwards, Kemal then came up against a British garrison at Chanak, guarding the Turkish Straits. Rather than risk battle with Kemal, the British commander at Chanak signed an agreement with him, the Convention of Mudania, promising a revision of the Treaty of Sèvres in Turkey's favour. Out of this came a new treaty, the Treaty of Lausanne, in 1923: Turkey regained Eastern Thrace from Greece, and the frontier between them was demilitarised. Turkey was left free of all foreign troops. The Straits were returned to Turkish control although they were to remain demilitarised. And no restrictions were placed on Turkey's armed forces.

The Treaty of Lausanne didn't quite finish the



tragedy of the conflict between Greeks and Turks. All Greeks still living in Turkey and all Turks living in Greece were sent 'home'. Nearly a million and a half people were uprooted from places in which their families had lived for generations. The Turks had set a brutal example for the more crude nationalists of the twentieth century.

Mustapha Kemal, who later altered his name to Atatürk ('Father of the Turks') declared a Turkish Republic in October 1923, and ruled it as President until his death in 1938. Atatürk's major achievement was the rapid modernisation of Turkey along Western European lines. He declared that Islam was no longer the state religion; he introduced the Western alphabet and forbade writing in Arabic; polygamy (the practice of a man having more than one wife) was abolished. If male Turks wished to wear headgear they had to wear Western-style hats or caps, not the traditional 'fez'. In 1934 a law was passed which gave women the vote. A new word entered the language: from 1 p.m. on Saturday to midnight on Sunday became the Turkish 'vikend'.

Persian Nationalism

Persia was also taken over by aggressive, reforming nationalists. In 1921 Reza Khan, with the support of the army, led a rebellion to overthrow the Persian government, which had accepted the presence of Russian and British troops, officials and business men. The Russians withdrew from north Persia, and the British left the Persian Gulf area—though they did so rather more reluctantly and kept a controlling interest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company which had already begun the serious exploitation of the wealth that lay beneath Persian sand and soil. In 1925 Reza Khan made himself Shah of Persia and started a programme of reform similar to that of Kemal in Turkey. Industrial growth was encouraged, communications were improved, and education was re-organised along Western European lines. In 1935 the Shah changed the name of his country to its ancient name of Iran. In the following year European dress was made compulsory for both sexes. As in Turkey, it was declared that women need no longer obey the Islamic rule about completely covering their faces and bodies in public. In both countries, of course, many women continued to do so, and it was mostly the daughters of the educated and better-off families who accepted Western fashions. In

both Turkey and Iran the Westernising, modernising movement was much stronger in the main towns than in the rural communities, where very little changed.

Arab Nationalism

Britain made no really determined effort to stay in Turkey or Iran in the face of nationalist opposition. She and France faced even fiercer resistance from nationalists in the Arab lands of the Middle East, but there the two European powers were not prepared to give up their interests.

We saw on page 64 how the Arab lands of the former Turkish Empire were divided between the British and French and Arabs friendly to the Allied powers. Five new states emerged from that arrangement—Syria and the Lebanon were French mandates; Transjordan, Iraq and Palestine were British. Only in the Arabian Peninsula were any of the Arab peoples truly independent. Egypt had been occupied by British troops since 1914, and for all practical purposes the British government regarded that country as part of the British Empire. France imposed direct rule on her Arab territories, Syria and the Lebanon, while the British arranged that friendly princes ruled Transjordan and Iraq.

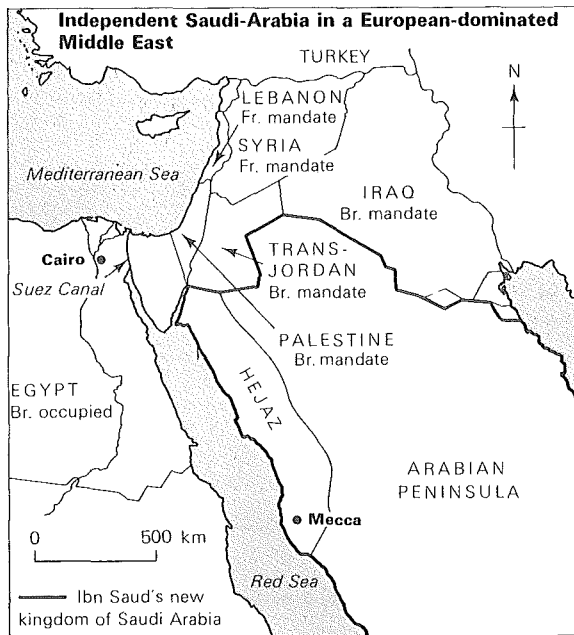
Britain's control of Egypt was vehemently opposed by Saad Zaghlul, the leader of the local nationalist party, the Wafd. When Zaghlul proved to be too effective in whipping up nationalist feeling, the British spirited him off to Malta—whereupon the Wafd led an uprising against the British in Egypt. Although the revolt was not successful, violence and unrest continued in Egypt until early 1922, when the British government decided that the only way to put a stop to it (short of getting out altogether) was to grant Egypt a kind of semi-independence. The Egyptians were given a form of parliamentary democracy, Sultan Fuad became King Fuad I, and the number of British officials in the country was steadily reduced. But the British army remained in occupation, and the Wafd remained a dissatisfied nationalist party, committed to the overthrow of Europeans who wouldn't go away.

It was obvious that neither Britain nor France was prepared to give up control of Arab lands. In 1925 France had to deal with a revolt in Syria when nationalists rebelled against the French policy of supporting Christian Syrians at the expense of the Muslim Arabs who formed the majority of the population. After the revolt was put down France granted Syria a new consti-

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tution, making her (like the Lebanon) a parliamentary republic: but France kept control of Syrian foreign policy and the armed forces. Similarly, although Iraq achieved a kind of independence by the end of the 1920s, Britain insisted on her 'right' to maintain forces in that country. The security of Suez and the potential oil-wealth of that part of the world were too important to be left to the chances of friendship.

The exception to the European domination of Arab lands was the Arabian Peninsula. In the early 1920s, it was rapidly taken over by Ibn Saud, a ruler who had sided with the British during the war. In 1924 his forces invaded the Hejaz (see map below) and captured the holy Muslim city of Mecca. In 1926 he was proclaimed King of the Hejaz, a title he changed to King of Saudi Arabia in 1932.



The problem of Palestine

To the north of Ibn Saud's enlarged kingdom, between British Egypt and French Lebanon and

Syria, lay the land which was to become the focus of Arab nationalism. Back in 1917 the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, had stated that:

“His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

The British had been attracted by the prospect of having a stable, friendly Jewish community in Palestine as well as by the more romantic idea of helping the Jews to return to their promised land after nearly two thousand years in exile. The trouble was that the Arabs were not consulted about the plan.

At the end of the Great War there were only 60,000 Jews in Palestine, out of a total population of 750,000; or roughly about seven Jews to every ninety-three Arabs. Yet the Palestine mandate made Britain responsible for establishing a Jewish National Home there while at the same time protecting the rights and position of the rest of the population. It was, of course, an impossible undertaking, and it would poison relations between the Arabs and the British for many years to come. As Britain was responsible for Palestine, she was also held responsible by the Arabs for both the legal and illegal immigration of Jews. By 1931 there were 175,000 Jews in Palestine—or nearly eighteen per cent of the population. It's possible that the Arabs might have been willing to accept even that sizeable minority, but sinister developments in Europe in the 1930s would soon bring a massive influx of Jews to the Middle East. By 1939 there would be nearly 430,000 Jews in Palestine, making up twenty-eight per cent of the population. Arab nationalists had rightly complained about their treatment at the hands of the Western powers after the war: the Palestinian problem inflamed their sense of injustice.

16 Africa between the Wars

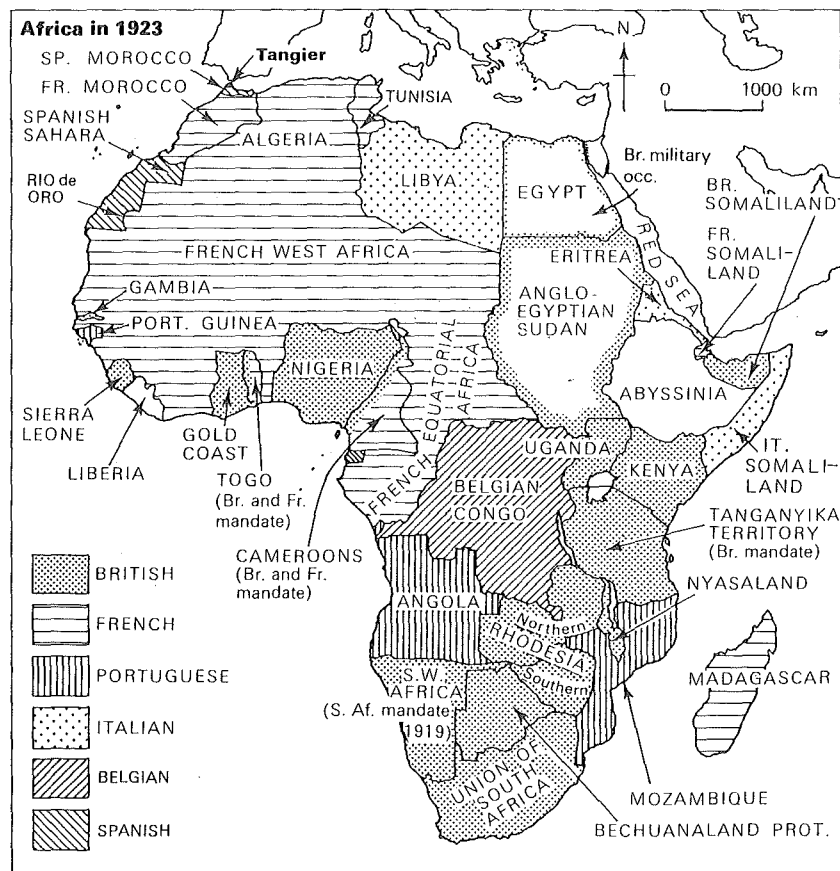
Until the nineteenth century Africa had remained a continent which Europeans touched and knew only at the edges. The land, peoples and civilisations of the African interior had remained largely unknown to them. Only when new paths into the interior were cleared by explorers and missionaries, and when the Western imperialists stepped up their search for new colonies in the later nineteenth century, did the Europeans begin to penetrate beyond the African coast.

Before the Great War most of the European colonies in Africa were largely unaffected by the trade and industry of the rest of the world. Few had much in the way of communications systems except the bare 'spinal columns' of the railway networks of the future. Only in South Africa was there anything like a complete rail system linking industrial centres (mostly mines) with farming areas as well as ports. Quite simply, much of

Africa had not been in the hands of Europeans long enough for them to organise the colonies in ways which would bring maximum benefits to the mother countries. For example, British East Africa had only been taken over in 1895, the Belgian Congo in 1908, and French West Africa in 1909. The Great War had interrupted the exploitation of the continent almost before it was really under way. Once the war was over, the imperial powers (except Germany, of course) returned to the business of getting Africa to earn its keep.

The Economics of Colonialism

Throughout the 1920s and 30s the story of colonial Africa was one of Western investment in a wide range of agricultural produce, in mining, in the extension of the railway networks and the development



Africa between the Wars

of harbours. Except in South Africa there was little, if any, attempt to develop industries whose products could compete with European manufactures.

By the end of the twenties the merchants and traders of the Western empires had developed two kinds of economy in Africa. The colonies of West Africa and most of East Africa exported crops grown on the small-holdings of peasant farmers: the colonies of Southern and West-Central Africa (and of Liberia in the West and Kenya in the East) exported mineral ores and crops grown on plantations by wage-earning labourers.

Most colonies specialised in one or more primary products—for example, cocoa in Western Nigeria and the Gold Coast; ground-nuts in Northern Nigeria and Senegal; cotton in the Sudan and Uganda; rubber in Liberia; coffee in Kenya and Tanganyika; copper in Northern Rhodesia; copper, diamonds and palm-oil in the Congo. The money invested in the new plantations and mines, and in the necessary railway and harbour facilities, came from the USA as well as from Western Europe; and many parts of Africa soon experienced their first taste of Western 'big business' when small trading firms either joined together or were taken over by bigger ones. An outstanding example was the United Africa Company, formed in 1929, which handled most of Nigeria's foreign trade and a large part of the Gold Coast's. UAC was itself part of a European 'multi-national' company, the Anglo-Dutch Unilever organisation, which also had a stake in the palm-oil and palm-kernels export trade of the Belgian Congo.

Social and Political Effects of Colonialism

All this exploitation of the colonies had profound effects on their African populations. The small-holders of West and East Africa brought new land under cultivation, purchased new tools, invested in transport to get their produce to market, and began to employ extra men at harvest times. To be a wage-earner, moving from job to job, became a common way of life for many Africans. In the mining and plantation colonies there were, of course, more wage-earning labourers; and if there were not enough men *willing* to work for low wages, colonial governments applied pressure to the labourers to volunteer. Taxation was one form of pressure: if a man wouldn't work for a wage, however low, he wouldn't have the cash to pay the taxes demanded from him. Such techniques of

persuasion were gentler than in the past. Not so many years before, in the Belgian Congo, workers who didn't produce sufficient rubber had their hands cut off. By and large that kind of forced labour was, in the 1920s, a sour memory of the bad old days before 1914. Only in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique was it still practised on a large scale. There, an African could be harshly punished or imprisoned if he broke his contract with an employer.

At the end of the twenties, most African peoples were still coming to terms with their new economic roles, as suppliers of foods and raw materials to the dinner-tables and factories of Europe and the USA. They were not encouraged to develop political ambitions. With few exceptions, they were more conscious of belonging to tribes than to the artificial colonies drawn on the African map by European imperialists. Even in the more prosperous colonies the European powers didn't encourage the Africans to take any part in government, and they took little notice of black Africans' first attempts to create nationalist movements. For example, in 1920 black Nigerians set up the National Congress of British West Africa, and demanded a degree of self-government: all they got was the vote for a limited number of Africans in elections for an advisory council which had little real power. That was in vivid contrast to the British government's treatment of white settlers. In 1923 the territory then known as Rhodesia was divided in two. The northern half, where there were few settlers, remained under direct British rule as the protectorate of Northern Rhodesia (today it is the independent state of Zambia). The other half, in which white settler-farmers were already well established, became the colony of Southern Rhodesia (today it is the independent state of Zimbabwe). Both lands were to become very prosperous by African standards—the North exploited its copper mines while the South exported flue-cured tobacco to British cigarette manufacturers. The difference was that the whites of Southern Rhodesia were given virtual self-government over their own internal affairs.

The Union of South Africa

At the very tip of the dark continent, South Africa soon began to develop a distinct kind of white-dominated society. In 1912 the National Party was formed by Afrikaners (whites of Dutch origin) who didn't want

to retain close links with Britain or share power with the blacks. In the same year, the African National Congress was set up to defend the rights of black men in a country where they had no vote and where the land would soon be divided up in the proportion of one-eighth for the blacks and seven-eighths for the whites.

The early prosperity of South Africa had been based on the mining of gold and diamonds. During the Great War the South African government had encouraged new industries and now their owners looked to the political leaders for protection from European competition in the post-war period. White workers, and those Afrikaners who moved into the towns for employment, also wanted protection from the black workers in the competition for jobs. In 1924 the Afrikaner National Party joined with the Labour Party, which represented the mainly English-speaking white urban workers. One of the first measures passed by the new coalition government was the Mines and Works Act of 1925, which meant that the government could reserve skilled jobs for whites and coloureds (people of mixed race) only. The pattern was set for black South Africans to remain in low-paid, unskilled work. Tariff barriers were also raised to protect the new industries from European competition, and in 1928 the South African government set up a state-run Iron and Steel Corporation. The foundations had been laid for the development of the first industrialised society in Africa, in which the unskilled labour was provided by poorly paid black Africans who were allowed no share in the running of what had been their country.

The Impact of the Depression

The countries of the African continent became involved in international trade just in time to be hit by the international slump—and although the economies of the African countries were not as badly affected as those of Latin America, they undoubtedly suffered. Between 1929 and 1932, their earnings from exports fell, on average, by over forty per cent; and by 1938 most of them had still not recovered their relative prosperity of the late twenties. Throughout Africa thousands of labourers lost their work and income; those who kept their jobs had their wages cut.

Among the few African countries which recovered quickly from the Depression were Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Kenya. All three of them benefited from protected access to the British market

after 1932. Southern Rhodesia was also helped by the fact that she had large quantities of a mineral whose price actually *rose* in the 1930s—gold. When many of the world's trading nations abandoned the gold standard in the early thirties, the price of gold was no longer artificially fixed: it was free to move, and it moved rapidly upwards—from 85 shillings (£4.25) an ounce in 1931 to 140 shillings (£7) an ounce in 1939. Southern Rhodesia experienced a 'gold rush' as European companies sank mines to excavate the metal, for the profit of their shareholders back home and to the benefit of Southern Rhodesia's export trade.

The most spectacular recovery, however, was that of the Union of South Africa. It would not be too fanciful to say that she was pulled out of depression by gold-miners' picks. The number of men employed in the mines rose from 232,000 in 1931 to 364,000 in 1939. Between 1931 and 1938, the value of South Africa's gold exports rose from £48 million to £71 million—and those export earnings were pumped into the new industries which had been started in the Great War, developed in the twenties, and then threatened by the world Depression. The iron and steel, food, tobacco, chemicals, textiles and construction industries all expanded; and between 1932 and 1939 South Africa more than doubled her industrial production.

In the gold-boom of the 1930s the Union was ruled by a coalition government made up of the South Africa Party (supported by people of both British and Dutch descent) and the National Party (supported mainly by Afrikaners—descendants of the Dutch Boers), which together formed the United Party. But as the economy recovered, so the more extreme Afrikaners kept the National Party alive as an anti-black and anti-British political movement. Blacks were already second-class citizens in the Union; they were made to live apart from whites, they had to have 'passes' to travel in their own country, and they were forbidden to join trade unions. If yellow metal was one of the two chief props of South Africa's industry, the other was cheap black labour—and the Afrikaner Nationalists were determined to keep it that way.

Across the border, in Southern Rhodesia, the ruling whites were already aping South African ways of treating blacks. By the late 1930s, the richer parts of southern Africa were well on the way to creating societies in which the wealth of white minorities depended on keeping black majorities poor and powerless.

17 India between the Wars

The British in India

If most of Africa was only now, in the early twentieth century, being thoroughly penetrated by European business men, India had already a long history of white man's rule. For there, for well over a hundred years the British had dominated the peoples of civilisations more ancient than their own.

In that vast land of huge population and many religions, the majority of the people were Hindus, segregated by their 'caste' system into hereditary social classes which defined their occupations and whom they might marry. The largest religious and cultural minority was made up of Muslims, descendants of earlier conquering peoples who long ago had controlled much of the sub-continent.

Within the British Empire India had a unique system of government, and as you saw in Chapter 5 (page 25) hundreds of thousands of Indian troops fought on Britain's side in the Great War. By that time demands for Indian independence had become so loud and insistent that in 1917 the British government accepted, in principle, that one day India would become a dominion (i.e. a self-governing country within the Empire).

In 1919, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms introduced a system of government called 'dyarchy' into the eleven provinces into which India was divided. In each province there were now to be two levels of power and responsibility: Indian ministers were responsible for programmes of health, education and agriculture; while the British kept control of finance and of the forces of law and order (the army, the police and the courts). It was not enough. Angry Indians resorted to anti-British campaigns which sometimes ended in disorder, and the British over-reacted in enforcing their law. The most sickening example of 'law-enforcement' occurred at Amritsar in the Punjab, where troops opened fire on a mob, killing 379 and wounding over a thousand other people. It was unforgivable. It was also out of character: British officials in India had generally set out to be humane, not barbarous, although this had not prevented them from frequently misunderstanding Indian customs and traditions. Now that the process of allowing Indians to take part in government had begun, the pace was always too slow

for the Indians, always too fast for the reluctant British. Human behaviour alters, becomes cruder and less rational, under stress. In the twenty years after 1919 the sub-continent was to suffer much crude and violent behaviour.

Gandhi and the Congress Party

It was fortunate for the people of India, and for their British rulers, that in those crucial years the independence movement was led by a Hindu who was both a wily politician and as near to a saint as a good British Christian could admit. Mohandas Gandhi was the leader of the Congress Party, the Hindu-dominated nationalist organisation. Instead of violent reprisals against the British, he preached (and practised) non-violent resistance; for example, disobeying British laws, and refusing to pay taxes to the occupying power. Both he and his right-hand man, Jawaharlal Nehru, were imprisoned by the authorities and the strikes and demonstrations of his followers sometimes collapsed into ugly, brutal spectacles. Yet Gandhi's moral leadership gave the Indian struggle for independence a massive dignity. His ideal was one of an independent India in which Hindus and Muslims could live and work peacefully together and in which the lowest of the Hindu social groups, the 'Untouchables', would be raised above the grim, indecent misery in which the caste system forced them to live.

But Gandhi's ideal was not wholeheartedly shared by all members of Congress nor by the more extreme Hindu nationalists outside the party. The traditionalists in Congress were offended by Gandhi's love for the Untouchables, whom he called *Harijans*, 'Children of God'.

Jinnah and the Muslim League

The other problem was that Hindu extremists would not consider sharing power with Muslims in a future independent India. The Muslims too were wary of Gandhi's grand and humane plan. By the early 1930s some of them had become so worried by the threat of Hindu domination that they campaigned for the independence not of one but of two Indias. Their organisation, the Muslim League, had been set up

India between the Wars



Gandhi sets out on yet another challenge to British power—this time an attempt to break the government's monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt. In 1930 he led a march to the sea to collect free salt. "The honour of India", he declared, "has been symbolized by a fistful of salt in the hand of a man of non-violence. The fist which held the salt may be broken, but it will not yield up its salt."

in 1906 to counter the Hindus' growing political influence. Now it began to be attracted by the idea of a separate state for Muslims. In January 1933 a Muslim Indian called for the creation of a separate state based on the Muslim homelands of the Punjab, Kashmir, Sind, the North West Frontier and Baluchistan (which you can see on the map in 'India—"that most truly bright and precious jewel"' on page 203. Elements of those names blended easily into one word—*pakistan*—'land of the pure'. The first man to demand its creation was called Rahmat Ali: at the time he was living at No.3 Humberstone Road, Cambridge.

Eventually, in 1935, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act. Indians were to have full control of the provincial governments: the British and the Indians would share control of the central government. In the elections of 1937, the Congress Party

gained control of six of the eleven provinces; the Muslim League came out on top in two; and there was no clear majority for either in a further three. Arrogantly, Congress declared that the Muslims elected should take their orders from Congress, not from the Muslim League. And from that point on, the League's leader, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was convinced that the Muslim people would never be well treated in an India run by the Congress Party.

By the end of the 1930s the question of who would rule the sub-continent had still not been finally settled, even though it was more or less certain that the British would leave, sooner or later. Gandhi and Nehru found themselves in the strange position of nationalists who wanted to get rid of the only people who appeared able and willing to hold the country together—the alien British.

18 China between the Wars

The Warlord Years 1911–27

At the end of Chapter 2 we noted that a man called Sun Yat-sen led a successful nationalist revolution in China in 1911. The revolution ended the rule of emperors, but that was about the limit of its success. There was nothing left to hold together what had once been an empire, no single central authority which all the people would accept. The new Chinese republic entered a long period of lawlessness in which local warlords fought for power. The great majority of the population—the peasants—got nothing out of the 1911 revolution except war and more misery. Their numbers increased, their pressure on the land available for cultivation increased; they became poorer, not better off.

Such industry as China had was mostly in the hands of foreign business men—especially the British, Americans and Japanese. Indeed, the degree to which foreigners controlled China's commercial life led Sun Yat-sen to describe his country as a 'hypo-colony'—a land exploited like a colony without being brought under the formal rule of a foreign power. Among the workers in China's cities and towns there was a deep sense of humiliation which a well-organised nationalist party would be able to use to its own advantage.

Sun's Chinese National People's Party (the *Kuomintang*) had a bad time in the early years of the warlord period. In 1917 Sun re-established himself as President of China; but he and his party actually controlled only the city of Canton and part of Kwantung province in the south. To be able to drive north in an offensive against the warlords who controlled the rest of China, the party needed to be larger, better organised and to have a trained fighting force. In 1922 Sun accepted the Soviet Union's offer to help improve party organisation and military training. He was determined that China should become a truly democratic socialist state, not a communist dictatorship—but he and the Kuomintang could find no-one else to support them. A small Chinese Communist Party had been formed in 1921. In 1924 Sun persuaded the Kuomintang to accept Communists as members.

Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang

Sun died in 1925. Shortly afterwards, a young,

ambitious officer called Chiang Kai-shek was appointed commander of the Kuomintang army; and a thirty-two-year-old Communist organiser called Mao Tse-tung was put in charge of the Kuomintang's propaganda and political agents. It was a successful and short-lived partnership. The Kuomintang set out on its Northern Expedition late in 1926. The urban workers rose to greet their deliverers from humiliation at the hands of foreigners; the peasants would have welcomed almost anyone who encouraged them to turn on the hated landlords. By the end of March 1927 Chiang's army was in control of Shanghai and all China south of the Yangtse River.

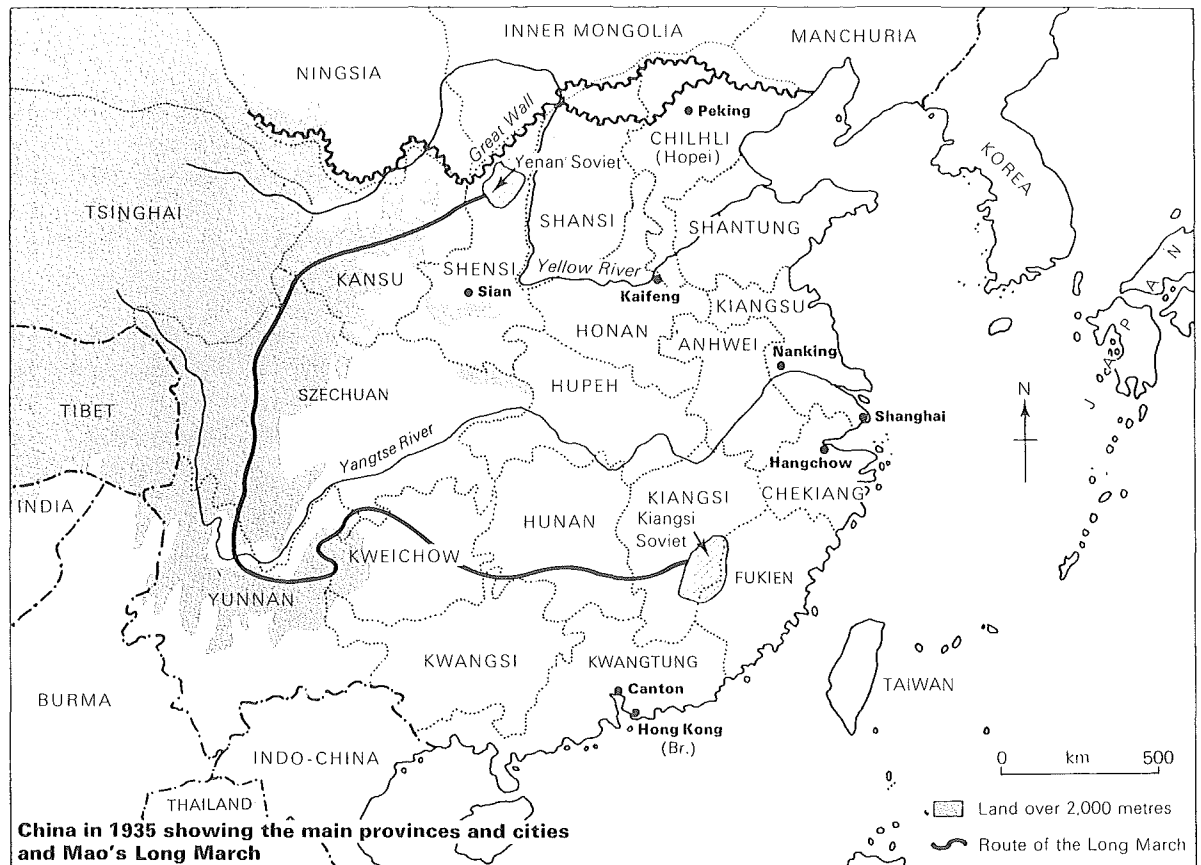
It was then that Chiang decided to deal with the Communists and their supporters in the trade unions, whom he saw as a future threat to the Kuomintang. In Shanghai and other occupied cities the Communists and their supporters were simply hunted down by Chiang's soldiers and massacred. After that savage extermination of most of their former allies the Kuomintang continued their march to the north and entered the capital city, Peking, in 1928. Chiang made Nanking, a city further south, his new capital and by 1930 could regard himself, not without good reason, as the new ruler of China.

Chinese communism seemed a lost cause. In Moscow, Joseph Stalin was not at all disappointed by the way things had turned out. He wanted a strong government in China, able to stand up to the world's great powers, and to Japan, which was now the biggest threat to the security of the USSR's eastern lands. The Kuomintang appeared likely to provide such a government: Stalin was not interested in supporting international communist revolution, in China or anywhere else, unless it directly benefited the USSR.

Mao Tse-tung and the Communists

Mao Tse-tung had escaped Chiang's bloodbath. He led a few other survivors to a remote, mountainous area in southern China. There Mao was to rebuild the Party, create an army and plan his revolution. He was a Marxist without an urban working class, a 'proletariat', to lead: his only possible allies were the peasants. But hadn't the great Lenin taught that

China between the Wars



imperialism makes *all* subject peoples 'proletarian'? If that were so, then all Chinese were proletarian and ready for revolution: Mao would make his revolution among the peasants.

In his southern stronghold Mao set up China's first Communist state—the Kiangsi Soviet. By late 1931 Mao's army had beaten off three attempts by Chiang's forces to destroy the small Communist state, using the tactics of guerrilla warfare.

But in September 1931, Japanese forces committed a major act of international aggression: they invaded Manchuria, China's most industrialised province. The League of Nations condemned the invasion but took no action; and despite evidence that the Japanese intended to dominate China, Chiang Kai-shek took no action either. Instead he preferred to continue his efforts to destroy the Communists' stronghold.

This time he was determined not to be drawn into another round of guerrilla warfare, but first to blockade and then to crush Mao's smaller forces. The Communists responded by setting out, in October 1934, on the

longest and most extraordinary military retreat in history. As you can see from the map above, their 'Long March' took them over some of the highest mountains in the world, on their journey from the south to a new base in the caves and hills of Shensi province in the north of the country. Their ordeal lasted over a year, and three-quarters of the Red Army died along the 9,000-kilometre route, many of them from starvation, disease and exposure.

But Mao survived and so did Chinese communism. The Yen-an Soviet was set up, which attracted to it many Chinese who believed that Mao, not Chiang, was capable of both building a better China and giving the lead in resistance to the Japanese invaders. By the middle of the 1930s there were three competitors for power in China—Chiang's Kuomintang; the Japanese, firmly based in the north-east; and the Communists in the new Yen-an Soviet. "Political power", said Mao, "grows out of the barrel of a gun." The three rivals armed themselves to the teeth for the struggles to come.

19 Latin America and the Caribbean between the Wars

To the south of the USA lay the under-developed half of a vast continent. The countries of Latin America (that is, those countries in which the people spoke Spanish or Portuguese—both of which were derived from the Latin language) already had long histories of independence from the Spanish and Portuguese empires, but they depended heavily on Western Europe and the USA for trade and for money. Mountain ranges (the Andes were the largest), swift rivers and impenetrable jungle were formidable obstacles to trade within Latin America at a time when air travel was still hardly used, and in a sub-continent where there were as yet few international railways. It meant that the 'natural' markets for Latin America's primary products were overseas. The poverty of the people meant that there was not enough spare money (capital) available to invest in the development of industry and communications. For that kind of development the Latin Americans had to attract capital from abroad.

In the nineteenth century, Britain had been the chief foreign investor, especially in Argentina where British money had tamed the *pampa* (grasslands), built the railways and frozen the beef ready for export. An American visitor to Argentina in 1908 declared that

"In Buenos Aires one looks in vain for an American bank ... American financial institutions are like the American merchant steamers, conspicuous by their absence. The Anglo-Saxons that you see briskly walking along the sidewalks are not Americans, but clean-shaven, red-cheeked, vigorous Britishers."

But after the Great War, which left Britain and other Western European countries much poorer and therefore with less money to invest, the USA quickly took their place and became the dominant business and financial power south of the Rio Grande.

The investment of American money—in agriculture, in mining, in oil-wells, in construction industries—was not always popular. Latin Americans had, and still have, a strong respect for American industrial power, and an equally powerful suspicion of American money. There was always the feeling that *Yanqui* dollars might bring with them *Yanqui* interference in politics; that 'dollar imperialism' would make the independent republics of Latin America little more than satellites of

their powerful neighbour to the north.

In the first thirty years of this century most of the Latin American republics remained relatively poor and under-developed. Only four countries—Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and Chile—showed any marked industrial development. And only in the southern lands—Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and southern Brazil—was there any rapid growth of urban populations.

Argentina and Chile

Argentina stood out as much the most 'modern' of the Latin American states, with a large urban working class based on her capital city and biggest port, Buenos Aires. From the late nineteenth century the people of Argentina had some of the apparatus of democratic government—political parties, votes for adult males and a secret ballot—but real political power still remained in the hands of the country's great land-owners. Similarly, the Chilean landowners kept their control over a country in which an urban working class developed as more miners were needed to extract first the nitrates and then the copper ore which Chile sold abroad.

Brazil

Brazil too had a form of democracy, but the real power in the land was the army, supported by the land-owners. For a short time, before the Great War, Brazil had been the world's biggest exporter of rubber. But competition from new plantations in the Far East, especially in Malaya, had led to the collapse of the Brazilian rubber industry; and in the 1920s the country's economy, and therefore the day-to-day lives of most of the people, depended almost entirely on the cultivation and export of coffee and cotton.

Uruguay

To the south of Brazil lay Uruguay, a much smaller country whose people were mostly of European origin, and whose democratic system of government was to become much more than a form of words. In the 1920s, President Batlle y Ordóñez's government introduced an impressive programme of reforms—old-age pen-

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sions, reductions in working hours, abolition both of capital punishment and of censorship of the press. It was an extraordinary attempt to create a 'welfare state' in a sub-continent whose ruling classes, in general put their own welfare first and last.

Venezuela

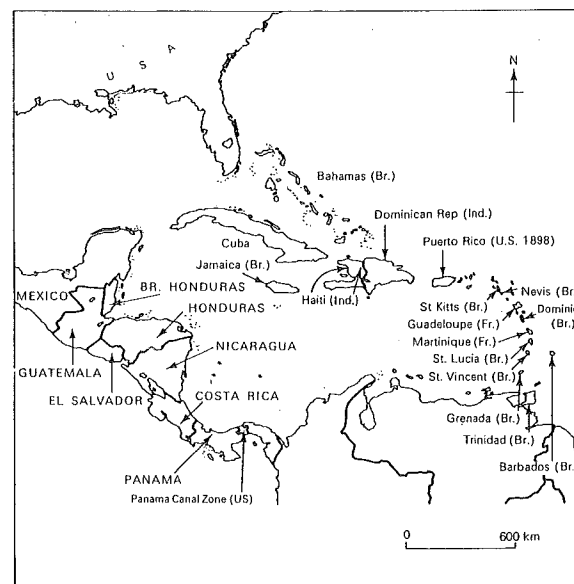
Perhaps most people would regard the early twentieth-century history of two countries to the north of Brazil, Venezuela and Mexico, as more typical of Latin America. Between 1908 and 1935 Venezuela was in the hands of a dictator, Juan Gómez, whose achievements included setting up a savage secret police force, fathering over a hundred children, and presiding over one of the first great 'oil-booms' of the century. By the end of the 1920s, Venezuela had become the second largest producer, and the biggest exporter, of oil in the world. As the oil flowed out, the money flowed back in—to Gómez and his government. The mass of the people had little share in the new national wealth: there were no noticeable improvements in health services, in education or in general living standards.

Mexico

Oil-wealth had already played its part in Porfirio Díaz's corrupt dictatorship in Mexico before Gómez began exploiting the Venezuelan wells. Díaz had brought a kind of political stability to lawless Mexico by imprisoning or murdering opponents of his government. He had encouraged foreigners (especially the British and North Americans) to invest in oilfields, in mines, in railroads; and in doing so he had started his country on the path of industrialisation. But the mass of the people benefited not at all: the wealth of the country was in the hands of the great landowners and foreign business men. Just two statistics should help you to grasp the situation: more than three-quarters of Mexico's people had to scratch their living from the land: yet ninety-five per cent of them owned no land of their own.

A revolution which began in 1910 soon brought an end to Díaz's dictatorship, which had lasted for over thirty years; but it didn't stop there. It turned into a ten-year civil war in which Emiliano Zapata led the landless peasants against the central government and its army, and in which a quarter of a million people died. The bloodbath didn't end with the victory of the

Latin America and the Caribbean after 1920



Latin America and the Caribbean between the Wars

'good guys' who wanted land returned to the peasants from whom it had been taken and with the vast estates broken up to provide more land for the poor. The great landowners and the army remained in power, but they realised that Mexico's rulers couldn't behave as they had done in the days of Diaz. In a sense they 'adopted' the Revolution they had fought against, and wrote into the new Mexican constitution the principle of *national* ownership of the land and of the minerals and oil beneath it.

The first two Presidents of the new Mexico, Alvaro Obregón (1920–24) and Plutarco Calles (1924–34), made haste very slowly to practise that new principle. The transfer of land to the peasants on a large scale had to wait until the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, who was in power from 1934 to 1940. Meanwhile, Mexico became a one-party state after the formation of the *Partido de la Revolucion Institucional* (PRI) in 1929. The Party ruled; the Party would accept as members people of very different political opinions, provided they didn't want to start a revolution against the 'adopted Revolution'.

The Caribbean

As you can see from the map on page 76, most of the islands of the Caribbean had not tasted the independence enjoyed by the Latin American republics. With the exceptions of Haiti, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean islands were firmly under the rule of foreigners.

The British West Indies, with their slave-manned sugar plantations, had once produced by far the greatest profits of any part of the Empire—but those days were long past. At the end of the 'sugar boom', over a hundred years before, the islands' economies had gone into a long, dismal decline, and it was only just before the Great War that they began to show signs of recovery. Instead of relying almost entirely, for employment as well as for an export trade, on the cultivation of sugar cane, a variety of tropical fruits was grown and shipped overseas. It was a shaky new prosperity, in which not all the people shared. Just as

Britain dominated the political life of the islands, so their economic well-being and living standards depended on the capacity of the British and American markets to absorb their produce. If they didn't, it meant unemployment and hunger for many.

As far as the USA was concerned, 'empire' was chiefly a matter of protecting trade. You saw in Chapter 2 (page 11) how the Americans took control of lands in the Pacific, Central America and the Caribbean early in the century. In the 1920s and early 1930s, when they saw that there was no likelihood of foreign threats to their security in the Caribbean or to their control of the Panama Canal, the Americans withdrew from all the lands they had occupied in that area—except for Puerto Rico and the Canal zone itself.

By now you will have read enough to make you wary of generalisations about the governments, societies and economies of Latin America and the Caribbean. By the end of the 1920s the independent republics had reached very different levels of economic development, and their peoples were living with (and sometimes suffering under) a variety of forms of government. It's true that democratic government through elected parliaments was not widely practised in the sub-continent, but then neither had it become well established in independent Eastern Europe.

Even so, one generalisation about Latin America has to be made: it was becoming more closely tied to the USA, as a market for manufactured goods, as a source of foods and raw materials for industry, and as an area of investment for North American money. The sugar plantations of Cuba, the oil-fields of Mexico and Venezuela, the tin mines of Bolivia, the copper mines of Chile, the coffee plantations of Brazil and Colombia—all came to depend more and more heavily on the USA as their chief consumer and money supplier. And North American money was invested in Latin America for the same purpose as it was invested in Europe and Africa and Asia—to make a profit. If the USA's demand for food and raw materials went down, if the supply of *Yanqui* dollars dried up, Latin America would be in trouble.

20 Imperial Attitudes: Colonies and Dominions between the Wars

You have seen in previous chapters something of the determination with which the European imperial powers held on to their overseas possessions after the Great War, even in the teeth of organised opposition. That determination was not just stiff-necked obstinacy, nor did it mean that the imperial powers thought only of their own narrow commercial and strategic interests. Gradually they were coming to think of their colonies as lands they were holding in trust for 'backward' peoples who were, as yet, not within sight of being able to fend for themselves.

Nowadays, in the last years of the twentieth century, such an attitude is often dismissed as hypocrisy, as a thin excuse for Western whites to continue lording it over Africans and Asians. But you have to consider whether the Western European powers in the 1920s were behaving in ways which were reasonable for those times. If Britain or France *had* given up their African colonies, would the new states have been strong enough, in military and economic terms, to remain independent for long? Wouldn't they have been simply left open to political and financial penetration by other powers—not excluding the USA and the USSR, those two great anti-imperialists who didn't always practise what they preached? In the 1920s, as you have seen, real trouble erupted only when a colonial power took the same paternalistic attitude towards peoples who considered themselves, rightly, far from 'backward' or 'uncivilised' and among whom nationalism had become a powerful force—for example, the peoples of Egypt and Syria, and of India.

Before we begin our survey of the colonies and dominions between the World Wars, we should note an important development in the British idea of empire. You know that the Dominions were already virtually self-governing; indeed, they signed the peace treaties of 1919 and 1920 as individual states and were founder-members of the League of Nations. In 1926 an Imperial Conference in London led to a declaration by Balfour in which he defined the status of the Dominions. They were

“equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another—though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations”.

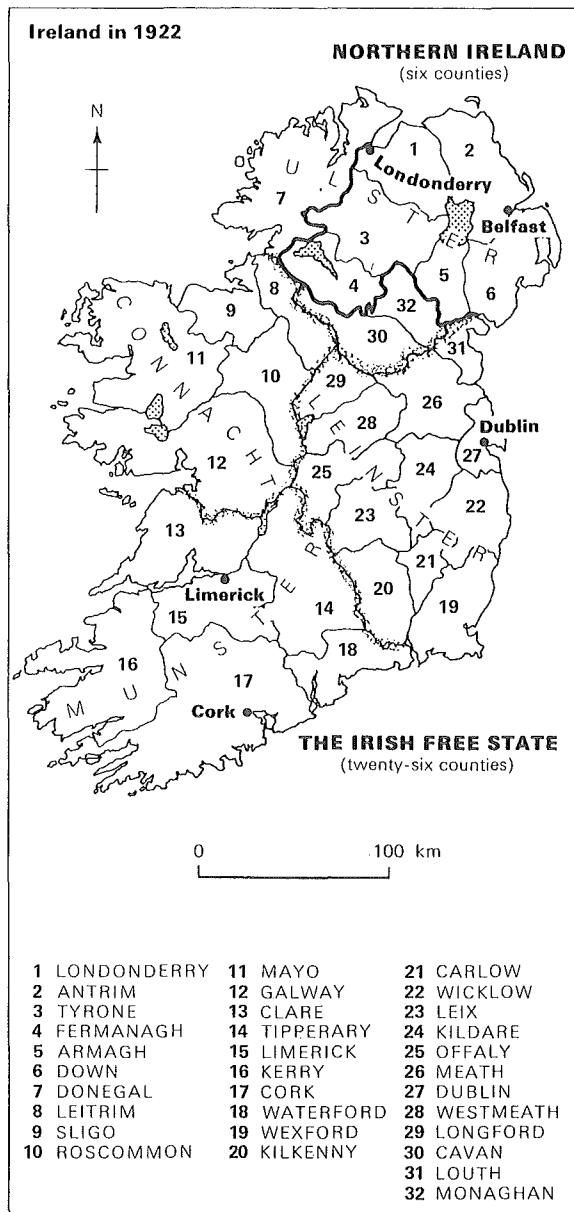
In 1931 the Statute of Westminster declared the Dominions to be completely independent of the British Parliament: no future British laws should apply to them. Until 1947 that Commonwealth was to remain a select club, only part of the vast British Empire. But it was a club into which other peoples of the empire would be able to move easily once they had become self-governing. Independence would not have to mean a complete break with the mother country—and that, in the end, would allow Britain to deal more generously, more flexibly than, for example, France, with nationalist movements among her colonial peoples.

Britain in Ireland

Ireland was a peculiar British problem. There had been rebellions against the British before, but this time the struggle was not just between Irish nationalists and the British. The Irish themselves didn't agree about the kind of independence they wanted. The Catholics wanted to break away completely from Britain, but the Protestants, who were in the majority in six of the northern counties of Ulster, wanted to remain within the United Kingdom.

In the 1918 British general election, out of a total of 105 Irish seats seventy-three were won by members of a movement called Sinn Féin ('Ourselves Alone'), who wanted to set up an independent Irish Republic. They refused to take their seats in the British House of Commons and in 1919 they met in Dublin and set up an independent Assembly of Ireland (the *Dáil Éireann*). No matter what the British said, Sinn Féin were determined that Ireland should be an independent Republic and declared Eamon de Valera its first President. The British refused to accept this act of rebellion: they were prepared only to grant 'Home Rule', which would have given the Irish control over all internal matters but not over foreign policy and defence. A clash was inevitable. The British Parliament passed the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, which set up separate parliaments in Belfast and Dublin. The Unionists reluctantly accepted the proposal for a six-county unit in the north (although they would have preferred the full nine counties of Ulster). The twenty-six counties in the south, however, turned the plan down flat. The British government declared the Sinn

Imperial Attitudes: Colonies and Dominions between the Wars



Féin government illegal and guerrilla warfare broke out. The British strengthened the Royal Irish Constabulary with ex-soldiers, who were known as the 'Black and Tans' from the colour of their uniform and were feared and hated for their brutality. Eventually the small, dirty War of Independence came to an end with a truce in July 1921, followed by a treaty in December, which was approved, after bitter debate in the Dáil, in January 1922.

In the Treaty it was agreed that the twenty-six

counties in the south would become a self-governing Dominion (to be known as the Irish Free State) but remain within the British Empire. Straight away the members of Sinn Féin who had negotiated the Treaty were labelled traitors by those members of the Dáil, led by de Valera, who would accept nothing less than complete independence from Britain. A civil war between the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty factions flared up, and lasted until 1923 when the Irish Free State army defeated de Valera's republican, anti-Treatyite, wing of Sinn Féin.

In 1925 a Boundary Commission confirmed the border that had been laid down by the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 between the twenty-six southern counties and the six northern counties. Irish nationalists and Unionists, Catholics and Protestants, had a new line on the map to make their divisions clearer. By 1926 de Valera was convinced that the way to fight for full independence was through the Dáil, and when Sinn Féin still refused to take their seats, he set up a new party, Fianna Fáil ('Soldiers of Destiny'). Many members of Sinn Féin then followed de Valera into the new party, and it gradually gained support, winning a majority in the Dáil in the 1932 elections. De Valera became Prime Minister and set about dismantling Ireland's remaining links with Britain. In 1937 he took advantage of the Statute of Westminster and pushed a new constitution through the Irish parliament. In effect this made the Irish Free State virtually an independent republic, but the new Republic of Ireland was not finally recognised by Britain until 1949.

South-East Asia

We noted in Chapter 18 that China in the 1920s and 1930s was emerging slowly but surely out of its condition as a 'hypo-colony' exploited by European and American traders. Whoever won the three-cornered struggle for power, China would, in future, be ruled by Asians. But to the south of China nearly all the signs pointed to the determination of the Western European powers to hold on to their possessions. Like the territories in Africa, the colonies in South-East Asia were becoming more valuable as suppliers of food and raw materials to Europe.

In 1921 the British government announced its plans to build a great naval base at Singapore, on the tip of the Malay peninsula, from where the Royal Navy would be able to defend British possessions and trade

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in the Indies and the Pacific. Malaya itself was prospering from the development of the rubber and tin industries: as early as 1920 this British possession was exporting half the world's supply of rubber. There was little open opposition to the presence of Europeans; and the native Malays appeared to be more concerned about the steady influx of Chinese and Indian immigrants, especially into Singapore, than about the desirability of getting rid of the British.

Before the war the French had treated the subject people of Indo-China roughly, damaging native culture and local forms of government as they imposed French ways on the territories. After the war, in an attempt to repair some of the harm done, they began to involve local rulers (mandarins) in government and to recognise native laws as well as to enforce French ones. But opposition to their rule mounted swiftly in the twenties. Among the dissidents was a young Marxist, Ho Chi Minh, who had visited Russia and China before organising the Revolutionary Youth Movement from Canton. In 1927, when the Kuomintang turned on the Chinese Communist Party, Ho moved first to Moscow and then back to South East Asia, a shadowy, subversive figure rousing opposition to the French from outside the borders of his native land.

Meanwhile, a nationalist People's Party had been founded in Indo-China, and in 1930 (the same year in which Ho Chi Minh set up the Indo-Chinese Communist Party) tensions erupted into a large-scale revolt of the native population against their European masters. The rebels were crushed and their few remaining leaders fled to China.

The disruptive force of nationalism affected the Dutch East Indies too. In 1917 the Dutch had allowed the native population a limited share in government through a parliament which had only the power to advise, not to decide policy. It was not enough. The Indonesian Communist Party, set up in 1919, attracted the support of the more determined nationalists, and in 1926 organised a revolt in Java and Sumatra. The revolt failed, the Party was declared illegal, and its role as the standard-bearer of opposition to Dutch rule was taken over by the Nationalist Party, set up in 1927 by Ahmed Sukarno. But the Dutch were determined to stamp out resistance: Sukarno and other leading nationalists were imprisoned, and opposition to colonial rule was forced underground.

The Comintern and World Revolution

Besides the various nationalist movements within the colonial empires, the most vocal critics of imperialism were, of course, the Marxists. They were out not only to destroy the capitalist exploitation of workers in industrialised Western Europe but also to deny the capitalist his cheap colonial labour and raw materials.

You will remember the organisation whose task it was to spread communist revolution—the Comintern. At its second congress in 1920, that body called for “the closest possible union of the West European communist proletariat with the revolutionary movement of the peasants in the East”; and in the September of that year the ‘First Congress of Peoples of the East’ was held at Baku, on the shore of the Caspian Sea. There, Gregory Zinoviev, President of the Comintern, declared that

“a new page in the history of humanity has opened; the sun of communism will shine not only on the proletarians of Europe but on the working peasantry of the whole world”.

He ended with a call to battle:

“The real revolution will blaze up only when the 800,000,000 people who live in Asia unite with us, when the African continent unites, when we see that hundreds of millions of people are in movement.”

Yet ten years later there was no sign of a world revolution ‘blazing up’. The African continent was still, by and large, docile; communism in China was hanging on by Mao Tse-tung's finger-nails; and as you have seen—in India, in Egypt, in Indo-China—the ‘ism’ which fired the imagination of subject peoples was nationalism, not Marxism. Zinoviev's call for an international communist crusade was merely words: he might just as well have whistled for a red moon. The Comintern was, in reality, a department of the Russian Foreign Ministry: revolutionary comrades in other lands would be helped only if and when it suited Stalin's Russia.

21 'Boom and Bust' – the USA in the Twenties

Closing the Door

To begin the story of the USA in the twenties we should remind ourselves that it was home for a bewildering variety of people—a mixture of all the world's races, nationalities and religions; a jumble of long-established American families and newly arrived immigrants (see Chapter 1, page 4). But now many Americans wanted to restrict immigration, to close their 'Open Door'. Already the Immigration Act of 1917 had established a literacy test for immigrants and had barred the door to newcomers from Asia. In the elections of 1920 the Republican Party called for an even stricter exclusion of 'undesirables':

"The immigration policy of the U.S. should be such as to insure that the number of foreigners in the country at any one time shall not exceed that which can be assimilated with reasonable rapidity, and to favour immigrants whose standards are similar to ours.

The selective tests that are at present applied should be improved by requiring a higher physical standard, a more complete exclusion of mental defectives and criminals, and a more effective inspection applied as near the source of immigration as possible, as well as at the port of entry. . . .

The existing policy of the United States for the practical exclusion of Asiatic immigrants is sound, and should be maintained."

The Republicans' candidate, Warren Harding, won the election and became President. In 1921, Senator Heflin of Alabama made it very clear why he wanted no more immigration:

"The steamship companies haul them over to America, and as soon as they step off the decks of their ships the problem of the steamship companies is settled, but our problem has but begun—bolshevism, red anarchy, black-handers, and kidnapers, challenging the authority and the integrity of our flag. . . . Thousands come here who never take the oath to support our Constitution and to become citizens of the United States. They pay allegiance to some other country while they live upon the substance of our own. They fill places that belong to the loyal wage-earning citizens of

America. . . . They are of no service whatever to our people. They constitute a menace and a danger to us every day. . . ."

In that year an Act was passed which limited immigration to 357,000 persons in one year. In 1924 another Act reduced even that number: by 1929 only 150,000 newcomers would be allowed to enter the USA each year. Both Acts discriminated against Catholic and Jewish immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, making it particularly difficult for them to enter.

You have already seen in Chapter 10 (pages 44–7) that the USA did not join the League of Nations. American policy in the 1920s was one of 'isolationism'—keeping out of foreign entanglements which did not directly affect the security and prosperity of the USA. The new President, Warren Harding (1921–23), had proclaimed that "America's present need is . . . not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality". But at home the sense of 'nationality' sometimes had an ugly, intolerant look.

Between 1920 and 1925 nearly five million Americans joined the Ku Klux Klan, a movement which had its own limited and prejudiced view of who belonged to the 'triumphant' American nation. In the eyes of the Klansmen, blacks, Jews, Catholics, socialists, and non-English-speaking immigrants did not belong. Their leader, Wesley Evans, used some grand mumbo-jumbo to explain why not:

"There are three great racial instincts, vital elements in both the historic and the present attempts to build an America which shall fulfil the aspirations and justify the heroism of the men who made the nation. . . . They are condensed into the Klan slogan: 'Native, white, Protestant supremacy!' The Klan is intolerant of the people who are trying to destroy our traditional Americanism . . . aliens who are constantly trying to change our civilisation into something that will suit themselves better."

On the face of it the Klan was absurd: its members dressed up in white sheets; its officers called themselves Klaliffs, Klokards, Kludds, Kligrapps and Kla-bees; Evans, a Texas dentist, called himself the 'Im-

perial Wizard'. But its activities were far from funny: beatings-up, tar-and-feathering, and lynching.

Closing the Bars

As well as the aggressive bullies of the KKK, America had many 'progressive' organisations which campaigned for a wide variety of causes. Before the war, many of those 'progressives', such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, had joined in a crusade against what appeared to be one of the great evils of the times – alcoholism. They believed that the only way to end drunkenness was to ban drink; and in 1917 a nation-wide campaign, led by the Anti-Saloon League, brought sufficient pressure to bear on Congress for it to pass a law which forbade the use of grain for either distilling or brewing.

That victory encouraged the supporters of the League to push towards their final goal – an amendment to the Constitution of the USA itself, which needed not only the approval of two-thirds of both Houses of Congress but also of three-fourths of all the States of the Union. In December 1917 the amendment was approved by Congress, and in January 1919 it was ratified by the States.

Amendment XVIII to the Constitution of the United States (1919)

"After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited."

That amendment to the Constitution was backed by the Volstead Act, which defined 'liquor' as one half of one per cent alcohol by volume. The amendment came into force in January 1920 and America went 'dry'. The age of Prohibition had arrived.

The first Prohibition Commissioner, John F. Kramer, had no doubts that he and the amendment together would stamp out the curse of drink:

"This law will be obeyed in cities, large and small, and in villages, and where it is not obeyed it will be enforced. . . . The law says that liquor to be used as a beverage must not be manufactured. We shall see that it is not manufactured. Nor sold, nor given away, nor

hauled in anything on the surface of the earth or under the earth or in the air."

To help Kramer in his work the government appointed 1,500 prohibition agents: by 1930 that number had almost doubled. An American writer, Frederick Lewis Allen, was anything but impressed by this body of law enforcers:

"Anybody who believed that men employable at thirty-five or forty or fifty dollars a week would surely have the expert technical knowledge and the diligence to supervise successfully the complicated chemical operations of industrial-alcohol plants or to outwit the craftiest devices of smugglers and bootleggers, and that they would surely have the force of character to resist corruption by men whose pockets were bulging with money, would be ready to believe also in Santa Claus, perpetual motion and pixies."

In 1928 the Republican candidate in the Presidential election, Herbert Hoover, declared that Prohibition was "a great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose". By that time there were more than 30,000 'speakeasies' (illegal saloons) in the city of New York – more than twice the number of bars open in the 'bad old days' before 1920. In the great American cities, gangsters like Dutch Schultz, Frank Costello and Al Capone had turned the evasion of Prohibition into big, violent business. It's difficult to know how much they 'earned' – they didn't tell the tax-man – but it's estimated that in his heyday Capone made between 60 million and 100 million dollars a year from sales of beer alone; and he could afford to run a private army of between 700 and 1,000 mobsters to control the Chicago booze trade and profitable 'rackets' in prostitution and 'protection'.

"Prohibition is a business," said Capone. "All I do is supply a public demand. I do it in the best and least harmful way I can." The 'least harmful' bit was funny: Capone was a murderous thug. But then the age of Prohibition was like that: humour could be deadly. 'Jackass Brandy' caused internal bleeding, while 'Soda Pop Moon' contained poisonous alcohol. Machine-guns were called 'typewriters', and Capone's men chose St Valentine's Day 1929 to type all over the rival O'Banion gang.

Thirteen years after going 'dry', America went 'wet' again. In the new hard times of the thirties many

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people came to think it more sensible for the government to tax legal liquor than to stand by, more or less helpless, while bootleggers made fortunes out of illegal booze. The 'great experiment' had failed. Perhaps its worst, and most long-lasting, effect had been to turn many otherwise respectable people into law-breakers. Once you break one law, what price the rest?

The Business of America

But the face of America which startled the world in the twenties was not that of the racist bully hiding behind the white sheet of the Klan, nor that of the booze-rich mobster making fools of President and Congress. It was, instead, the extraordinary face of an industrialised society which threatened to make all its citizens rich.

In 1927 a Frenchman, André Siegfried, suggested that America was becoming, once again, a 'new world'.

"European luxuries are often necessities in America. . . . One could feed a whole country in the Old World on what America wastes. American ideas of extravagance, comfort and frugality are entirely different from European. . . . In America the daily life of the majority is conceived on a scale that is reserved for the privileged classes anywhere else. . . ."

James T. Patterson, an American historian, said

"the years between 1917 and 1929 witnessed major industrial breakthroughs, such as the manufacture of continuous strip-sheets in steel and tin, and of machines to make glass tubing. . . . New machines revolutionising the construction industry included power shovels, belt and bucket conveyors, pneumatic tools, concrete mixers and dump trucks. The communications industries developed automatic switchboards, dial phones, and teletype machines. Innovations in chemicals and synthetics included rayon, bakelite, and cellophane. George Washington Carver, a pioneer in developing farm products for industrial use, found ways of turning peanuts into axle grease and shaving lotion, and sweet potatoes into shoe blacking, library paste, and synthetic tapioca. . . . consumer goods industries boomed as never before. Moderately priced products included radios, wristwatches, cigarette lighters, hand cameras, linoleum, vacuum cleaners, and washing machines."

The following statistics should help you to grasp the dimensions of that industrial 'boom':

	1920	1929
Kilometres of surfaced roads	620,000	1,000,000
Motor cars on roads	9,000,000	26,000,000
Telephones in homes and offices	13,000,000	20,000,000
Radios in homes	60,000	10,000,000

The most spectacular development was that of the mass-produced motor-car. By 1925 Henry Ford's factories were producing one new car every ten seconds. By the end of the twenties there was one American car to every 4.5 American people; or, to put it another way, more than two cars for every three American families. The car industry devoured 20 per cent of America's steel, 80 per cent of her rubber and 75 per cent of her glass. It employed millions of workers – either directly in the factories of Detroit, or indirectly in other major industries, in road-building, in the rash of new roadside restaurants, motels and service stations.

The rise of the motor-car and the lorry marked the beginning of the long-drawn-out decline of the railways. It hurried along the growth of American cities with their sprawling suburbs. Many people saw the car as a machine which freed them to discover the vastness of their country for themselves. Others saw it as a menace to American moral standards: for them the 'automobile' was a 'house of prostitution on wheels'. But whatever else it did, for good or ill, one thing was certain: the automobile "built oil into a major industry and ultimately created the fateful dependence of the economy on petroleum".

The Never-Never Land

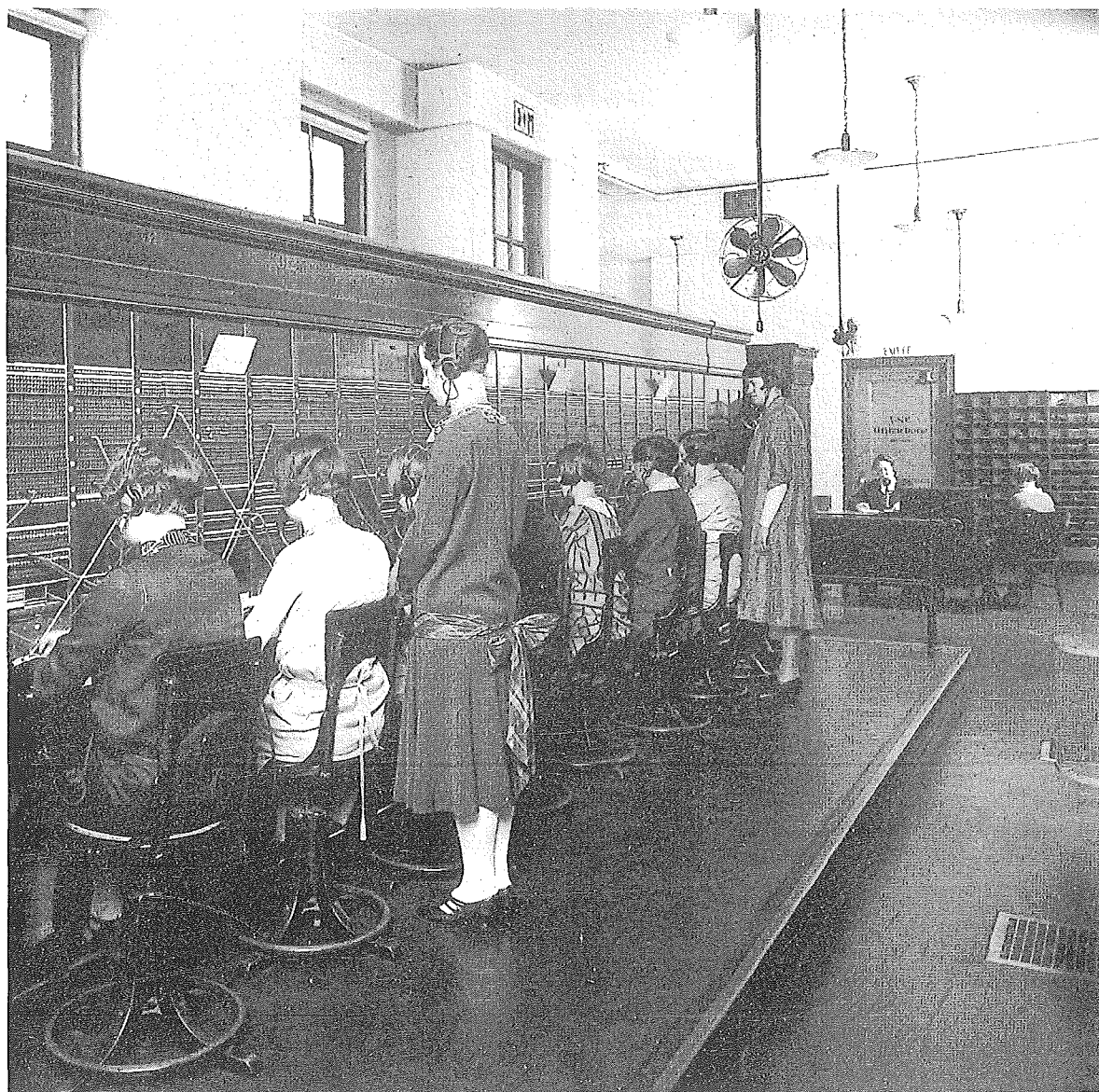
"The business of America is business," declared Calvin Coolidge, President from 1923 to 1929. Business was not just a matter of mass-producing motor-cars, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and other 'consumer durables': it meant the industrialisation of entertainment too. As early as 1915, the film *Birth of a Nation* had made 18 million dollars – big money in anybody's language. In 1929, the first year of the new 'talkies', cinema receipts totalled 720 million dollars; and in 1930 the average weekly attendance at American cinemas was a staggering 90 million! Radio too was big business – unlike in Britain, where broadcasting was a

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non-profit-making public service. From the beginning American radio was 'commercial', a mass medium for advertising the products of American industry.

"The man who builds a factory," said Coolidge, "builds a temple. The man who works there, worships there." A worshipper is not supposed to tell priests

how to run a temple – and neither were American workers supposed to interfere in the running of American industry. Membership of trade unions shrank from five millions in 1920 to less than three millions in 1932. The banding together of working men to press for higher wages and shorter working hours was somehow



Switchboard operators of the Chesapeake-Potomac Telephone Company in 1927. The photograph shows three features of life in America in the 1920s: the expansion of work opportunities for women, the new technology of the telephone, and the silk dresses and bobbed hair that were fashionable among 'flappers' in 1927.

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thought to be 'communistic' or 'un-American'.

Other observers, like Richard Müller-Freienfels, believed that American industrialism was making men less than human. "They [the workers] too are machines, which indefatigably exercise the same function – without any personal relation to the thing which they are making. Strictly speaking, the factory worker is not even a complete machine, but only a portion of a machine, with no more independence than a cog-wheel or driving-belt." But however their employers or foreign observers regarded them, the factory workers' jobs depended on advertisers persuading consumers to buy more goods by spending money they hadn't got. The age of instalment credit (hire purchase) dawned in the USA in the twenties. America became the first of the never-never lands.

In 1928 Herbert Hoover declared, "We in America are nearer to the financial triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of our land. The poorhouse is vanishing from among us." Hoover was to be the next President of the USA (1929–33), and he was convinced, as were many others, that American economic progress was unstoppable. Already many Americans had bought themselves a stake in the continued prosperity of American business by investing their savings in company stocks and shares. As American industry boomed, so the value of stocks and shares rose, and more people were tempted to invest in the hope of getting rich quick. The stock markets – the places where shares in companies were bought and sold – suddenly looked like short-cuts to happiness.

Just as automobiles, fridges and vacuum cleaners could be bought on the never-never, so company shares could be bought on the 'margin' – which meant that the buyer paid only a small percentage of the purchase price in cash, and the remainder was covered by loans. The loans were usually provided by 'brokers', men who bought and sold shares in the markets on behalf of their customers. In turn, the brokers borrowed the money from banks, from industrial companies and from abroad. The buyer 'speculated' – that is, he hoped the value of his shares would rise so that he could sell them at a profit before he had to repay his debts. He would then re-invest his money and profit in more shares, bought 'on the margin'.

Throughout the twenties trading in the stock markets grew heavier. Anyone with spare capital could join in. There was no shortage of money to borrow: between 1926 and 1929 brokers' loans jumped from 3.5

billion dollars to 8.5 billion dollars. Share prices continued to rise.

The End of the Dream

By 1927 there were already signs that the American economy was slowing down. Fewer new houses were being built, and sales of motor-cars declined. Industrial workers' wages were not rising fast enough for them to buy (even on the never-never) all the consumer durables the factories could produce. American farmers had over-expanded their production of food: food prices went down, farmers' earnings decreased – and so, inevitably, did their purchases of goods.

The stock markets took no notice. Speculators continued to indulge in what the humorist Will Rogers later called a 'financial drunk'. Though the car industry recovered for a while in 1928, by the summer of 1929 it and the construction industry were again feeling the pinch. Early in October doubts finally began to affect the stock markets. More and more investors tried to sell their shares while prices were still high. The wave of selling gathered pace until on 'Black Tuesday', 29 October 1929, more than sixteen million shares were sold on the New York Stock Exchange in Wall Street. The stock markets crashed and share prices continued to fall as panic set in. Investors sold shares at a loss; banks and foreign lenders demanded their money back from the brokers; brokers called for the money they had loaned to their clients, and their clients sold more shares – which sent prices down even further.

The 'financial drunk' was over. Many speculators were ruined, but most Americans were not at first directly affected by the 'Wall Street Crash': only about one American in a hundred had been actively 'playing the market'. But the collapse of the stock markets had serious effects on an already sagging economy. Many banks went bust – they couldn't recover all the money they had lent; others sharply reduced their lending to industry and the money they provided for instalment credit.

After the 'boom' years of the twenties, in which Americans had thought they were in sight of the final triumph of capitalism over poverty and want, they staggered into the blackness of economic depression. It was almost unbelievable. As Will Rogers put it, "We are the first nation in the history of the world to go to the poorhouse in an automobile."

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Into the Dark

The history of the world economy in this century is a tale of ups and downs, of good times and bad. Looking back, we can see a rough pattern of periods of growth, when trade increased, more goods were produced and people were better off, and between those 'booms' we can see periods of decline which we call 'recessions'. But that pattern was interrupted in the 1930s by a particularly severe period of decline, when the world economy sagged into a condition much worse than a recession; when trade, production of goods, levels of employment and standards of living sank to alarmingly low levels.

In 1929 the American economy started to go bust. By 1932 the economies of most other countries were to go bust too: the world was to plunge into what has since been called the 'Great Depression' or the 'World Slump'. It was a dark period in which many ordinary people throughout the world realised for the first time just how much their own lives and jobs had come to depend on economic relationships between countries and on the economic policies of governments. They became newly aware of 'economics' as something which affected *them*; and economic terms began to come into everyday language.

Those people were bewildered and many of them were hurt. Some of them thought they knew what or who lay behind it, and they lashed out – with appalling consequences, for themselves as well as for their victims. Others suffered the Depression more or less quietly, seeing it as yet another disaster which ordinary human beings could do nothing to avert. They hoped and waited for better times to come. Yet they, like most other people, felt that the effects of the Great Depression would be of the same magnitude as the effects of the Great War: that when it was over the world would never be quite the same again.

The World Economy after 1918

You will remember from Chapter 1 (page 4) that before the Great War the world's trade had been paid for in gold, or in currencies whose value was fixed in gold. The 'gold standard' made for stability and for confidence among traders and governments alike,

whether they were buying or selling goods, asking for loans or making them. The Great War smashed that stability. Governments of countries fighting for their lives borrowed and taxed money from their own people, borrowed from each other, and printed vast quantities of paper money to cover their debts. For the first time in the twentieth century, though certainly not for the last, people became aware of a new, impersonal and frightening enemy – inflation. You have already seen it at work in Russia and in Germany (Chapters 7 and 11). It hit other countries too, less spectacularly but enough to make nonsense of fixed relationships between dollars, pounds, francs, marks and yen; and more than enough to make the gold standard unworkable.

After the war, governments and peoples yearned for a return to stability, to the security of knowing what money was worth. A return to fixed relationships between currencies, based on the gold standard, seemed to most people who had any influence on governments' policies the only way to achieve that stability. Eventually, in 1925, Britain went back on the gold standard (at the rate of £1 = \$4.86); and in 1926 France fixed the value of her currency at the rate of 120 francs = £1. Other European nations followed quickly, and the 'return to gold' was soon complete among the world's most powerful trading nations – except for Japan, which didn't return to gold until January 1930.

The world economy now looked more stable. In reality, it was anything but secure, for too much had changed since 1914 to be put right by a 'return to gold'. One of the most important changes was that Britain was no longer the supreme trading and money-lending power she had once been: the USA had emerged from the war as the world's greatest money-power.

If you glance back at Chapter 8 (page 38), you will remember the pattern of international debts which the Great War had created. To pay their debts to each other and to the USA (and, in the case of Germany, to pay reparations), the nations of Europe needed to make more money from trade; they also needed to borrow large sums – some as straight loans to their governments and some as capital for investment in the industries they were trying to revive. Britain continued to lend money to all parts of the world, and especially to

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Latin America, Australia and Europe; but in the five years from 1924 to the end of 1928 the USA lent nearly twice as much as Britain—a massive \$5,758,000,000. Europe took the largest proportion of American loans—which was to Europe's benefit unless, for some reason, Americans should ever want their money back quickly.

In the mid and late 1920s there was a boom in production in most of the industrialised countries of the West—in France, Italy, Germany, Canada and, of course, in the USA. The only major industrial nation which didn't enjoy the boom was Britain, a country whose older industries no longer had the 'sales-pull' they once had. World markets could take only so many British railway engines and ships, so much coal and cheap cloth. That was a severe handicap because Britain depended more than any other country on the export of manufactured goods. But despite the general boom in other nations, international trade in the late 1920s did not reach pre-war levels; and among the obstacles to growth were new 'tariff barriers' (taxes or duties on imports) which countries erected to protect their own industries against foreign competition.

As you might have expected, the new states of Central and Eastern Europe followed a policy of 'economic nationalism'. Their aim was 'autarky'—self-sufficiency in the production of food, basic manufactures and goods necessary for their defence should war break out again. To depend on each other for the import of vital raw materials and manufactures would, they felt, be rather like inviting a strangler to put both hands round your neck. You saw in Chapter 9 (page 42) how the Paris Peace Conference failed to investigate the possibility of setting up a free trade area among those new states. The price of failure was high. As early as 1919 the most highly industrialised of the new states, Czechoslovakia, slapped customs duties on imported goods. Hungary did the same in 1924. Romania had the highest duties on textile imports in all Europe by 1926, and Bulgaria the highest duties on manufactured goods.

Developing the industries of those new states, behind high tariff barriers, was a slow and expensive process—after all, the machinery had to be imported. Industrialisation didn't keep pace with the growth of population, and therefore it didn't draw enough people away to the towns from an already over-populated countryside. And meanwhile, the American Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 (see Chapter 21, page 81) suddenly closed a traditional outlet for surplus

population—that of emigration to the New World. By the end of the twenties, only Czechoslovakia and Austria among the new states did not depend primarily on agriculture to earn their living. Nearly all of them were heavily in debt (to the USA and to Western European countries) at high rates of interest, and they could continue to pay off their loans and make some kind of economic progress only as long as they could earn money from their exports.

But it was not only the small states of Central and Eastern Europe which sheltered their economies behind tariff barriers. Every great trading nation in the world, except Britain, built a similar kind of protection for itself. The most formidable obstacle of all to the free flow of international trade was the Fordney-McCumber Act of 1922 which raised American customs duties on imported goods so that imports would normally be more expensive than goods produced in the USA itself. As an expression of American 'isolationism' that Act was the economic equivalent of refusing to join the League of Nations, or of drastically cutting the annual quota of immigrants. As an act of economic nationalism it was short-sighted and selfish. The USA was not Bulgaria: its industries had a huge, increasingly wealthy domestic market in which to grow; and if the USA wouldn't admit imports from foreigners, how could foreigners earn dollars to repay their American loans?

First Signs of Danger

From 1925 another very disturbing trend appeared in international trade: between the end of that year and the autumn of 1929 the prices of agricultural produce fell by about thirty per cent. The reason was simple: the world's farms and plantations were producing too much. During the Great War, European agriculture had suffered a setback, and other countries had expanded their production to supply a new demand. Now, by the mid-twenties, European agriculture had returned to pre-war levels, and as foodstuffs and raw materials flooded on to world markets in ever-increasing quantities, so producers were forced to sell at lower and lower prices, if they wanted to sell at all. The farm and plantation workers of the world (including those in industrialised countries) began to suffer a long-term decline in their standards of living.

Although, at first, industrialised communities and nations benefited from cheaper food and raw materials,

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the fall in farm prices soon began to have unpleasant effects on them too. As the earning power of the producers of food and raw materials went down, so did their buying power, and so did their purchases of manufactured goods.

Crises and Collapse

From June 1928 the USA began to lend a lot less money abroad. The main reason was that extraordinary 'financial drunk' you read about in Chapter 21 (page 85). Investment in the American stock markets became more profitable, and it was thought to be safer than lending money to foreign borrowers—especially to those borrowers who were now being hit by falling prices on world markets.

Europe was badly affected by the American stock market boom. As less money found its way across the Atlantic, so European business started to decline. By the summer of 1929 over one million German workers were without jobs and the number of unemployed people in Britain was nearing a million. And then, in the autumn of 1929, the Wall Street Crash shook to its foundations an American economy already unsettled by a decline in demand for manufactured goods and by falling farm prices.

As American industry slowed down its jazzy pace, as more American producers (of manufactured goods as well as of food and raw materials) went further into debt to their banks, so Europeans, Canadians and Latin Americans were faced by the awful spectacle of the world's most advanced industrial country suddenly unable to cure its own economic ills. If the USA could not buy its own industry and agriculture out of trouble, it would no longer make enough money available in loans for other countries to tackle their problems.

In 1929 US lending to other countries more than halved as the Wall Street Crash of that year helped to dry up the flow of money on which other countries had come to depend.

In June 1930 President Hoover signed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Bill, which raised American customs duties still further. It was a desperate policy: Congress and President persuaded themselves that if even more foreign goods were kept out of the States, maybe the business of America would pick up again. But its only effect was to goad other countries into raising their tariffs—Australia, Cuba, France, India, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain and Switzerland; a roll-call of

countries frightened and angered into taking measures which could only harm international trade even more. The USA, the world's leading industrial and financial power, was refusing to lead. The message was already becoming clear: every nation should be prepared to look after itself.

As the prices of goods (especially those of food and raw materials) continued to fall in 1930 and the early months of 1931, business profits and share prices sank with them. In the USA one effect of a fall in prices and production was the failure of many banks: much of the money they had lent was no longer there to be paid back by ruined farmers and business men. Pressure now mounted against banks everywhere, and especially against those that had lent too much money or had lent it unwisely to bad business risks—and there were a large number of such banks in Europe. If one large bank was seen to be unable to pay back what it owed to its creditors, and went bust, a panic would start: everyone would want their money back, knowing that not everyone would get it. When banks started to close, the supply of money available for lending to business men and traders would simply dry up.

The crisis of European banking started in Austria. As a result of the break-up of the Empire in the Peace Settlement, Austrian banks no longer made profits from investment in industry in places such as the Sudetenland and Trieste. To lend money to what remained of Austrian industry they had to borrow heavily from Britain and the USA. In May 1931 the Credit-Anstalt, the largest of the Austrian banks, announced that it had suffered grave losses and was in danger of being unable to repay money to its creditors. Immediately British and American creditors moved in to claim what they could from the Austrian wreck—and they also began to pull their money out of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland and Germany. Two months later, the large German bank, the Darmstädter und Nationalbank, went bust.

The panic spread as people feared for the value of their money. Was it, for example, safe for foreigners to hold their money in pounds? What was a pound?—was it really worth \$4.86? The general decline in world trade had gravely damaged British exports, and in 1931 Britain was heavily in debt—the country paid more for its imports than it earned from its exports. The pound suddenly looked unstable: its gold-standard price was too high and would have to come down. Foreigners exchanged pounds for other currencies

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which looked as if they would hold their value. As the reserves of gold and foreign currencies drained out of the country, the British government decided to take the pound off the gold standard in September 1931. With international trade shrinking, Britain hoped to get an advantage over her competitors by letting the value of the pound sink, which would make her goods cheaper and more attractive in world markets. By December the pound, no longer fixed in relation to gold, was worth less than \$3.50.

Twenty-five other countries hoped to increase their trade by following Britain off the gold standard and devaluing their currencies. They included countries in the British Empire, in Scandinavia, in Eastern Europe, and Britain's long-standing trading partners, Argentina and Portugal. The USA left the gold standard later, in 1933. Germany, South Africa and the countries in the so-called 'gold bloc' (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy) did not. In Germany devaluation was simply not on: it would have reduced the value of the mark, and that was a prospect which provoked nightmares of a repeat of the inflation of 1923 (see Chapter 11, page 49). To protect the value of the mark, and to avoid inflation at any cost, the German government, under Chancellor Brüning, took desperate measures, including cutting wages and restricting imports. One result was almost predictable: as Germany raised her tariff barriers, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Belgium and Switzerland all raised theirs in late 1931 and 1932. And in 1932 the long tradition of British free trade came to an end at the Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa. In its place was a new British trade policy—that of Imperial Preference: tariffs were imposed on foreign goods entering Britain, while goods from the Empire continued to come in free of customs duties.

The Failure to Find an International Solution

In the 1920s people had hoped that international trade would once again be stimulated by stable cur-

rencies with fixed values and that the richer nations would lend to others the money they needed to manufacture or to grow products more efficiently and in increasing quantities. Before the Great War such a system had been supported by Britain—a nation whose wealth depended on a high level of international trade. But after the war, Britain was no longer wealthy enough to bail out other countries when their economies began to go wrong; and the USA (the new financial giant) was unwilling to come to the rescue of other nations once her own economy had started to sag. Instead of working to improve the worsening international situation, both Britain and the USA retreated—Britain into her Empire, and America behind her tariff wall.

In the second half of the twentieth century we have become used to international organisations, like the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund), helping countries out of their financial and economic difficulties. It is generally agreed that it is in nobody's interests for any country to go bust, for its workers to line up in dole queues and for its money to lose value. When the Great Depression got under way there was only one international financial organisation in existence—the Bank for International Settlements, set up in 1930 to provide machinery for the payment of German reparations which had been renegotiated for a second time in the Young Plan of 1929. Britain proposed that the Bank's powers should be extended to make it a kind of central 'World Bank' which would lend money to countries in temporary difficulties. But the plan failed, chiefly because the USA and France saw no good reason why their gold should be used to help anyone else out of a mess. At the World Economic Conference in the summer of 1933 the British suggested the creation of an international fund with enough money to lend to countries in difficulties. Again the Americans and the French blocked the idea.

Largely because of that American attitude, the World Economic Conference ended in failure. There would be no truly international attempt to drag the world economy out of the slump. The nations would have to go it alone.

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The Great Depression was like a long, slow and immensely powerful earthquake which shook the foundations and the fabrics of whole societies, and whose most critical effects were on the world's industrialised nations.

Before the Depression, many of the people in the primary-producing countries had low standards of living; and that was particularly true in those countries which had only recently begun to produce food and raw materials for world markets. Their expectations of life had not been raised so high that they would feel shattering disappointment when either their incomes fell or they lost their jobs. In contrast, the people of the industrialised nations had come to expect relatively high standards of life, some security of employment or profession, sufficient food and clothing, and the prospect of improvement. In the USA, in the heady optimism of the 1920s, many people had even come to believe that capitalism was about to put an end to want itself.

In short, the industrialised societies were the richer societies, and their people believed they had 'riches' to lose – whether it was a factory or a chain of shops and a mansion in the country, or a job in the civil service and a mortgaged 'semi' in the suburbs, or a weekly wage packet and two rented rooms in a decaying tenement near the city centre. If the Depression undermined and then ruined their businesses, if it threw them out of work, their ways of life would lie in tatters.

In this chapter we shall look at the effects of the Depression on five of the world's industrialised countries – Germany, Britain, France, the USA and Japan – and we shall see how people reacted to their new insecurity in very different and sometimes violent ways. Three of those countries – Britain, France and the USA – would, in the end, emerge with their traditional forms of government intact: the slump would put to the test, but not break, people's attachment to democratic institutions. But both Japan and Germany would go through political upheavals brought about by despair and a sense of outraged nationalism.

Germany – Down the Road to the Third Reich

After the bewildering inflation and the French occupation of 1923, the German economy had re-

covered in the second half of the twenties; and the boom had attracted investment from the USA which, in turn, stimulated further industrial development. Workers' average earnings rose by nearly one-third between 1925 and 1929, and industrial production overtook pre-war levels. The wild political extremism of the immediate post-war years appeared to have died down; and when the first President of the Republic, the Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert, died in 1925, the people elected as his successor none other than Field-Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, the most revered relic of the old Imperial Army. Parliamentary democracy appeared to be working. Although the extremist parties of both the Right and the Left continued to oppose the system, the more moderate parties were willing to join together in coalition governments. And Gustav Stresemann (see page 50) worked to restore some of Germany's influence and prestige in European affairs.

But by the time Stresemann died in October 1929, the Depression was already rocking the economy: the number of registered unemployed workers was well over the million mark. As American bankers and investors called for their money back (see Chapter 22, page 88), as world demand for manufactures and foodstuffs declined, as prices slumped, as banks went bust, so the lines of the unemployed in Germany grew longer, until by September 1932 over five million people were out of work.

They were not all factory employees: the Depression took down with it the middle class – bank clerks, civil servants, office personnel – as well as the working class. And it overwhelmed many of the self-employed – shopkeepers, small farmers, independent professional men. It directly affected one out of every two German families; it brought back the fearful memories of 1923; and it dredged back to the surface of German politics those extremists who had been submerged in the brief years of prosperity. Among them was the man who would become the most terrifying political figure of our century – Adolf Hitler. You will remember him from the end of Chapter 11 (page 50) – a nationalist revolutionary who had been jailed for his messy failure in Munich in 1923. So far we have needed to know nothing of him as a man. It is now time to learn something about his life and character.

Born in 1889 and brought up in the German-speak-

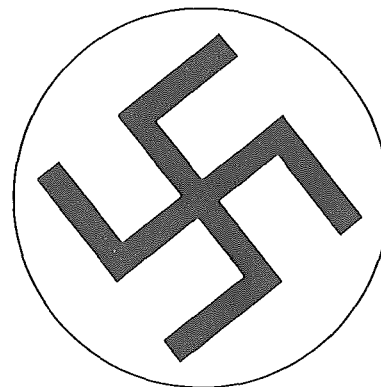
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ing part of what was then the Austrian Empire, he later drifted dreamily from place to place—a failed artist, a layabout, a nobody—until in 1914 war broke out while he was in Germany and he volunteered for service in a German infantry regiment. During the next four years it appears that, for the first time in his life, the young Hitler found a purpose—in the discipline of war. But when the Great War ended his world threatened to collapse around him. He was convinced that the army had been betrayed, that Germany's will to fight on had been sapped by the enemies and aliens within—by Bolshevik revolutionaries and, above all, by the Jews. The dreamer who became a soldier now became a fanatic who would carry on the struggle against his own and his Fatherland's enemies.

The failed artist turned to politics. He joined and soon became leader of a new, small political party based in Munich—the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP), the National Socialist German Workers' Party—the Nazis. 'National Socialism' itself was a hotch-potch of political ideas. It was against large-scale capitalism but utterly opposed to international communism; it was aggressively nationalist and violently anti-Semitic (hostile towards Jews).

In that post-war period of rising tension and violence, which you read about at the beginning of Chapter 10, the Nazis formed their own private army—the brownshirted *Sturmabteilung* (SA)—for the political struggle that was being waged in the streets; and they carried their new flag—blood red with a black swastika (a hooked cross) on a white circle. On 9 November 1923 they carried it into the centre of Munich to begin their ill-fated revolt against the government of the Republic.

While serving a short prison sentence for his part in the Munich *putsch* (armed uprising), Hitler wrote the first volume of *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), the story of his life and the history of his ideas. In it he described what he was by saying what he was against: he was against the new Republic, against democracy, against Marxism, against liberals and pacifists, against Christian moral values and the rule of law, and against the Jews. Much of it was half-baked; and even its racist claptrap about the 'Aryan master-race' and an 'international Jewish-Marxist conspiracy', was second-hand, lifted from other, earlier writers. But among the jumble of hysterical ideas Hitler showed an alarming confidence in his ability to organise a disciplined political movement, and a sure sense of how to appeal to the lowest instincts of frightened masses.



The Swastika: a sign whose history can be traced back to the religious art of a number of ancient civilisations but which Hitler used as a symbol of the supremacy of the Aryan 'master-race' over all other peoples.

Hitler was released from Landsberg Castle in December 1924, just when Germany was beginning her economic recovery and everyday life was returning to normal. In a land which offered much less scope to political extremists, Hitler's aim could no longer be immediate, violent revolution carried out by a few fanatics. Instead he set to work to rebuild his shattered Nazi Party into a tightly knit movement with branches throughout the country. The SA was reorganised and expanded; in 1926 the black-shirted *Schutzstaffel* (SS) appeared, as did the Hitler Youth, the Nazi German Student League, the *Nazi Teachers' League*, the *Nazi Women's League*, and the *Nazi Physicians' League*.

By 1928 Hitler was in control of a party with 100,000 members. But it was not a political party as we understand that term; its aims and policies were not decided democratically by its members. It was a political 'movement', whose members were united by fanatical loyalty and unconditional obedience to their *Führer* (leader). The only challenge to Hitler's absolute control of the movement had come from the Strasser brothers, Gregor and Otto, who had their own power base in the industrialised regions of northern Germany and who took the term 'national socialism' seriously and favoured the public ownership of heavy industry and big estates. Hitler himself had no interest in such 'red' policies: his aims were to seize power and then to destroy. Perhaps Hitler himself didn't know precisely what or whom he would destroy, if ever he got the chance. Obviously, Jews and communists would be dealt

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with, but in 1928 they looked safely out of his reach.

Results of the May 1928 Reichstag election (main parties only)

Party	Votes	Seats in the Reichstag
Social Democrats	9,153,000	153
Centre and BVP*	4,658,000	78
Nationalists (DNVP)	4,382,000	73
Communists	3,265,000	54
DVP†	2,680,000	45
Nazis	810,000	12

* BVP – Bavarian People’s Party

† DVP – German People’s Party

Hitler had already tried his hand at violent revolution, and failed. In 1928, as you can see above, his party held a mere twelve seats in the German parliament (Reichstag). Despite all the fancy-dress ceremonials and demonstrations of his followers, he was still nowhere in sight of coming to power by legal means.

You have already seen something of the effects of the Depression on Germany. In March 1930 the ‘Grand Coalition’ split apart under the mounting strain of rising unemployment: the Social Democrats would not accept the cuts in unemployment benefits which their partners in government proposed. But that disagreement didn’t only bring about the end of an effective coalition government: it brought into the open all the festering dislike which many influential Germans felt for parliamentary democracy itself. You will remember from the beginning of Chapter 11 that to Germans this form of government was not only new, it was associated in many people’s minds with defeat in war and humiliation in peace. In the minds of President Hindenburg and his advisers, and in the opinion of Kurt von Schleicher and other army generals, it was now obvious that parliamentary democracy was incapable of dealing with a national emergency.

The German President had the authority to appoint and dismiss the Chancellor and government ministers without the approval of the Reichstag; he also had the power to dissolve the Reichstag and call for new elections. In addition, Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution gave him the right in a national emergency to sign decrees submitted by the Cabinet and give them the force of law, without having to ask for the Reichstag’s agreement. Armed with those formidable powers, and with Schleicher’s approval, Hindenburg chose as the

next Chancellor Heinrich Brüning (one of the leaders of the Centre Party) and made it clear that if a majority of the Reichstag opposed Brüning’s policies, not only would he push them through by presidential decree, but he would also dissolve the parliament and call new elections. The Social Democrats refused to give in to the President’s threat, and blocked the new government’s policies in the Reichstag. Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag, and Germany prepared for a general election.

The results of the September 1930 election were alarming. They showed how badly the slump had affected people’s morale, how in their anger and frustration many people had come to think that only desperate measures, and men, could pull them out of a desperate situation. Large numbers of working-class men without jobs gave their support to the Communist Party (KPD), which polled over four-and-a-half million votes (compared with three-and-a-quarter million in 1928) and increased its number of seats in the Reichstag from fifty-four to seventy-seven. In contrast, Stresemann’s old party, the German People’s Party (DVP), lost over a million votes and fifteen seats in parliament; while the Social Democrats (SPD) lost over half a million supporters and ten of their Reichstag seats. But the really staggering feature of the election was the sudden rush of support to the Nazis.

The Twenty-Five Points of the Nazi Party Programme had first been announced in 1920. Now, in 1930, they appeared to offer something for nearly everyone – for the unemployed workers, the worried farmers, the anxious middle classes, the bored and dispirited young.

- “Point 11. We demand the abolition of all income unearned by work.
- Point 14. We demand profit-sharing in large industrial enterprises.
- Point 15 We demand the generous development of old age insurance.
- Point 16. We demand the creation and support of a healthy middle class . . .
- Point 17. . . . We demand the abolition of ground rent, and the prohibition of all speculation in land.”

The Nazis even had a ready-made scapegoat for Germany’s ills – the Jews. And Hitler put it all across with incomparable flair; for he was the supreme public speaker, the orator who went straight to the gut feelings

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of an audience. The result in September 1930 was over 6½ million votes—more than seven times the number the Party had received in 1928. With 107 Reichstag seats, the Nazis had become the second biggest party in a parliament they intended to destroy.

For the first time Hitler had the mass support he needed, and it seems that it came chiefly from three sources. First, some of his backing came from the panic-stricken middle classes—people who not only feared the loss of their businesses or jobs but also believed that the Communists and Social Democrats intended to ruin them by bringing them down to the level of the proletarian masses. Second, the Nazis attracted the votes of small landowners, whose property and way of life were threatened by the sudden fall in prices for agricultural produce, and who were attracted by Nazi election promises of higher tariffs on imports of foreign foods and lower interest rates on loans. And third, there were many new young voters—university students as well as unemployed working-class youths—who saw no future for themselves in a weak democracy, despised by its army, its business men, and even by the President himself.

Chancellor Brüning stayed in power as head of a government supported in the Reichstag by the Social Democrats, who were now thoroughly alarmed at the wave of anti-democratic feeling that was sweeping the country. Brüning was determined to use the slump to put an end to reparations, by proving that a depressed Germany could no longer afford to pay them. His policy was, therefore, one of *deflation*—of making life in Germany even harsher than before. His government would not spend money on public works to create jobs for the unemployed, who would then have spent more on the products of German industry. Instead, by 'emergency decrees', Brüning reduced wages, cut unemployment benefits and increased taxes.

Eventually the Allies did agree, at a conference in July 1932, to bring an end to reparations; but that relief came too late. By that time many German banks had already gone bust in the financial crisis of 1931 (see Chapter 22, page 88); industrial production had sunk to little more than half its level of 1928–29; five million workers were out of a job—and so was Heinrich Brüning.

Meanwhile, Hitler had taken another opportunity to test his popularity in Germany: in April 1932 he had challenged Hindenburg in the seven-yearly presidential elections. Hindenburg had won, but Hitler (who

had become a German citizen in order to stand for election) had emphasised the growing support for the Nazi movement by polling thirteen-and-a-half million votes to the old Field-Marshal's nineteen-and-a-half million.

One month after his re-election Hindenburg had felt secure enough to get rid of a government which relied on the cooperation of the Social Democrats he despised. In May 1932 he sacked Brüning and appointed in his place Franz von Papen—another Centre Party man and another friend of Schleicher. Papen was much more interested in doing a deal for the support of the Nazis than in asking for the support of the SPD. The deal was arranged: after new elections, Hitler would be invited to join the government.

Results of the July 1932 Reichstag election (main parties only)

Party	Votes	Seats in the Reichstag
Nazis	13,769,000	230
Social Democrats	7,960,000	133
Centre and BVP	5,782,000	97
Communists	5,283,000	89
Nationalists (DNVP)	2,177,000	37
DVP	436,000	7

Now Hitler, the leader of the largest Reichstag party, laid down *his* condition on which he would join the government: he demanded the position of Chancellor for himself. Papen refused and went ahead with his policies to inject new life into the German economy. Instead of the misery of Brüning's deflation, Papen's government prepared to spend its way out of the Depression with new programmes of public works. The Nazis refused to cooperate unless they were given power, so Papen asked Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag and call yet another general election in November. The election did not, as Papen hoped, destroy the Nazis; although they did lose votes (over two million) and won only 196 seats. But the Communists ended up with 100 Reichstag seats. Papen was still faced by two large extremist parties who were determined not to let the Reichstag work.

Papen, the Chancellor with opposition in the Reichstag and no mass support in the country, believed that he could continue to rule with the backing of Hindenburg and Schleicher—and behind them, the army. He

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was mistaken. In December Schleicher himself took over as the new Chancellor. But the wily general had also made enemies – among them influential industrialists who were suspicious of Schleicher's attempts to win trade union support for his government. Behind Schleicher's back Papen now approached Hindenburg with yet another scheme for a new government – to bring in Hitler while the Nazis still had a mass following in the country, while the Social Democrats were still doing badly in elections, and before the Communists gained any more ground. Hitler should be used. Why not make him Chancellor of a coalition government which contained only a few other Nazis, and give the other ministries to good, conservative politicians who would do as Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen told them to do?

At last Hindenburg was persuaded that Papen could control the Nazi leader. On 30 January 1933 he appointed Adolf Hitler Chancellor of the German Republic. "I have Hindenburg's confidence," Papen boasted. "Within two months we will have pushed Hitler so far into a corner that he'll squeak."

At this crucial moment in German history – perhaps the most fateful moment in the history of the world in our century – there was no determined opposition to the foolish plottings of Hindenburg and Papen. Hitler was not elected Chancellor, he was not chosen by a majority of the people: he was put in power by a senile President, a retired Commander-in-Chief who had never even had the courage to admit he lost a war. Yet no-one lifted a finger to stop him. The army stood to one side. More important, there was no attempt by the parties which represented the working class (the Social Democrats and the Communists) to form a common front against the Nazis. Yet in the election of November 1932 they had together polled more votes and won more Reichstag seats than Hitler's party.

You will remember from Chapter 14 (page 62) that throughout the 1920s in the industrialised countries of the West the communists and the non-revolutionary socialists had fought bitterly for the political leadership of the workers; and that the Comintern had forbidden its member parties to join forces with any other parties which claimed to represent the interests of the working class. But now the rivalry of the parties of the Left was becoming self-destructive: they fought each other instead of fighting the dark enemy that threatened to destroy them both. In February 1933 Max Brauer, the

Social Democrat who was mayor of Altona, asked Ernst Torgler, chairman of the Communists in the Reichstag, if the KPD would join the SPD in a common front. Torgler replied, "It doesn't enter our heads. The Nazis must take power. Then in four weeks the whole working class will be united under the leadership of the Communist Party."

The German Communists' attitude was simple-minded to the point of idiocy. Their first aim was to control the working class – and they thought Hitler would help them to achieve it: after a few weeks of Hitler as Chancellor, the workers would, as a man, flock to the bright red banner of communism. The Communists had failed to learn anything from the experience of Fascist Italy, where Mussolini had used the power of the state to crush the Left – and yet here, in Germany, they were dealing with a man whom they labelled 'fascist' and who was a thousand times more dangerous than the pompous *Duce*. For very different reasons Franz von Papen and the KPD intended to make use of Adolf Hitler. Within two months Hitler would have made fools of them all.

Early in February 1933, Hitler called for new Reichstag elections. The German people had become used to violence in the streets at election time; but even they were unprepared for the terror which the Nazis unleashed. Hermann Goering, Hitler's right-hand man, had been appointed Prussian Minister of the Interior, a position from which he controlled the police in almost two-thirds of Germany. Goering now appointed 50,000 'auxiliary policemen', mostly from the SA and the SS: they were nothing less than Nazi gun-slingers in the pay of the government.

Worse was to come. On the night of 27 February the Reichstag building went up in flames. A young Dutch Communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested and later charged with arson. Chancellor Hitler claimed that a communist revolution was at hand and persuaded Hindenburg to sign an emergency law, "for the Protection of the People and the State", which swept away the freedom of speech and the freedom of the Press. As Nazi propaganda was stepped up, Goering's bully-boys terrorised German towns and cities. On 5 March German voters went to the polls, and Hitler's Nazis won their greatest electoral victory – over seventeen million votes and 288 seats in the Reichstag. But a majority of the electorate – twenty million of them – declared themselves against National Socialism and all its works by voting for other parties. Given

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the circumstances, it was an amazing last fling for German democracy.

On 23 March, the new parliament met in the Kroll Opera House to act out a tragic farce. All of the Communist deputies and some of the Social Democrats were either already in prison or in hiding. Hitler demanded an Enabling Act which would give him the power to make his own laws, and only the ninety-four Social Democrats who remained had the courage to oppose him. The Act was passed, and what little life there was left in German democracy was killed stone dead.

That was how the 'Third Reich' (Empire) came into being. The first Reich had been the Holy Roman Empire of the Middle Ages; the second had been that short-lived German Empire which plunged to defeat in 1918. This new 'Third Reich', the Nazis boasted, would last for a thousand years. We have described its beginnings in some detail for three reasons. First, the Nazi movement in Germany would become a model for radical groups in other countries gripped by the Depression of the thirties. Second, the German revolution of 1933 let loose a destroyer who would eventually set off another great war. And third, the Nazi seizure of power is, even for us today, history's most terrible lesson in the speed and ease with which democracy and the rule of law can be overthrown.

Britain—MacDonald, Means Tests and Mosley

Between 1921 and 1938, at least one out of every ten British citizens of working age was without a job. In the worst of those years one out of every five was out of work. Unemployment ranged from just over one million in September 1929 to just under three million in 1932. At its height it claimed 34 out of every 100 coalminers, 47 out of every 100 steelworkers, and 62 out of every 100 shipbuilders and ship-repairers.

The blight of unemployment was not evenly spread throughout the land, but concentrated in areas which became grim, derelict: South Wales, central Scotland, the north-east, parts of Lancashire, Cumberland and Northern Ireland. When Palmers' shipyard in the north-east town of Jarrow closed down in 1933, eight out of every ten workers there were without jobs.

The twenties had been a bad time for Britain as world trade had struggled to recover to pre-war levels and as old-established industries had been faced with

shrinking world markets. In the early thirties the Depression aggravated those ills, and in particular the running sore of long-term unemployment. They were bleak years of poverty and misery for many people. Yet they did not end in revolution, did not spark off a violent reaction against 'the system', against the established form of government. As the historian Alastair Parker has pointed out: "Between 1919 and 1939 no single life was lost in Britain in political or industrial conflict." (You can compare that with the turbulence in Germany, where, for a start, 356 political murders were committed between 1918 and 1922.)

In Britain parliamentary democracy was long-established; as a form of government it had proved capable of ruling and expanding an empire, of winning the war, of improving the general quality of life and of setting up a primitive 'welfare state' to care for its most needy citizens. In 1924 the Labour Party, which claimed to represent the interests of the working class, had formed a government for the first time. Parliament had already granted unusual legal privileges to the workers' trade unions—for example, protection against being sued by employers for damages if they went on strike. And the leaders of the unions in the 1920s and 1930s were, on the whole, men who were not attracted to revolutionary politics—as was made clear in their non-violent leadership of the 'General Strike' of 1926.

If the British middle classes had little reason to fear the unions, they had even less cause to worry about the communists. The membership of the Communist Party never rose above 20,000, even in the darkest days of the Depression. And the record of the Communist Party in parliamentary elections was one of continual failure: in 1924, one Communist MP was elected; in 1929, none; in 1931, none; in 1935, one. Hitler could frighten shopkeepers, lawyers, doctors and civil servants with tales of the 'Bolshevik menace': by the 1930s, no British politician could seriously scare the electorate with threats of a 'red peril'. In general, the failure of the communists to make much progress among the working class, and the way the British political system actually worked, made for stability and not for revolution.

The world crisis had hit the second Labour government, under the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, as soon as it came to power after the general election of 1929. Government spending was rising sharply as the cost of paying out benefits to the unemployed went up; and meanwhile, as people earned less, the govern-

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ment's income from taxation was falling. In 1931 a committee appointed by the government recommended what then seemed to be massive cuts. Public spending was to be cut by £96 million, mainly by reducing unemployment benefits and the wages of public employees (such as teachers). Rather than carry out all those measures, a majority of Labour ministers resigned, and the Labour government was replaced by a coalition called the National government, made up mostly of Conservatives. MacDonald remained Prime Minister—and his name has remained mud in the Labour Party ever since.

In that same year, when MacDonald left the Labour Party, and Britain left the gold standard (see Chapter 22, page 89), the economist John Maynard Keynes gave a talk on BBC radio on 'The Problem of Unemployment'. We have met Keynes before, in Chapter 11, when he was criticising the bill for reparations imposed on Germany. Now he told his startled listeners, who had been brought up to believe in the virtue of saving money, that the best way out of depression was not to save money but to *spend* it. This increased demand for goods would, in turn, increase employment. "The best guess I can make," said Keynes, "is that whenever you save five shillings, you put a man out of work for a day." Later, in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (published in 1936, and one of this century's most influential books), Keynes went on to say that a government should *manage* demand to make sure that a nation's resources (including its labour force) were fully employed.

According to Keynes and his followers a government faced with a depression should be prepared to spend more than its income in order to create jobs, which in turn would raise demand for goods. The National governments of the thirties, however, took what seemed to be the common-sense view that to spend more than they received (creating a 'budget deficit') would eventually lead to bankruptcy. Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1931 to 1937, believed in 'sound finance', in balancing the books — and so did the Labour Party in opposition. However, even though British governments did not do as Keynes proposed, they did develop new policies in attempts to stimulate employment, industry and trade.

Interest rates on loans were reduced from 1932 onwards, which made industrial investment cheaper. The electrical, chemical and motor-car industries all

benefited, but the most spectacular development was in the construction industry in general, and in house building in particular. The figure of 275,000 houses built in 1933 was, until then, an all-time record; by the year 1937 it reached 362,000. Unfortunately, although the new houses were cheap, they were not cheap enough for poor people with large families: as part of its cuts in spending, the government had stopped paying subsidies for council housing.

MacDonald's National government attempted to protect British industry by tariffs, and by the scheme of Imperial Preference (see Chapter 22, page 89), which gave Britain cheap imports from the Empire. But 'protection' was not, could not, be any kind of solution to the problems of a nation whose industrialised economy really needed a high level of world trade. Its effect was to reduce world trade even further. And since Britain could not absorb all the primary products of her Empire and imposed quotas on imports of food, the policy was resented in the Empire as well as by countries outside.

At home, the National governments of the thirties intervened directly in industry for the first time since the Great War. Firms in old, depressed industries (such as iron and steel, coal mining, cotton and shipbuilding) were encouraged to join together to regulate output and fix prices. Even nationalisation (taking firms into public ownership) was undertaken if there was a good case for it: BOAC (later to be known as British Airways) took off in the Depression years. And the Special Area Acts of 1934 and 1937 aimed to revive the depressed areas of the country by offering firms subsidies to settle in the areas and provide new jobs. Although only £4 million was actually spent on those subsidies in the thirties, the two Acts marked the beginning of modern 'regional' policy, on which large sums would be spent in later years.

Despite those new policies, unemployment did not go away; and that, in itself, raised a new issue in British politics. The system of providing poor relief through separate, local Public Assistance Authorities had led to wide variations in the rates of relief made to those out of work. It was not coping fairly or efficiently with the hundreds of thousands of long-term unemployed. In 1934 this system was scrapped and the Unemployment Assistance Board (UAB) was set up to pay national rates of 'assistance' to those in need. Eventually the UAB gave the unemployed a fairer deal than they had got under the old system, and by the end of the thirties

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Jarrow approaches London. In 1936 a deputation of unemployed workers marched from that depressed town in the north-east to ask the government and Parliament for help. Here they halt near Bedford for a meal of corned beef and potatoes.

Britain was spending a higher proportion of her national income on social security than any other country in the world.

The unemployed in Britain could not complain that they were callously treated by their government, but they could, and did, protest against the 'means test' snoopers – the people whose job it was to enquire into the 'means' of men and women who claimed assistance from the Board. The 'means test' penalised people who had saved money in the days when they had jobs, or whose sons and daughters were still in work. It was hated by all people who disliked the invasion of their privacy, and by many who were now coming to believe that in a rich, industrialised society they should be able to claim relief from poverty as a *right*.

Parliamentary democracy in Britain was not undermined by the Depression. Yet there were people who believed that Britain's best way out of the slump was not by the cautious measures of coalition governments but by strong, authoritarian rule on the model of the German National Socialists or the Italian Fascists. In the 1920s there had been a number of small, ineffective fascist groups in Britain. In the early thirties they found their leader in Sir Oswald Mosley, a former Labour minister who had left the party in 1930. Mosley founded the British Union of Fascists in October 1932 – just three months after Hitler's Nazis had hit the jackpot in the German elections.

The British fascists aped their European models – dressing up in black shirts, riding-breeches and jack-

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boots, parading through the streets, distributing propaganda against democracy and socialism, and making their most vicious attacks on the Jews. It is possible that the money to finance Mosley's activities came from Mussolini's Italy as well as from some British industrialists. It is a fact that for a short time in 1934 the *Daily Mail* openly gave its support to the fascists. It is also a fact that as part of a European fascist crusade, Mosley's movement was a dismal failure. After riots in the East End of London in October 1936, the Public Order Act was passed, which forbade (and still forbids) the wearing of military-style uniforms, and limited the right to march in the streets. Until the end of the decade, the Union of Fascists remained in the background of British politics, little more than an ugly reminder of the creatures across the sea, dancing on the corpse of German democracy.

France – *Le Front Populaire*

Like the British, the French did not abandon their democratic form of government during the Depression; but there were times in the 1930s when France seemed to be teetering on the brink of civil war. In the 1920s the French economy had done well, mainly because the French franc had been 'undervalued' (its real value had been greater than the rate at which it had been fixed by the French government for exchange with, say, pounds or marks) and French products were therefore cheap enough to sell well in world markets. But when, in the early thirties, other countries left the gold standard and devalued their currencies (which brought down the prices of *their* goods in world markets), France and the other countries which stayed in the 'gold bloc' were left high and dry: their goods became relatively expensive in a world in which trade was shrinking fast. Between 1929 and 1933 French exports of manufactured goods fell by forty-two per cent.

Stubbornly, French governments refused to leave the gold standard or devalue the franc: it all seemed to be a matter of protecting French prestige; an unwillingness to admit that France was not as strong as she pretended to be. And to pay for that prestige, French governments (rather like the British in 1931 and the Germans under Brüning) tried to balance their budgets by raising taxes and by cutting public spending on, for example, civil servants' wages and the pensions of war

veterans – the kind of policy we have come to know as deflation.

The Depression had affected French agriculture, as it had affected agriculture throughout the world. Deflation on top of Depression hit French industry, although in comparison with Britain and Germany the figures for unemployment in France seemed low – only half a million people out of work in early 1935. However, such figures in themselves are rather misleading when we consider that France solved part of her unemployment problem by rounding up about a million Polish, Italian and Algerian workers and packing them off home. In addition, many city dwellers who couldn't find work simply migrated back to the countryside where families and relatives could at least offer them beds and food.

Meanwhile, a succession of weak coalition governments was finding great difficulty in coping with the crisis. Between 1932 and 1934, five successive governments tried, and failed, to balance the budget – and, as in Germany, there was much criticism of parliament as a mere talking shop, where political parties protected the interests of the groups they represented and seemed to care little about the fate of the nation as a whole. Fascist-type groups had been formed in the 1920s. The largest of them was the *Croix de Feu*, set up in 1927 by François Coty, a man with a unique place in history as the purveyor of two very different sorts of smell – women's perfumes and the stink of political extremism. Other groups were *Action Française*, the *Camelots du Roi*, and a body called the *Cagoule* which was set up to resist an imagined communist take-over and was helped by senior officers such as Marshal Pétain to form secret groups inside the French army.

On 6 February 1934 extremist groups demonstrated in Paris against the failure of the National Assembly to cope with the nation's problems. They clashed with the police, and seventeen people were killed and well over two thousand injured. In the months which followed there was an alarming increase in the membership of the *Croix de Feu*, and in the activities of the movement's shock troops, which seemed to threaten a revolution of the kind by which Mussolini had come to power in Italy in 1922. But the most important, and in some ways extraordinary, development in the period which followed the Paris riots was the coming together of the Radicals, Socialists and Communists to form a common front – the Popular Front – against the fascist threat. To explain why those three parties embraced

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each other we shall have to make some comparisons between French and German politics in the early thirties.

The Radical Party in France was “the party of the small independent proprietors, farmers, shopkeepers, artisans, civil servants, men of the liberal professions” – the kind of people who in Germany between 1930 and 1932 had been drawn in large numbers, in fear and despair, to support Hitler’s Nazis. But in France they were among the chief supporters of a parliamentary democracy which, until recently, had brought them stability and prosperity. They were in no hurry to hand over the Republic to gangs who might end up treating Frenchmen in the same ways the Nazis were now treating Germans.

The French Communists were a different matter altogether: they owed no loyalty to the Republic or to parliamentary democracy; and as you saw in Chapter 14 (page 62) they were the bitter enemies of the French Socialists. In 1932, Maurice Thorez, the French Communist leader, was still standing firm on the old Comintern line: “We do not wish agreement with the socialist chiefs, we do not wish understanding with the socialist organisations. We wish to lead the socialist workers to battle.” It all sounded remarkably similar to the speechifying of the German Communist leaders in the same year. Yet little more than two years later Thorez’s Communists were arm in arm with the Socialists in the Popular Front. What happened to change their minds?

That question has a one-word answer – Hitler. The Nazi leader lasted a lot longer than von Papen and the KPD had foolishly expected (see page 94). The Enabling Act of March 1933 had led to a reign of terror in which German Communists had been destroyed – and it soon became clear to Stalin that the new, fanatically anti-communist German government was a threat to the Russian state itself. If France went the same way as Germany (and France still had considerable influence in Eastern Europe), Russia might soon find herself faced by a powerful new alliance on her western borders. A new message went out from the Comintern to the French Communists: stop the fascists by joining a common front with other anti-fascist parties – and the Communists obediently hopped into bed with their old enemies to form the Popular Front.

The Popular Front won the elections of April and May 1936; and Léon Blum became Prime Minister of France, the first Socialist to hold that office. And the

industrial workers came out on strike to show that they expected good socialist reforms from the new government – not just more of the old deflation. They got their reforms: by the Matignon Agreement employers were made to raise wages and to give their workers three weeks’ annual holiday with pay; and a rigid forty-hour working week was introduced. But the forty-hour week was a failure – in some instances it deprived industries of skilled labour and discouraged investment – and Blum’s government persisted in refusing either to devalue the franc or to create a budget deficit: it continued trying to balance the books. French industry did not prosper under the Popular Front: in 1937 France was producing fewer motor cars than she had turned out in 1929 – while Britain was producing nearly twice and Germany more than twice their 1929 outputs.

The problems became too great, Blum’s government fell in June 1937, and in July the franc was devalued. New governments staggered on with Popular Front support, but the French economy remained depressed until the Popular Front itself broke up towards the end of 1938 and a new government was formed by a Radical, Edouard Daladier. Paul Reynaud, the new Minister of Finance, set about reversing previous governments’ policies: in particular the forty-hour week was gradually abandoned, and interest rates on loans were brought down to encourage investment. Industrial production and prices began to rise again.

Despite outbreaks of political violence and the dark menace of fascist-style movements, France survived the years of the Depression without falling victim to revolution from the Right or the Left. In 1936 Blum’s government had outlawed the *Croix de Feu* and other extremist organisations: the *Croix* reappeared almost at once in the form of the *Parti Social Français*, but from then on it behaved more like an ordinary party in a parliamentary democracy. That in itself tells us a lot about France in the thirties, a world apart from its Nazified next-door neighbour. One historian has summed it up like this: “France remained until 1940 a country in which an intelligent and free man might reasonably choose to live.”

‘Hooverville’, USA

By 1932 many Americans had been forced to leave the homes on which they could no longer afford to pay the rent. If they were fortunate, they moved

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their few belongings into the homes of sympathetic relatives; if they had no-one to turn to, they slept out of doors or in shacks and tents on the outskirts of the cities. They called those shanty-towns 'Hooverilles' – which was, perhaps, a shade unfair on Herbert Hoover; but back in 1928 Hoover had asked to be President; he had become President, and now, four years later, he was presiding over the worst depression in American history – and, to most Americans, he seemed prepared just to watch things get worse.

In Chapter 21 you read about the American boom of the 1920s, about an advanced industrial society which had appeared capable of bringing prosperity within reach of all its citizens. But the American economy had depended on the demand for manufactured goods and agricultural produce growing as swiftly as supply. At the end of the twenties, however, demand had slackened, the Wall Street Crash had seriously injured the banking system and the supply of credit, and the decline in international trade had reduced America's ability to sell abroad what she couldn't sell at home. The results were appalling. Depression was more severe, and lasted longer, in the USA than in any other industrialised nation, as you can see on page 101.

The unemployment figures for some of America's great cities were even worse than the national average: for example, in the autumn of 1931 there were 624,000 people out of work in Chicago – roughly forty per cent of the work-force. And, throughout the country, as the table on page 102 shows, unemployment hit blacks harder than it hit whites.

The USA had no national system of relief against poverty. Many unemployed workers and their families depended on private charity (such as 'soup kitchens' financed by rich citizens); and on the public charity of town and city governments, whose relief programmes were cut back as their incomes from local taxes fell. The face of charity could be hard; a Chicago welfare officer said: "We insist that the people who come to our private and public agencies shall use up, absolutely and completely use up and come to us empty-handed, all their available resources." That was a 'means test' with a vengeance.

Somehow, millions of Americans avoided both the humiliation of public charity and the degradation of the 'Hooverilles' by living off the 'invisible relief' of friends, relatives and neighbourhood stores. Those at the bottom of the pile stayed alive by living like ani-

mals. According to the American historian, William Manchester:

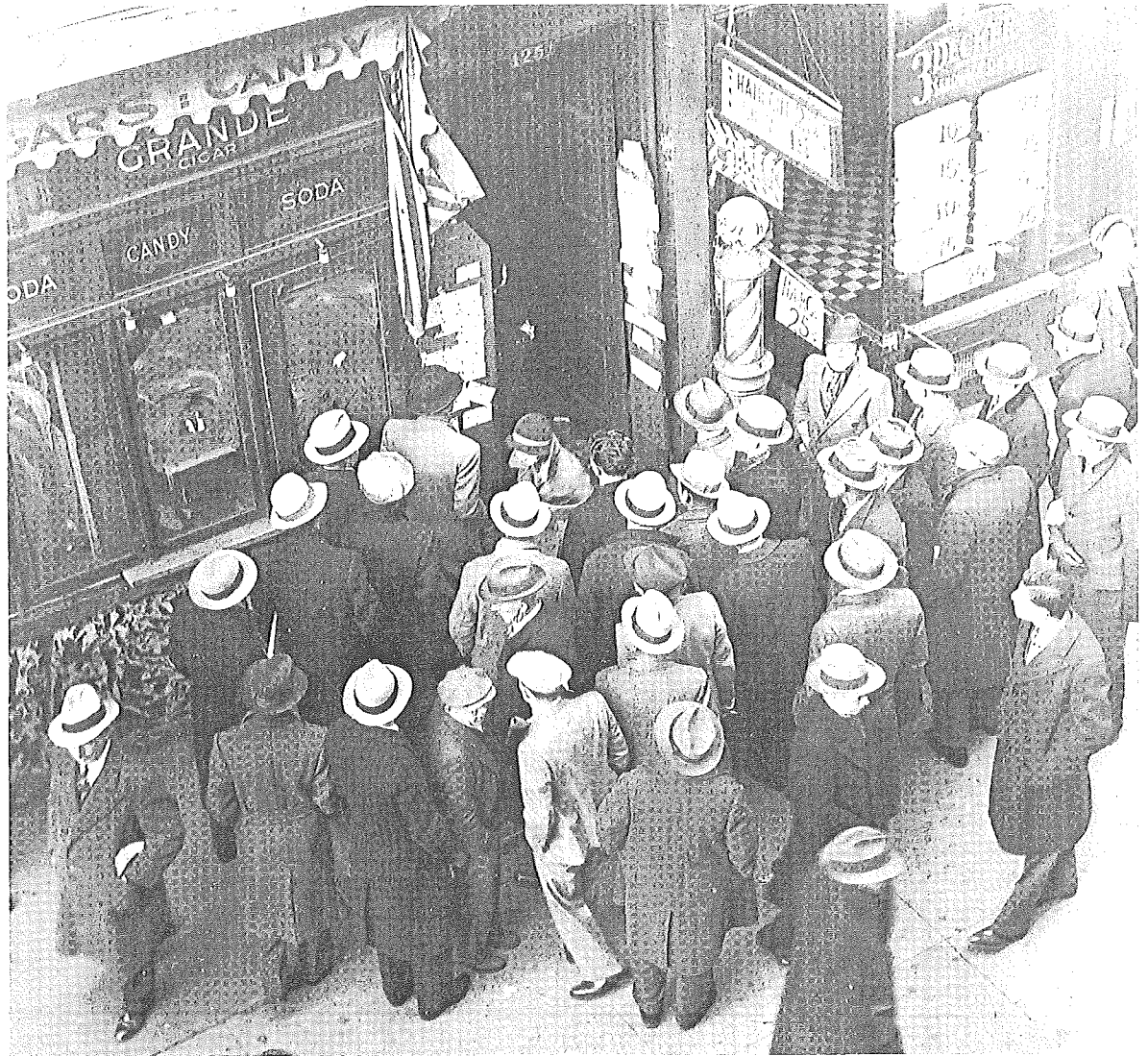
"In the Pennsylvania countryside they were eating wild weed-roots and dandelions; in Kentucky they chewed violet tops, wild onions, forget-me-nots, wild lettuce, and weeds. . . . City mothers hung around docks, waiting for spoiled produce to be discarded and then fighting homeless dogs for possession of it."

While American industry had been booming in the 1920s, American farmers had been complaining of lower prices for their produce. They had increased their production during the Great War and had continued to do so in the years that followed. Their incomes were, therefore, already depressed before the Great Depression; and many small tenant-farmers in the southern and mid-western states had already been forced off their land by a combination of high rents and low prices for their crops.

But in the early 1930s American farmers would look back to the twenties as the 'good old days'. Between 1929 and 1933 their net incomes (what they had left as 'profit' after paying all expenses) fell by nearly seventy per cent. Inevitably they went into debt – or further into debt – and to meet their debts, taxes and costs of living they had to try to sell more produce at lower and lower prices. Neither the home market, nor a world market already glutted with agricultural produce, could take all they had to offer. Many of them went under: unable to repay loans and the mortgages on their land, they joined the new army of migrants who roamed their own country in search of work. And as farmers went under so did the banks which had lent them money. Between 1930 and 1932, over five thousand banks went bust in the USA; and well over half of them were country banks in places with populations of under 2,500. Small-town America, like big-time Chicago and New York, took a frightful beating.

It was not that President Hoover did nothing, but that what he did was too little, and it came too late. In 1930 he persuaded Congress to cut taxes by \$160 million; in 1931 he increased public expenditure on the building of river dams which would eventually generate electricity, and in the short term provided jobs in the construction industry. In the same year the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) was set up, with funds to provide relief for ailing banks and insurance

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As the Depression deepened, men of all ages, all social classes, found themselves out of work. Here some of them shop for jobs in a New York street. Among the unemployed were many who felt it was their own fault that they couldn't find work. "Sometimes I feel like a murderer", one of them told a New York Daily News reporter in February 1932. "What's wrong with me, that I can't protect my own children?"

Unemployment in the USA, 1929-32

Year	Numbers of unemployed	Unemployed as % of the labour force
1929	1,550,000	3.2
1930	4,340,000	8.7
1931	8,020,000	15.9
1932	12,060,000	23.6

Unemployment of blacks in early 1931

City	Blacks as % of population	Blacks as % of total numbers of unemployed
Chicago	4	16
Philadelphia	7	25
Pittsburgh	8	38
Baltimore	17	32
Memphis	38	75
Charleston	49	70

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companies. But, in general, the government's policies were deflationary. For example, interest rates were raised, and the higher cost of borrowing further discouraged business men from investing in the re-equipment of their industries. The dollar was not devalued, and American goods remained expensive in world markets. And Hoover was determined to keep public spending as low as possible in his attempts to balance the budget at a time when the government was bound to receive less from taxation. In 1930 the American government agreed to the Hawley-Smoot Tariff, which raised customs duties on imports to record levels. This simply provoked other countries to do the same, and American exports suffered as much as those of other countries.

Hoover had not created the slump which forced Americans into 'Hoovervilles', but he showed precious little sympathy for the misery of millions of his fellow-countrymen. Only in July 1932 did he sign the Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Act, which gave the RFC power to lend \$300 million to the states for the relief of the unemployed. Yet by the end of 1932, when over twelve million Americans were out of work, only \$30 million had been paid out by the RFC!

In that same year a ragged army of unemployed ex-servicemen came to the American capital, Washington DC, to ask Congress and the President to pay them their bonuses for war service now instead of when they were due, in 1945. Congress rejected their appeal and many of them returned home. The rest of the BEF (Bonus Expeditionary Force) set up camp on the outskirts of the city, hoping their President would do something for them. He did—he sent them General Douglas MacArthur, who hounded them away from the capital with tanks, cavalry, infantry and tear gas.

America had a new hit song in 1932: 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?'

"Once I built a railroad, made it run,
Made it race against time.
Once I built a railroad,
Now it's done—
Brother, can you spare a dime?"

Once I built a tower, to the sun.
Brick and rivet and lime,
Once I built a tower,
Now it's done—

Brother, can you spare a dime?"

Once in khaki suits,
Gee, we looked swell,
Full of that Yankee Doodle-de-dum.
Half a million boots went sloggin' through Hell,
I was the kid with the drum.
Say, don't you remember, they called me Al—
It was Al all the time.
Say, don't you remember, I'm your pal—
Buddy, can you spare a dime?"

The BEF asked Hoover for a dime: he gave them tear gas. Unemployed and ruined Americans asked Hoover for hope: he gave them only empty words. In the summer of 1932 the Democrats nominated Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Governor of New York, as their candidate for the Presidential election in November. In his acceptance speech he said, "I pledge you—I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people. . . . This is more than a political campaign; it is a call to arms. Give me your help, not to win votes alone, but to win in this crusade to restore America to its own people."

In the November election twenty-two million Americans accepted Roosevelt's pledge, against fifteen million who voted for Hoover. Many Americans knew next to nothing about the man who was to be their next President, yet like the nation itself, he was a cripple. When he was thirty-nine, Roosevelt's legs had been paralysed by polio. Now, at the age of fifty, his legs locked in steel braces when he stood to speak, he was offering new hope to a stricken land. In Chapter 26 you will see how his 'New Deal' affected the USA and how it made Roosevelt perhaps the best-loved, and most bitterly hated, President in American history.

Japan—The Aggressive Way Out

Japan was the only independent Asian power with her own colonial empire—an empire that had been extended in 1920 when Japan took over the Mariana and Caroline Islands as 'mandates'. Japan was also Asia's greatest industrial and trading power, producing and exporting a wide range of manufactured goods as well as factory-spun silk yarn. In 1923 the capital city, Tokyo, was destroyed by an earthquake in which over a hundred thousand people died. Six years later the man-made disaster of the Great Depression began

Industrial Nations in the Slump

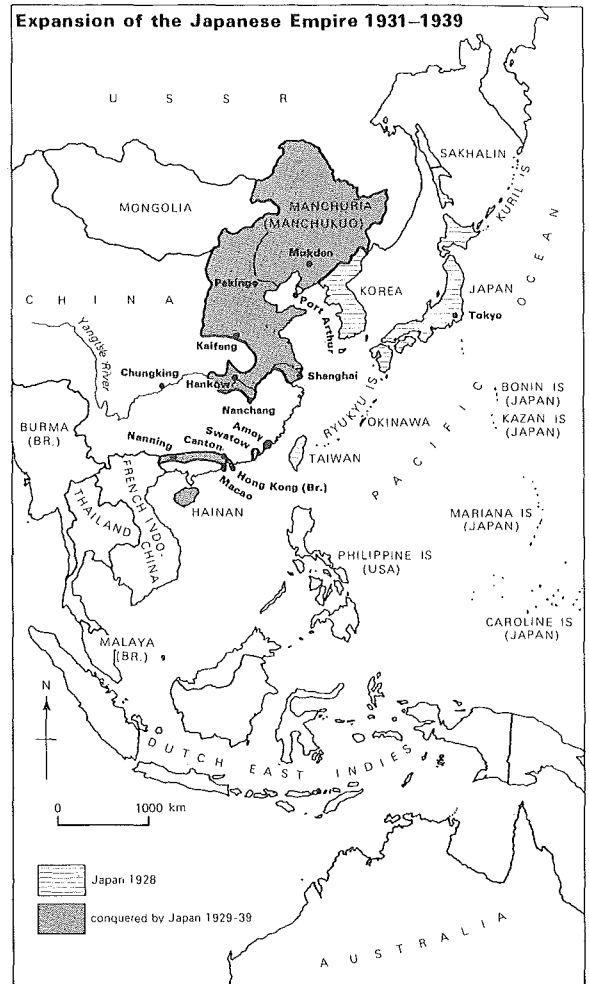
to flatten the Japanese economy. The decline of international trade and the raising of tariff barriers soon had savage effects. Japan's exports of manufactured goods dropped by two-thirds; and by 1931 half her factories were idle. In the countryside millions of peasants were ruined as demand for and prices of food and raw materials fell.

Japan attempted to solve her problems in two ways. The first involved using the desperate measure of war against a foreign power—and we have already looked at the beginning of that policy in Chapter 18 (page 74).

Japan had important economic interests, such as the mining of coal and iron ore and the cultivation of soya beans, in the northern Chinese province of Manchuria. To protect those interests she had insisted on keeping an army in the Port Arthur region of the province. Nationalist officers in that army and on the Japanese General Staff now planned the take-over of the whole province, and faked an incident between Japanese and Chinese soldiers near Mukden in September 1931 as an excuse to launch an invasion of the interior. The civilian government in Tokyo was appalled, outwitted and unable to stop the troop movements. By December Manchuria was in Japanese hands. Soon it was to be renamed Manchukuo and provided with an emperor: Japan had at last found a use for Pu Yi, the Chinese Emperor who had been overthrown in Sun Yat-sen's revolution of 1911. But Pu Yi was merely a figure-head: the real rulers of Manchukuo were the jubilant officers of the Japanese army.

The invasion of Manchuria had two important effects—putting aside for the moment its dreadful revelation that the League of Nations was powerless in the face of a determined aggressor. First, it raised the prestige and power of the Japanese army, in which nationalist extremists were now dominant. Second, it made it possible for the army to begin putting massive pressure on the civilian government to undertake a policy of imperial expansion, backed up by enlarged and well-equipped armed forces.

Japan's second way out of economic depression was the work of a remarkable Minister of Finance, Korekiyo Takahashi, a kind of Asian Keynes. Not for him the policies of deflation and penny-pinching followed by the Brünnings, MacDonalds and Hoovers of the Western world! Takahashi was, quite simply, a big spender. In each of the years 1932, 1933 and 1934 he increased government spending by no less than twenty per cent, and so provided workers with jobs, and with wages to



create new demands for manufactures and food. In 1936, as the Japanese economy was booming and the end of unemployment was in sight, Takahashi prepared to restrict government spending. Army officers, who were now demanding almost unlimited expenditure on armaments, made their opposition clear by murdering him.

The civilians in the government were no longer able to check the more dangerous ambitions of army leaders. In July 1937 the second stage of Japan's new drive for a greater empire opened as troops swept south from Manchukuo. The targets this time were China's ports and great cities, and control of traffic on the Yangtse River. In a little over a year they forced Chiang Kai-shek's forces far into the interior, to the new Kuomintang capital of Chungking.

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The Japanese declared that they had established in the east of China a 'New Order', which promised efficient government in the interests of the local people. In fact, it was a simple occupation of foreign land, which depended on the presence of large numbers of Japanese troops and on the willingness of many Chinese landlords and civil servants to collaborate with the invaders.

By the end of 1938 Japan dominated the richest parts of the Chinese mainland. At home, Takahashi's policies and rapid rearmament had brought about full employment and an end to depression. Most of Japan's trade was now with the 'yen bloc' of Korea, Taiwan and Manchukuo—to which she now sold over half her exports, and from which she bought over forty per cent of her imports.

But Japan's new prosperity and her expensive armed forces would be difficult to maintain if her empire was kept within even its 1938 limits. She needed larger markets in which to sell her goods; and she looked enviously at the Dutch, French and British colonies which could provide not only markets but rich resources of raw materials for industry—especially the rubber of Malaya and the oil of the Dutch East Indies. The very forces which had pulled Japan out of depression—aggressive nationalism and the rapid development of her military power—would soon pull her into a war of conquest throughout East Asia and the Pacific. But that part of our story comes later, in Chapter 31.

In this chapter we have looked at the effects of the Great Depression on five industrialised countries. Of

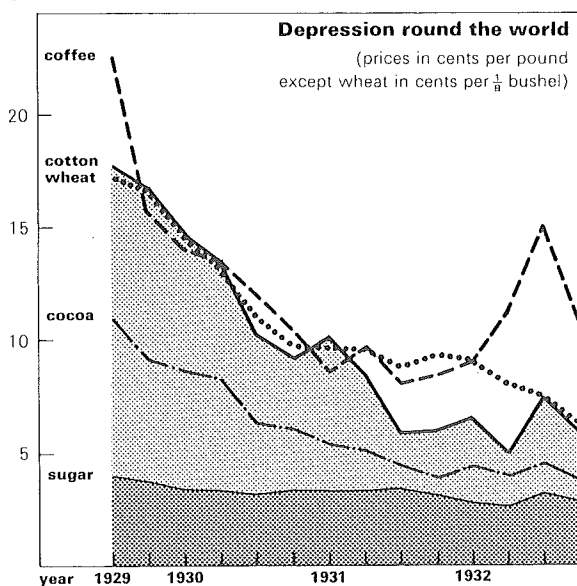
those five, Britain and France still had vast colonial empires which straddled the world. Germany, defeated in the Great War and feeling humiliated in the peace, was Europe's most disturbed and restless nation. Japan, as you have just seen, set out to cure her economic ills by rearmament and aggression. And the USA, despite her severe mauling in the Depression, remained the world's greatest economic and financial power. Taken together, those five countries could exert enormous influence on the rest of the world—for good or ill.

In Chapters 25 and 26 we shall return to two of them—Germany and the USA—to follow their history through to the end of the 1930s. And in Chapter 27 we shall look at the government and people of the Soviet Union, who have so far touched only the edges of our story of the world in the period of the Great Depression. That period emphasised the Soviet Union's unique position as the world's only communist state, for she was now faced by capitalist countries weakened by the slump. By cutting off all imports of non-essential goods, the government of the USSR isolated and protected the Soviet economy from the collapse of world trade in the 1930s. The international depression was, for the Soviet Union, a national opportunity to develop her industrial power while the capitalist countries struggled to recover the ground they had lost.

Meanwhile, to complete our picture of the worldwide effects of the slump we shall turn to look at those countries whose economies depended first and foremost (though not in every case entirely) on the production and sale of food and raw materials.

24 Depression Round the World

Between 1925 and 1929 world prices for agricultural produce had fallen steadily. Now you can see from the examples below how prices plunged still further in the period 1929 to 1932.



As the depressed industrial countries reduced their imports of food and raw materials, as their governments raised tariff barriers to protect their own producers, so the primary producers found they couldn't sell what they had produced — even at giveaway prices.

Primary-producing countries classified by percentage decline in exports, 1928–29 to 1932–33:

Exports down by over 70 per cent
Chile, China, Bolivia, Cuba, Malaya, Peru, Salvador

by over 65 per cent
Argentina, Canada, Ceylon, Dutch East Indies, Estonia, Guatemala, India, Irish Free State, Latvia, Mexico, Thailand, Spain

by over 60 per cent
Brazil, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Poland, Yugoslavia

by over 50 per cent
Australia, Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Honduras, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay

Not all the people in those countries affected by the slump in prices and exports suddenly found themselves in poverty and want. Many were already in that position before the Depression came to drag others down to their level. In some of the European colonies (for example, in parts of the Dutch East Indies), businessmen and planters fared relatively worse than their labourers—who were paid most of their 'wages' in goods, not money. And not everyone who lived in a primary-producing country depended for his or her living on exports. But in general the living standards of people did suffer—dreadfully in some places—and the Depression left its mark on politics and forms of government, as well as on economies, around the world.

Latin America

“Way down among Brazilians
Coffee beans grow by the billions,
So they've got to find those extra cups to fill.
They've got an awful lot of coffee in Brazil!

You can't get cherry-soda
'Cause they've got to sell their quota,
And the way things are I guess they never will,
They've got a zillion tons of coffee in Brazil!

No tea, or tomato-juice,
You'll see no potato-juice,
'Cause the planters down in Santos
All say 'No, no, no!'

A politician's daughter
Was accused of drinking water,
And was fined a great big fifty-dollar bill.
They've got an awful lot of coffee in Brazil!

And when their ham and eggs need savour,
Coffee ketchup gives them flavour;
Coffee pickles way outsell the dill!
Why, they put coffee in the java in Brazil!”

Pop-songs are historical documents. This American song tells us, with a certain grim satisfaction, about the plight of just one country in Latin America. It could have been written about Colombian coffee, or Argentinian wheat, or Cuban sugar, or Bolivian tin, or

Depression Round the World

Chilean copper and nitrates – for a glance at the table on page 105 will show that from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn the staple exports of the countries of Latin America were the victims of Depression.

Prices fell, loans from the USA dried up, and there was little money available to pay for the storage which would have kept some of the produce out of glutted markets until better times came. Producers were forced to sell on shrinking markets at lower and lower prices; they cut wages and sacked workers. Workers rioted, and revolutions were commonplace. New governments appeared, which mostly depended on the support of the armed forces; but there was little they could do, except by raising tariffs, to protect their nations from the effects of the world slump.

However, some Latin American countries tried to develop their own industries to provide substitutes for the manufactured goods they could no longer afford to import, and to protect themselves against any future depressions in world trade. In general, it was a slow process, but for the first time in Latin American history several national governments got themselves into the business of forcing the pace of economic change. In 1939 the Chilean government established a Corporation for the Development of Production, which organised steel, oil and other industries. In 1940 the Brazilian government set up a National Steel Company.

New Problems for Colonial Empires

As we have seen in Chapter 16 (page 70), the international slump quickly found its way into the African colonies of the western European imperial powers. Although their economies were not, on the whole, as badly affected as those of Latin America, they undoubtedly suffered: their earnings from exports were almost halved, throwing many thousands of labourers out of work. Some African countries recovered remarkably quickly, however. The British colonies of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Kenya benefited from the Ottawa Agreement (see page 89) which imposed customs duties on produce imported into Britain from outside the Empire. This gave, for example, the copper mining companies in Northern Rhodesia a trading advantage over Chile, the world's leading copper producer. And, as we have noted, Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa were able to make spectacular recoveries from

the slump through the rapid growth of their gold exports.

Meanwhile, way across the Atlantic, the descendants of the black slaves who had once been West Africa's chief exports were beginning to demand power. In Chapter 19 (page 77) we saw how the living standards of the people of the West Indies depended almost entirely on the export of foods to the British and American markets. Now the Depression of the late twenties and thirties reduced those markets for the islands' produce. Wages were cut, many plantations were closed down and unemployment rose sharply. To make things worse, the annual migration of tens of thousands of West Indians to find work in the USA and in Cuba was no longer possible. The misery and frustration of the people erupted in riots, strikes and a wave of opposition to white, British rule. Depression in the West Indies brought into being new trade union movements which formed the bases for the political parties that began to campaign for the end of colonial rule.

Australia and New Zealand, the two Dominions furthest from the European heart of the British Empire, were bound to be hard hit by the Depression. The world prices of New Zealand's chief exports – wool, meat and dairy produce – all went down sharply. The country's problems were best illustrated between 1932 and 1933 when both she and Denmark reduced the prices of their butter in a commercial fight over the British butter market. There was only one winner – the British housewife, who got cheaper butter from both countries.

The Australians had similar problems – low prices and glutted world markets. They were not helped by the policies of their Labour government, which came to power in the autumn of 1929. A campaign to 'Grow More Wheat' raised the amount of wheat produced by more than twenty per cent in 1930; and since Australian wheat-farmers could not afford expensive storage facilities, almost the entire crop had to be unloaded on an already over-supplied world market! Other Labour policies were more familiar: deflation, wage cuts, and devaluation of the currency to encourage exports. The results were familiar too: over thirty per cent of the work-force unemployed in 1933, and the rejection of the Labour government at the next general election. Free trade within the British Empire could not compensate Australians for the fact that they were producing too much for the world of those depressed times

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to buy: too much wool and too much wheat.

The world slump obviously put the colonial empires under a new kind of stress. In the past, colonies had earned their way by supplying foods and the raw materials of industry to the mother countries; and surplus money from those countries had been invested in their colonies. Now investment was no longer profitable (except in isolated cases such as Southern Rhodesia); and the imperial powers were seen to have no other ways of protecting their overseas subjects from the effects of the slump.

Already we have seen (in Chapter 22, page 89) how the British tried to protect themselves and their colonies by making their empire into a free trade area by Imperial Preference. But the very size of that empire was now seen to be a weakness as well as a source of pride. It was too widespread to make into a manageable, exclusive trading system; and at its centre Britain was not big enough to buy in all its surplus produce, and she was no longer rich enough to lend sufficient money for investment or to tide countries over a bad patch.

Eastern and Central Europe

If the collapse of the prices of primary products – like Australian wheat, West Indian sugar and Malayan rubber – put new stresses on the British Empire, they had even more unsettling effects nearer home, on the continent of Europe. In Chapter 22, page 87, we looked at some of the economic problems of the Eastern European countries – over-population, slow rates of industrial growth, and an unhealthy dependence on the export of primary products (chiefly wheat) to earn the money they needed to pay off debts to Western European nations and the USA. We also saw how tariff barriers were erected to protect new industries and to encourage national self-sufficiency. Now we shall see how the Depression magnified those problems and brought with it new miseries.

As a result of the European financial crisis of 1931 (Chapter 22, pages 88–9), governments, business men and farmers in Eastern and Central Europe had to pay back their loans to Western European and American bankers; and they were no longer able to borrow new money to pay off old debts as they had done in the twenties. The only way to get money was to earn it, by increasing exports and reducing imports. The trouble was that they all tried to earn more and buy less at the same time – and at a time when the world

slump was driving down the prices of wheat, tobacco and timber. The result was economic disaster. Exports, especially of wheat, went down. Farmers couldn't sell their produce at a profit, even at home. The bigger farmers were ruined; and peasant-farmers either went back to their old ways of payments 'in kind' or did without the goods which they could no longer afford. Industries could no longer sell manufactured goods to the people of poverty-stricken villages, and tariff barriers prevented sales abroad. As production went down, people were thrown out of work. The middle classes suffered too: many civil servants were dismissed or forced to retire early on half-pensions; while even fewer people than before could afford the services of lawyers or doctors.

The peoples of Eastern Europe endured terrible hardship in the 1930s, but it was a misery which forced them further apart rather than closer together. It exaggerated the economic nationalism of the separate states. Austria actually increased her production of wheat while Yugoslavia was bursting at the seams with the stuff. And Poland, Hungary and Rumania all hastily built new factories to manufacture the kinds of goods they had in the past imported.

The only Western European country which showed any interest in helping the depressed economies of Eastern Europe was Germany, who turned the situation to her own advantage. From 1934 onwards the German government negotiated trading agreements, one by one, with the Eastern European states. Germany agreed to import large quantities of agricultural produce and raw materials, and paid for them in special currencies that could only be used to buy German manufactured goods. Obviously, Germany gained a lot from the agreements – not only valuable outlets for the products of her own industries but also political influence in Eastern Europe. As Germany bound the Eastern states to her with economic ties those states could not afford to break, so the influence of Germany increased at the expense of the influence of France. The figures on the next page should give you a clear idea of how the agreements helped Germany to dominate Eastern European trade in the later 1930s.

People in other Western European countries could, and did, complain about this German policy – claiming, for example, that the Reich sucked Eastern Europe dry of valuable resources and in return dumped useless manufactured goods – such as mouth organs and typewriters – onto peasant economies. There was much

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Germany's percentage share in the trade of Eastern European countries

Country	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Hungary:					
<i>Imports</i>	18.3	22.7	26.0	25.9	40.9
<i>Exports</i>	22.2	23.9	22.8	24.0	40.0
Romania:					
<i>Imports</i>	15.5	23.8	36.1	28.9	40.0
<i>Exports</i>	16.6	16.7	17.8	22.3	26.5
Yugoslavia:					
<i>Imports</i>	13.9	16.2	26.7	32.4	39.4
<i>Exports</i>	15.4	18.6	23.7	21.7	42.0
Bulgaria:					
<i>Imports</i>	40.2	53.5	61.0	54.8	52.0
<i>Exports</i>	42.8	38.0	47.6	43.1	59.0

truth in such complaints but the fact remained that Germany provided what Eastern Europe needed above all—markets for primary produce—and so helped to relieve some of the pressures of the slump.

We saw in Chapter 14 some of the problems of the minority peoples in the states of Central and Eastern Europe in the 1920s. Not surprisingly, the majority nationalities had quickly dominated the economic and political life of the new states; and the old, powerful prejudice against the Jews (anti-Semitism) had stayed firmly rooted throughout the area. As long as the states were fairly prosperous, dislike and distrust of Jews and other minority groups could be kept under control. But once the Depression set in to ruin many people's livelihoods and threaten others, old prejudices took shape as new and dangerous political forces.

You have already seen (page 105) that the Depression affected all levels of society in the new states. The urge to find a scapegoat—some thing or some people on whom to fix the blame—was overwhelming, especially among those middle classes of people who lost jobs or army commissions or who became hopelessly in debt to banks or to local moneylenders. Jews were the most obvious candidates as scapegoats—despite the fact that many of them were as badly affected as anyone else by the slump. Eastern European anti-Semitism was, therefore, a home-grown prejudice which thrived in the Depression years: it was not imported direct from Germany. But some of the new political movements which developed in this period of economic crisis resembled German Nazism.

In Hungary a National Socialist Workers' Party was set up by Zoltan Böszörmény, who chose crossed

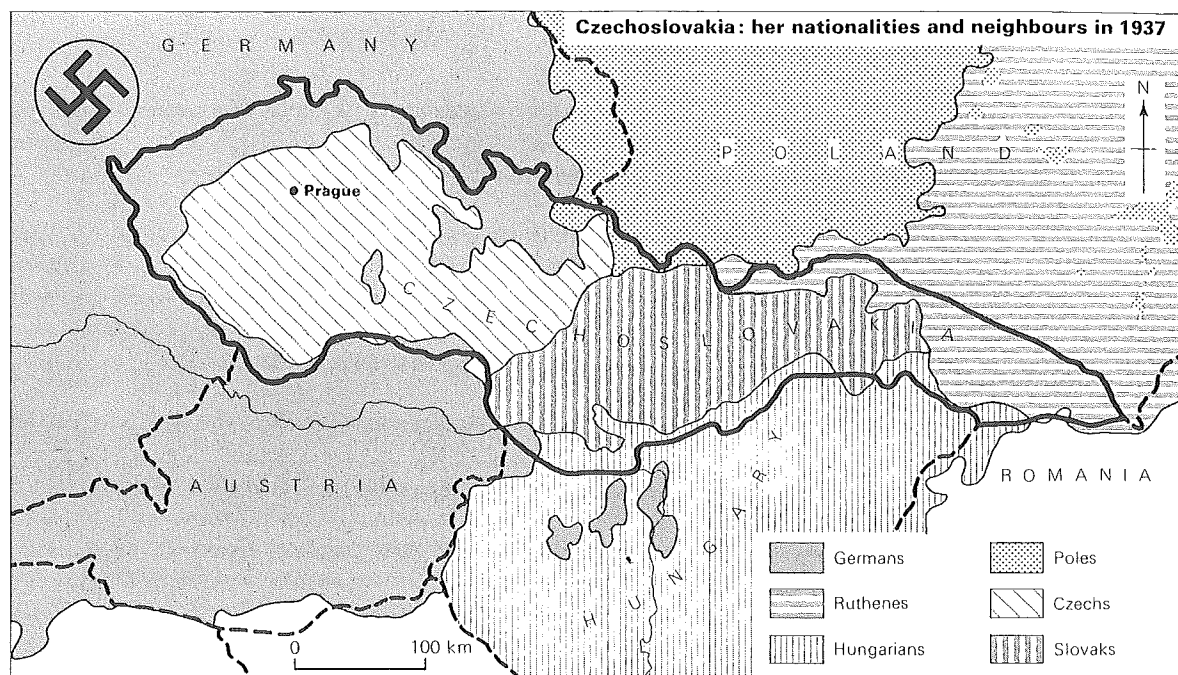
scythes as the movement's emblem. Böszörmény preached a familiar fascist message: he was against communists, against liberals, and against democracy; but his Scythe Cross movement appealed less to people in the cities than to the poverty-stricken peasants of eastern Hungary who were attracted by the leader's vague promises of land reform and 'justice for the poor'. Böszörmény described his followers as "Gardeners of the Hungarian race, fateful Death Reapers of the Jewish swine and their hirelings", and in 1936 he planned a march on Budapest. The 'revolution' fizzled out in the arrest of 700 half-starved peasants and the imprisonment of the party's incompetent leaders.

More serious was the Arrow Cross movement, led by Ferenc Szálasi. At first its members came mainly from unskilled industrial workers in the depressed towns, but later the movement attracted support from the professional classes and army officers. Szálasi's ideas, when they were clear enough to be understood, appeared to combine bits of Nazism with bits of Italian Fascism in a perverted vision of a new Hungary which would be based on what he called a "Christian moral order"—which, of course, excluded Jews. The Arrow Cross, although increasingly popular in the late 1930s, was resisted by the government and failed to gain power.

Romania produced what was perhaps the most extraordinary of all the fascist movements in the Europe of the 1930s. The Legion of the Archangel Michael had been founded in 1927 by Corneliu Codreanu, a young man whose deep religious faith was matched only by his desire to rid Romania of the Jews, communists and foreign capitalists who, he believed, were responsible for widespread poverty and injustice. Codreanu's instrument for the work of destroying the 'oppressors and betrayers' of Romania was the Iron Guard, an organisation whose methods of operation included torture and murder. It was hardly surprising that Codreanu admired nationalist leaders outside Romania who were not squeamish about using the same methods to ensure obedience to their wills—Hitler and Mussolini.

As the Legion grew more popular and widely feared it became a kind of 'rival dictatorship' to that already set up by King Carol; and in 1938 and 1939 the struggle between the Legion and the royal government ended in a bloodbath. Codreanu was murdered; and as teams of terrorist Legionaries planned to avenge his death, the police tracked them down and either strangled or shot them. Eventually, in September 1939, Legionaries

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assassinated the Prime Minister—and in return the government forces hanged Legionaries in the market-places of towns the length and breadth of the land.

Throughout Eastern Europe, in the misery of the Depression years, the nationalities who had been forced to live cheek by jowl with other nationalities in the new states grew more suspicious and intolerant of each other. Majority nationalities were openly hostile to the 'foreign' minorities in their midst; and the minorities responded with a new determination to join up with the national states dominated by their own people. And of all the countries in Europe, Czechoslovakia was the one which had most cause to be alarmed by these ambitions among its minority peoples.

In the 1920s most of the bad feeling about the share-out of power and jobs had been between the Czechs, who got most of both, and the Slovaks and Ruthenes in the east. The Germans of the western border area, the Sudetenland, had been loyal to the central government while their industries, shops and tourist businesses had prospered. But the slump in world

trade hit them hard and they blamed unemployment and a fall in their standard of living on the government in Prague. But this was a long way from calling for the separation of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia—until 1933. Then Hitler came to power in Germany with the promise of a single 'Reich' for all Germans. The Sudeten Germans turned from voting for the Czechoslovak parties of their choice—whether conservative, liberal or socialist—towards the Sudeten German Party led by Konrad Henlein, an admirer of Hitler who was in the Führer's pay. In the elections of 1935, Henlein's party won forty-four of the sixty-six parliamentary seats in the German-speaking parts of Czechoslovakia.

By 1936 it had become clear that Henlein and his party had their eyes fixed on something much more ambitious than the better protection of Czech-German citizens by the Czech state. In almost everything but name the leaders of the Sudeten German Party were Nazis. Their eventual aim was nothing less than to make the Sudetenland part of Germany.

25 Hitler's Germany

Führer, Party and People

Before Hitler came to power, a German citizen – like the citizens of other democratic Western countries – had a variety of loyalties, interests and responsibilities. In his daily life he was probably most concerned about his family, his neighbours, his church and the people he did business with or worked for.

His freedom to live his own life within the law was protected by a variety of powerful forces within the German Republic. Firstly, the Republic was a federation of states, or *länder*, each with its own democratically elected government. Those second-level governments worked as a check on the power of the federal government in Berlin: for example, the largest of the states, Prussia, was ruled for many years by Social Democrats while the federal government was in the hands of right-wing coalitions. Secondly, as in all modern democratic states, a citizen could join an organisation which protected his interests: a worker could become a member of a trade union; a farmer could join a co-operative, which tried to sell his produce for him at the best price. Thirdly, a citizen had the right to speak, listen to and read criticism of those who ruled him: political argument was carried on in public, in a vast number of local and national newspapers and magazines. And finally, there was the crucial principle that no person or government was above the law.

There was nothing extraordinary about all that. What was extraordinary was Hitler's determination to sweep away that rich variety of life in which free citizens could express themselves as individuals and the *länder* could preserve their traditions and differences. Hitler's vision of the people belonged to the distant past, before written history; to dark forests inhabited by warriors who survived in their struggles against rival people by blind obedience to their leader. He himself was to be the new German leader, or *führer*, and his will was to be above the law. Sixty million Germans were to be moulded into a *volk*, a racially pure people, whose only loyalty was to him.

Once he was in power, Hitler moved to destroy whatever stood in the way of his domination of the minds and bodies of the people. By the middle of March 1933 all the governments of the *länder* had been taken over by local Nazi leaders. The new State Presi-

dent of Württemberg, Wilhelm Murr, staged a massive victory demonstration on 15 March, at which he made clear the facts of life in Nazi Germany:

"The government will brutally beat down all who oppose it. We do not say an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. No, he who knocks out one of our eyes will get his head chopped off, and he who knocks out one of our teeth will get his jaw bashed in."

* On 23 March, what was left of the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act (see also Chapter 23, page 95), which gave Hitler the authority to make his own laws. On 2 May, the trade unions, which had consistently opposed the Nazis, got their 'heads chopped off' when union offices throughout the country were raided by the SA and SS. In their place the German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront* – DAF) was set up, led by Robert Ley, which both workers and employers were forced to join. The DAF was basically a means of stopping German workers organising themselves in their *own* interests.

And on 14 July a new law destroyed the German people's democratic right to disagree openly with those who ruled them.

"Law Against the New Formation of Parties

July 14, 1933

Article 1

The sole political party existing in Germany is the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

Article 2

Whoever shall undertake to maintain the organisation of another party, or to found a new party, shall be punished with a sentence of hard labour of up to three years, or of prison between six months and three years, unless other regulations provide for heavier punishment."

The NSDAP itself became a mass party. It had grown from just over 100,000 members in 1928 to nearly one-and-a-half million in 1932: within the next two years it would grow again by almost 200 per cent. For many people it was convenient, and prudent, to join the Nazis: there were all kinds of benefits for Party

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members, such as being first in line for jobs. For some people it became essential: by 1939 Party membership was a condition of entry into the civil service.

Everyday life in Germany was dominated by the Party organisations, and the affairs of its citizens were open to the interference of Party officials. By 1937 there were 700,000 political leaders in Germany. They ranged from the *gauleiter* (the regional Party chiefs), through the *kreisleiter* (the area bosses), the *ortsgruppenleiter* (the local leaders) and the *zellenleiter* (the cell leaders), down to the *blockleiter* (block leaders), the local eyes and ears of the Party, the subscription collectors, the snoopers.

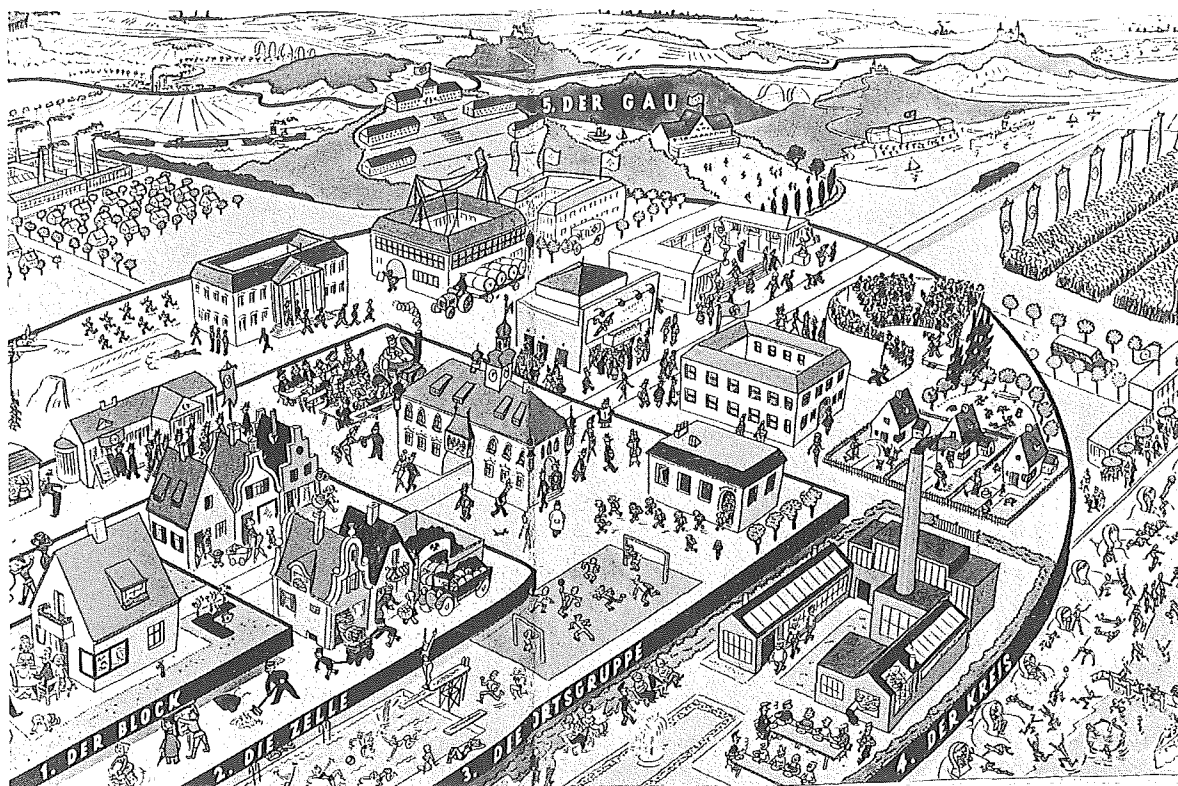
Through these 'mini-führers' of his mass party Hitler could regulate and spy on the nation. If the Nazis could smash the unions and other political parties, they could also alter people's public behaviour – even how they greeted each other in the streets.

"If people belong to the same social group, it is custo-

mary to raise the right arm at an angle so that the palm of the hand becomes visible. The appropriate phrase that goes with it is 'Heil Hitler' or at least 'Heil'. If one spies an acquaintance in the distance, it suffices merely to raise the right hand in the manner described. If one encounters a person socially . . . inferior to oneself, then the right arm is to be fully stretched out, raised to eye-level; at the same time, one is to say 'Heil Hitler'."

That stiff-armed salute was officially known as the 'German greeting'.

For a time the Nazification of Germany and the smashing of the known opponents of the new régime obscured a struggle for power within the NSDAP itself. Control of the Party and, through the Party, control of the people had appeared to be in Hitler's hands from the very beginning. In fact, after he had come to power in January 1933, his authority was soon challenged by Ernst Röhm and other leaders of the SA,



How the Nazis saw themselves. A picture from the propaganda magazine *Signal* in 1941 shows a happy and harmonious people living in 1. the block, 2. the cell, 3. the locality, 4. the area, and 5. the region.

the Nazis' uniformed force of stormtroopers, which had swollen to over two million men. Röhm's ambition to take over the *Reichsmehr*, the regular German army, not only alarmed the generals: it was a direct threat to the unique authority of the Party leader. If Röhm were allowed to control the armed forces as well as the stormtroopers, he would be the greatest power in the land. And while Röhm was plotting to bring the army under his authority, other SA men were demanding that the 'socialist' part of the National Socialist revolution should begin.

On the 'Night of the Long Knives', 30 June 1934, Hitler dealt with his challengers. Röhm and over 150 others were murdered. The victims included General von Schleicher, who paid the price for his intrigues of 1932 (see page 94), and Gregor Strasser, the 'socialist' Nazi who had opposed Hitler once too often (see page 91). The instruments of death were the black-shirted SS, commanded by Heinrich Himmler.

Hitler made no bones about who was responsible for the massacre. He told his mockery of a parliament:

"I ordered the leaders of the guilty shot. If someone asks me why we did not use the regular courts I would reply: at that moment I was responsible for the German nation; . . . it was I alone who, during those twenty-four hours, was the Supreme Court of Justice of the German People!"

He could have added that the army had stood aside and let him do it, and that President Hindenburg had sent him a telegram of congratulations.

On 2 August, Hindenburg died. Straight away Hitler announced that the offices of Chancellor and President were combined, and on the same day the soldiers of the German army swore their loyalty to a new chief:

"I swear by God this holy oath, that I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, Führer of the German Reich and People, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath."

Within the space of a few weeks Hitler had finally answered all the questions about who ruled the Party and Germany. And the events of the night of 30 June had made clear *how* he ruled – by the methods of a gangster boss, served by men who were prepared to cut each other's throats to gain favour in his eyes.

"Your Child Belongs to Us"

It takes time to teach old dogs new tricks – even to say "Heil Hitler" – and the Führer was aware of resistance among older generations. In the short term they could be squashed: in the long term Hitler was sure they wouldn't even matter.

"When an opponent declares, 'I will not come over to your side,' I calmly say, 'Your child belongs to us already. . . . What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.'"

In 1932 only 35,000 German children had 'belonged' to the Leader as members of the Hitler Youth movement. By the end of 1934 membership of the Hitler Youth had soared to over three-and-a-half million; and at the end of 1936 Hitler finally gathered in all Germany's youngsters by making membership compulsory.

This was to be the real education of German youth: all else was mere book learning. Twelve years before, in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had written, "The bodies of the young will be systematically trained from infancy onwards, so as to be tempered and hardened for the demands to be made on them in later years." By "young" Hitler had really meant 'boys', although he had a few words to say about the girls: "In the education of the girl the final goal always to be kept in mind is that she is one day to be a mother." Now the *Bund deutscher Mädel* would teach her all she needed to know: how to be a good Nazi, a fit Nazi; and, as far as possible, an attractive mate for a good, fit Hitler Youth.

The Hitler Youth movement emphasised above all else physical fitness, endurance and participation in team-games. Its members attended regular camp meetings and took part in mass demonstrations of loyalty to the Führer.

Some children were selected to complete their secondary education in special Adolf Hitler Schools, where the emphasis on physical fitness was carried to extraordinary lengths. And from those special schools a small number of students were selected to go on to the four *Ordensburgen* (Order Castles) whose job it was to complete the education of the young people who had been picked out as the future Party leaders.

Early in 1933 the Nazis had celebrated their seizure of power with bonfires of literature. Into the flames had

gone everything they disliked or despised – books by Jews, books by socialists, books about the merits of democracy, about the old morality of protecting the weak from the strong. And along with them had gone many of the textbooks used in the schools of the Republic – especially the history textbooks. History would be re-written by the Nazis, and for the time being pupils would have to make do with cheap pamphlets. In any case a Hitler Youth was not expected to spend too much time in the company of books. Even the books that had not been burnt might give him ideas, might encourage him to think for himself.

The Organisation of Terror

Let's begin with an example of what happened to one man – a former member of the SPD – soon after Hitler came to power.

"An unknown man knocked at Leidler's door and asked for him by name. Leidler took him in. It was raining and the man was wet. The man showed Leidler a *Reichsbanner** membership book and told him that he was a fugitive from the Gestapo. He told Leidler that the *Reichsbanner* had risen in the Ruhr and was fighting the Nazis. Would Leidler have any weapons? Could he supply the names of any loyal *Reichsbanner* men in the area? Leidler answered 'no' to each question and added, 'I'm through. I've had the shit kicked out of me. All I can do is put you up overnight and feed you, which I'd do for any human being on a night like this.'

In the morning, after breakfast, the man went to the door and, just before he left, turned his lapel back and showed Leidler an SS button. Then he left wordlessly."

Thousands of Germans had similar experiences. Some of them were lucky: they kept their mouths shut, their opinions to themselves, and they survived. Others were not so fortunate: they were caught up in the system of terror and spat out at the other end, dead.

In the summer of 1934 Heinrich Himmler, chief of the SS, had helped Hitler in the bloody business of the Röhm massacre. Less than a month later, Himmler re-

* *Reichsbanner* = a para-military organisation which had supported the democratic Weimar Republic.

ceived his first reward: the SS was made independent of the SA. Two years later, in June 1936, the grateful Führer gave Himmler the greatest prize he had to offer – control of all Germany's police. Hitler had placed himself above the law: now he put his chief murderer in charge of the forces of 'law and order'.

Like all the other Party organisations, the SS was responsible to no-one but its own leader, and he was answerable only to Hitler. As long as Himmler remained faithful to the Führer he was free to do as he wished, to subject the German people to organised terror.

Perhaps the most widely feared branch of Himmler's organisation was the *Gestapo*, controlled by Reinhard Heydrich (who was also head of the SD – the Party police). His deputy, Dr Werner Best, described how this new body was different from any previous police force in German history:

"The National Socialist Führer State has created for the first time in Germany a political police which we regard as modern, i.e. as meeting our present-day needs; an institution which carefully supervises the political health of the German body politic, which is quick to recognise all symptoms of disease and germs of destruction . . . and to remove them by every suitable means."

The most suitable means of removing the "germs of destruction" was to place them in 'protective custody' – Nazi shorthand for arresting suspicious characters and handing them over, without trial, to the concentration camps run by the *Totenkopfverbände* of the SS. Many camps had been hastily set up in 1933 to cope with the flood of victims of the SA and SS terror, but gradually their numbers were reduced until there were just four large camps left – at Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Lichtenburg.

From the end of 1937 the political prisoners in 'protective custody' were joined by more and more people roped in by the police under their new powers of 'preventive detention'. The argument behind this new development was brutally simple: certain types of people were always causing trouble, refusing to behave like everyone else – so why not lock them up? The 'anti-social' elements included beggars, gypsies, prostitutes, 'grumblers', alcoholics, hooligans, and what the Nazis called 'mental cases'. Homosexuals were definitely 'anti-social', and so were people who refused to work.

By the summer of 1939 there were about 25,000 pri-

soners in the camps. They were 'marked' men and women in more than one sense of the word, for each prisoner had a coloured triangle of cloth sewn on to his or her uniform for easy identification. Political prisoners wore red triangles; Jehovah's Witnesses, blue; anti-socials, black; criminals, green; and homosexuals, pink. We know all that now, long after most of the prisoners are dead. We don't know how many Germans, outside the SS, knew of those things at the time; but we can guess that most people, given a choice between ignorance and finding out, preferred not to know. The "fear and horror" (Heydrich's own words) which surrounded the very name *Gestapo* was enough to discourage most people from asking questions.

Werner Best put the situation in a nutshell: "Provided the police are carrying out the will of the Leadership, they are acting legally." Germany was in the grip of a kind of political rabies: the disease of Nazism had penetrated the central nervous system of the state—its law-making and law-enforcing agencies. The Law was now the will of the Führer, and the whims of his obedient underlings.

The Empire of the 'Poison Dwarf'

"The broad masses of the people are not made up of diplomats or professors of public law nor simply of persons who are able to form reasoned judgment in given cases, but a vacillating crowd of human children who are constantly wavering between one idea and another."

"The chief function [of propaganda] is to convince the masses, whose slowness of understanding needs to be given time in order that they may absorb information; and only constant repetition will finally succeed in imprinting an idea on the memory of the crowd."

Those two quotations are taken from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (see also Chapter 23, page 91), the book which sold hundreds of thousands of copies after January 1933 and made a fortune for the Führer. They reveal a contempt for "the masses", and at the same time a realisation that the fickle "crowd of human children" must be numbed into Nazi ways of thinking by the constant repetition of Nazi propaganda.

You have already seen how little respect Hitler had for the people he ruled and how he encouraged Himmler and Heydrich to create an empire of terror

within the Reich. On 13 March 1933 (ten days before the Enabling Act was forced through the Reichstag) Hitler appointed Dr Joseph Goebbels as his Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, responsible for "all tasks of spiritual direction of the nation". Goebbels was physically small, but what he lacked in inches he made up for in ambition. Before long he had created his own empire—of newspapers and magazines, of film studios and radio transmitters. He was perhaps the cleverest and most unscrupulous manipulator of mass media in history. He was a bigger liar than the master he served. Behind his back he was called "poison dwarf" and "Wotan's Mickey Mouse"; and he was likened to a tadpole—all mouth and tail (*Schwanz*, the German word for tail, is also slang for 'penis').

The two most important media were the press and radio. German broadcasting was already centralised and Goebbels took it over in 1933 as a ready-made instrument of propaganda—or, as the Minister himself put it, "a spiritual weapon of the totalitarian state". All that was required was to 'Nazify' its programme output and to ensure that people listened in. The first task was quickly completed; success in the second was guaranteed by the very novelty of wireless broadcasting and by the efforts of manufacturers to produce cheap sets. In 1933 fewer than one out of every four German households had a wireless. By 1942, seven out of every ten German families owned radios.

But broadcasting was not aimed just at the home: offices, factories, restaurants and cafés were equipped with wirelesses through which the Minister or his Führer could reach out to the German people. Nor did Goebbels neglect the world outside the Reich: by early 1935 he had under his control a network of short-wave transmitters which could broadcast to any part of the world. Australians, Brazilians, Portuguese and Japanese—all could listen in to the voices of the new Germany. More important, Goebbels' propaganda penetrated the homes of Germans who lived outside the Reich—in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, in Austria.

The press presented the Nazis with very different problems. When they came to power they controlled only 121 newspapers and periodicals out of a total of 4,700. There were, of course, crude ways of selling papers: the *Fränkische Tageszeitung*, controlled by Julius Streicher, sent this circular to readers unwilling to renew their subscriptions:

"Your intention expresses a very peculiar attitude to-

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wards our paper, which is an official organ of the National Socialist German Workers' Party . . . We shall continue to forward copies of it to you, and hope that you will not want to expose yourself to unfortunate consequences in the case of cancellation."

By the end of 1934 Goebbels had extended direct Nazi control of the press from 121 papers to 436; but he had also taken indirect control of all the others. No longer were German news agencies independent: Goebbels made them put out Nazi versions of the news. And a law of October 1933 forbade any newspaper editor to criticise the government. As the historian Z. A. B. Zeman has pointed out, "There was no need for censorship because the editor's most important function was that of a censor."

If the *Gestapo* was the Nazis' secret service, the job of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry was to reinforce the terror by convincing the people that the Party was everywhere. It was difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the Party: even if you avoided its opinions in newspapers and on radio, it was still there in the streets—its uniforms, its parades, its flags hung out in 'spontaneous demonstrations' of loyalty to the Führer. Only for a brief period, in the summer of 1936, was the output of propaganda restrained. The Olympic Games were being held in Berlin—and while Germany was on show to the world, some of the more strident Nazi posters disappeared.

Nevertheless, the Games were a massive propaganda success. Their organisation was faultless, the Führer turned up in person to award medals, and the radio facilities provided for foreign commentators were lavish. Only one man spoiled the effect—Jesse Owens, the American sprinter and long jumper, who won four gold medals. For the Games were not staged by the Nazis to "promote international understanding" or "to bring the youth of the world together in friendly competition": their purpose was to reveal to the world the new Germans, Hitler's 'master-race', in action. Owens, the supreme Olympic athlete, was American: worse still, he was black.

"My daddy says Jews are not damnably vile"

Way back in 1920 Adolf Hitler, the unknown politician of Munich's back streets, had announced the Nazi Party Programme (see also Chapter 23, page 92). The fourth of its Twenty-Five Points read as follows:

"None but members of the nation may be citizens of the state. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the nation." And so it followed that a Jew could not be a citizen of the German state, with the same civil rights as anyone else.

Even when Hitler became a national political figure, not everyone took his anti-Semitism at face value. And if anything shows how badly Hindenburg, Papen and the other intriguers of January 1933 had miscalculated when they lifted Hitler to power, the following letter does:

Berlin, April 4, 1933

Dear Mr Chancellor,

In recent days, a whole number of cases were reported to me in which judges, lawyers and justice officials who are wounded war veterans, and whose conduct of office has been flawless, were forcibly retired and are to be dismissed because of their Jewish descent.

For me personally . . . this sort of treatment of Jewish officials, wounded in the war, is quite intolerable. I am convinced, Mr Chancellor, that you will share this human feeling with me, and I ask you, most cordially and with the utmost urgency, to look into this matter yourself. . . . If they were worthy of fighting and bleeding for Germany, they must be considered worthy of continuing to serve the fatherland in their professions. . . .

Your devoted
Von Hindenburg

There was no "human feeling" to appeal to. Those legal officials were merely some of the first victims of the Nazis' systematic persecution of the Jews.

Some Dates in the Calendar of the German Jews

- 1933 1 April—First official boycott of Jewish shops, doctors and lawyers.
7 April—Law for the Re-Establishment of the Career Civil Service excluded Jews from government jobs.
- 1934 22 July—Jews forbidden to take legal examinations.
8 December—Jews forbidden to take pharmaceutical examinations.

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- 1935 15 September—Reich Citizenship Act: “No Jew can be a Reich citizen. The right to vote on political questions is not extended to him and he may not be appointed to any office of State.”
- 15 September—Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour: “Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are hereby forbidden. . . . Extramarital intercourse between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood is forbidden.”
- 1936 Professional activities of Jews severely and restricted or prohibited—including vets, 1937 chartered accountants, teachers, dentists, surveyors, auctioneers and nurses.
- 1937 12 June—Secret order from Heydrich: Jewish women who had had sexual intercourse with Germans to be sent to concentration camps.
- 1938 17 August—All male Jews to add the name ‘Israel’ and all female Jews the name ‘Sara’ to their non-Jewish first names.
- 30 September—Cancellation of qualifications of Jewish doctors.
- 7 November—Ernst von Rath, a German diplomat, murdered in Paris by Herschel Grünspan, a Jew.
- 9 November—‘Kristallnacht’ (Crystal Night). Destruction of Jewish shops, homes and synagogues throughout Germany. Over 30,000 Jews sent to the concentration camps: they were later released, after they had promised to leave the country.
- 15 November—Jewish children excluded from German schools and universities.
- 3 December—Closing and compulsory sale of Jewish businesses and shops.
- 1939 21 February—Jews to hand over all gold and silver objects and jewels in their possession.
- 1 September—Curfew on the Jews after 8 pm in winter and 9 pm in summer.
- 23 September—Confiscation of all radios owned by Jews.

As you can see, the sickness of rabid anti-Semitism became a feature of everyday life in Germany. Towns

and villages put up notices on their approach roads—“Jews not wanted here”. Holiday resorts advertised themselves as “free of Jewish taint”. By 1935 local authorities were banning Jews from public parks and playing fields: it was not unusual to see outside a local swimming pool the notice “Bathing Prohibited to Dogs and Jews”.

Hatred of the Jews was taught in schools. Jewish children were repeatedly humiliated in front of their classmates until they were excluded from the German education system altogether in 1938. And not only the Jews were harmed by the campaign against them. In 1934 a Berlin schoolboy interrupted his teacher’s anti-Semitic lecture with the remark, “My daddy says Jews are not damnably vile.” His daddy was put in prison. In a land where a father could be punished for the innocent words of his child, it was safer to keep your opinions to yourself—even at home.

In Chapter 15 (page 67) you read that there was a massive migration of Jews to Palestine in the 1930s. Now you know where many of them came from, and why. Between 1933 and 1939 roughly half the Jewish population of Germany emigrated, mostly to Palestine, the USA and Britain. The other quarter of a million German Jews stayed behind—to wait.

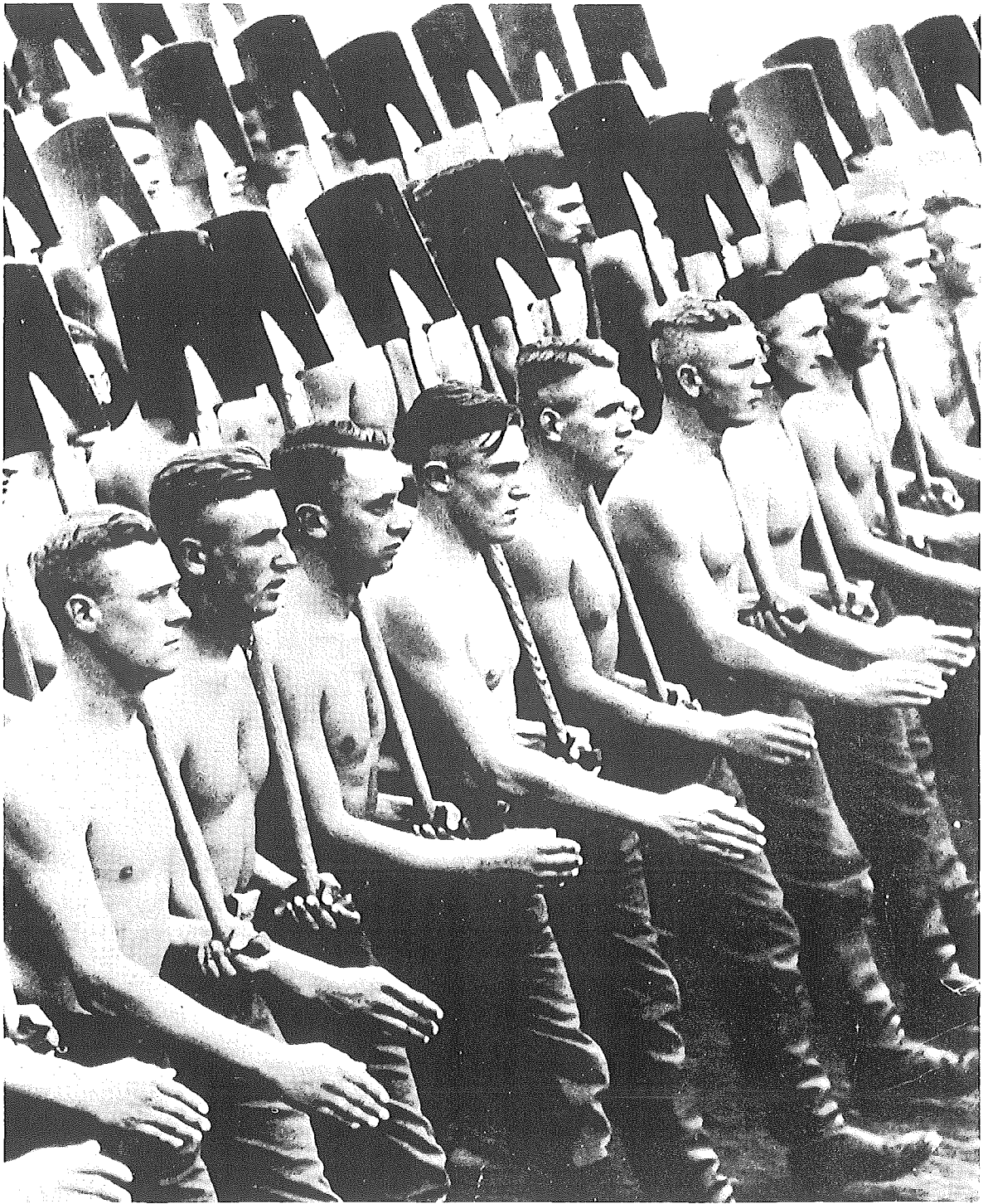
The Intentions of Nazi Germany

Where was Nazi Germany going? What would Hitler do with a state over which he now had total control?

Let’s look first at *Mein Kampf*, at some of the ideas Hitler put forward in his chapter called ‘German Policy In Eastern Europe’.

“Our Movement must seek to abolish the present disastrous proportion between our population and the area of our national territory. . . . In striving for this it must bear in mind the fact that we are members of the highest species of humanity on earth. . . . For the future of the German nation the 1914 frontiers are of no significance. They did not serve to protect us in the past, nor do they offer any guarantee for our defence in the future. With these frontiers the German people cannot maintain themselves as a compact unit, nor can they be assured of their maintenance. . . . The soil on which we now live was not a gift bestowed by Heaven on our forefathers. But they had to conquer it by risking their lives. So also in the future our people will not

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"He who would live must fight. He who does not wish to fight in this world, where permanent struggle is the law of life, has not the right to exist." – Adolf Hitler in Mein Kampf. Here, young men of the Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD – the National Labour Service), gripping their spades like tools of war, parade in front of their Führer at Nuremberg.

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obtain territory, and therewith the means of existence, as a favour from any other people, but will have to win it by the power of a triumphant sword. . . . We National Socialists put an end to the perpetual Germanic march towards the South and West of Europe and turn our eyes towards the lands of the East. . . . when we speak of new territory in Europe today we must principally think of Russia and the border States subject to her.”

It is clear that Hitler believed the German people had to have more territory (*lebensraum*—living space) in Europe and that they would have to take it by “a triumphant sword”, or, more accurately, by the weapons of modern warfare. But *Mein Kampf* was written nearly ten years before Hitler became Führer; and ten years are a long time in a man’s life—time enough in which to change opinions, cool down, limit his ambitions. We have to look at what he did in the 1930s as well as at what he believed in the mid-1920s.

As soon as he came to power, Hitler acted quickly to deal with Germany’s unemployment problem. A National Labour Service was set up to employ people on a wide range of public works—in agriculture, land reclamation, the building of schools and hospitals, and the construction of the *autobahnen*, Germany’s new motorways. The results of Hitler’s approach to unemployment—using government money to create jobs—looked spectacular.

Unemployment in Germany, 1933–37

Date	Numbers of unemployed
October 1933	6,000,000
October 1934	4,100,000
February 1935	2,800,000
February 1936	2,500,000
February 1937	1,200,000

However, the rapid decrease in unemployment was only one side of the coin. From the very beginning the

Nazis had been spending money on rearmament. Admittedly, it was not a lavish outlay at first—only 4,000 million Reichsmarks in the first two years of Nazi rule. But in March 1935 Hitler announced the start of universal military service and the creation of a new German air force, the *Luftwaffe*. The money made available for equipping the armed forces was suddenly doubled; and in the years 1936–39 a total of 42,000 million Reichsmarks was spent on rearmament.

The conscription of young men into the armed forces and the expansion of the armaments industry both helped to reduce Germany’s unemployment figures. And more jobs were created by Hitler’s policy of autarky—his attempt to reduce Germany’s dependence on world markets for essential raw materials. Particularly from 1936 onwards, more and more people were employed in the metal-processing industries and in plants producing synthetic oil, rubber and textiles.

Policies like these—conscription, the development of an air force, massive expenditure on rearmament, autarky—were obviously preparations for a war, though they didn’t necessarily mean that Hitler was determined to start one. We have to leave it to Hitler to tell us that.

On 10 November 1938 Adolf Hitler made a secret speech to representatives of the German press.

“The prevailing circumstances have obliged me to speak, for a decade or more, of almost nothing but peace. Only, in fact, by continuously declaring the German desire for peace and Germany’s peaceful intentions was I able, step by step, to secure freedom for the German people and to provide Germany with the armaments which have, time and time again, always been the essential precondition for any further move. . . . It was sheer necessity that made me speak for years of peace alone. It has now, however, become necessary to submit the German people to a gradual change in its psychological state of mind, and to make it plain to the Germans that there are things which, if they cannot be achieved by peaceful means, *must* be achieved by means of force. . . .”

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The '100 Days'

On 4 March 1933, just a little over a month after Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany, Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the oath of office as President of the United States. In his Inaugural Address he told the American people that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance".

Around fifteen million Americans were without jobs, ruin was staring farmers in the face, banks were going bust, and an army of migrants was already on the highways—refugees from poverty in a land of plenty. Yet the cripple who now replaced Herbert Hoover, in the White House seemed to welcome the awesome responsibility for putting things right. To walk, Roosevelt had to have his legs harnessed in steel braces, and most of his day was spent in a wheelchair. It appears that many Americans never knew the full extent of his handicap—that to get upstairs their new President had to be carried in men's arms, like a helpless child. To those who did know it was not important: what mattered was that he seemed to have the guts and the will to lead the nation, not that he couldn't dance the waltz at a White House ball.

Roosevelt's first actions as President were not imaginative, nor did they solve America's most pressing problems. But they did stop the feeling that feeble government was allowing the country to slide further into depression. To begin with, the banking system had to be made to work again, and Roosevelt did it by 'old-fashioned' means. On his second day in office he ordered the banks to close—all of them. On 9 March, Congress did as it was asked and passed the Emergency Banking Act, which extended government aid to the stronger banks and arranged for the re-organisation of the rest. On 10 March, the President asked Congress to slash government expenditure by \$500 million, and Congress obliged with the Economy Act. On 13 March, he asked for the legalisation of beer and a quick end to Prohibition: again Congress did as it was asked and voted in the Beer Act.

Meanwhile, on 12 March, Roosevelt had spoken to the nation on radio in the first of his 'fireside chats',

saying there were no longer good reasons for withdrawing money from the banks and hoarding it: "I can assure you that it is safer to keep your money in a reopened bank than under the mattress." And they believed him. When the banks opened in the following week, people deposited more money than they took out. They were prepared to believe almost anything he said, to accept anything he did, even those actions which could do nothing to lift them out of the slump—like cutting government spending.

But he was no dictator: there were limits to his power. Under the American Constitution, Congress was the law-maker and it was the President's job to carry out those laws. And alongside President and Congress were the nine justices of the Supreme Court with the power to crush any law of the Congress, any action taken by the President, if they judged it to be 'unconstitutional'—if they believed, for example, that such a law or action violated the rights of individual people or states as laid down in the Constitution.

Roosevelt had no 'Enabling Act', as Hitler did, to allow him to make his own will the law of the land. He began his work in 1933 with no special Presidential powers to meet the emergency; but he did start off with the good will of Congress, which was eager to work with him to translate his ideas for a 'New Deal' into law.

In his first '100 Days' as President, Roosevelt asked for and got from Congress an extraordinary burst of activity—making laws, voting money for new government programmes, setting up new agencies to carry them out. The first of the 'alphabetical agencies' appeared—the organisations through which Roosevelt would tackle the Depression—the CCC, the NRA, the AAA, the PWA, the TVA. In 1934 more agencies were set up, and yet more still in 1935. The list seemed endless—FERA, CWA, RA, FCA, WPA, NYA, REC, NLRB.

But for millions of Americans, who remembered all too vividly the dispiriting years when Hoover was President, these new agencies represented action instead of empty words. For many people they represented relief from starvation, the chance of a job and holding on to the family home: for some they meant the difference between life and death.

Roosevelt and the New Deal

Acts and Agencies of the First New Deal

CCC

(Civilian Conservation Corps: 31 March 1933)

Organised activity for unemployed young men

Camps set up and organised by the army. In all 2,500,000 young men took part in the 1930s. As America's greatest re-foresters, they planted trees on eroded lands and on lands previously stripped of timber. They stocked rivers and lakes with one billion fish, built 30,000 wildlife shelters, dug canals, built networks of fire-lookout towers and roads through forests.

AAA

(Agricultural Adjustment Administration: 12 May 1933)

To control the growth of crops and livestock and guarantee farm prices

Farmers in each area decided what the total production of each crop should be and then set an average quota for each farmer. Farmers who agreed to participate in the scheme and who reduced their acreage under cultivation would benefit by (a) higher prices for what they produced, and (b) government subsidies.

FERA

(Federal Emergency Relief Administration: 12 May 1933)

Organisation to provide relief, quickly, to those in need—and, where possible, to provide some kind of public employment. Headed by Harry Hopkins, who would become Roosevelt's most influential adviser

It gave money to the states (on the basis of one dollar of federal money to every three dollars of state money spent on relief of poverty). It also had power to spend money on relief when states were reluctant to finance it.

Its lasting achievements included the construction or improvement of 5,000 public buildings and 7,000 bridges. It financed the clearing of streams and dredging of rivers. It organised nursery schools for children of poor families and helped one-and-a-half million adults to learn to read and write.

TVA

(Tennessee Valley Authority: 18 May 1933)

Government development of a poverty-stricken region which included lands in seven separate states (see map on page 133)

The Authority was given power to build dams to control floods and generate cheap hydro-electric power throughout the valley.

HOLC

(Home Owners' Loan Corporation: 13 June 1933)

To assist home-owners unable to keep up mortgage payments on their houses

Mortgages were re-financed by buying them from banks and offering home-owners long-range terms for repayment. This Agency would eventually help to re-finance one fifth of all mortgaged urban houses.

NRA

(National Recovery Administration: 16 June 1933)

To stabilise prices of manufactures and to improve the standing of organised labour

Management and workers in each industry were to agree on 'codes' of production and prices. Section 7A of the Act which set up the NRA said that codes should guarantee minimum wages, maximum hours of work and union rights of collective bargaining. Eventually, codes were drawn up by two-and-a-half million firms and covered twenty-two million workers. Firms which took part had the right to display the 'blue eagle' insignia: "In war, in the gloom of night attack, soldiers wear a bright badge on their shoulders to be sure that comrades do not fire on comrades. On that principle, those who cooperate in this program must know each other at a glance. That is why we have provided a badge of honor for this purpose, a simple design with a legend, 'We do our part', and I ask that all those who join with me shall display that badge prominently."—F. D. Roosevelt.

One of the NRA's great achievements was to wipe out child labour in the USA. But because many firms soon began to violate the codes, and because it was not a compulsory organisation, it failed in its two main purposes.

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PWA

(Public Works Administration: 16 June 1933)

To provide employment on large-scale public works

Between 1933 and 1939 it built seventy per cent of the country's new schools; sixty-five per cent of new court-houses, city halls and sewage plants; and thirty-five per cent of new hospitals, as well as bridges, tunnels and harbour facilities. PWA funds were also used to build the aircraft carriers *Yorktown* and *Enterprise* as well as other warships for the navy. The Army Air Corps got grants for building over a hundred planes and fifty military airports.

FCA

(Farm Credit Administration: 16 June 1933)

To aid farmers unable to keep up mortgage payments on their land

In under two years one-fifth of all farm mortgages were re-financed with the help of government loans.

CWA

(Civil Works Administration: 8 November 1933)

Temporary work relief programme which paid wages, not relief doles

In the winter of 1933–34 it had over four million people on its payroll. It closed down in 1934. In its short life it built or improved 800,000 kilometres of roads, 40,000 schools, 3,500 playgrounds and athletics fields, and 1,000 airfields. It employed 50,000 teachers to keep rural schools open and to teach adults in cities.

Acts and Agencies of the Second New Deal

In 1933 Roosevelt had provided relief for the unemployed, particularly through FERA and CWA. It had been absolutely necessary. But in January 1935 the President declared:

“I am not willing that the vitality of our people be further sapped by the giving of cash, of market baskets, of a few hours of weekly work cutting grass, raking leaves or picking up papers in the public parks. . . . The Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief.”

He asked for, and Congress passed, the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. The Act provided a first instalment of \$5,000,000,000 which the President was authorised to spend as he saw fit. Much of the money (and further sums voted later by Congress) was divided between existing agencies; but a vast new agency—the WPA—was formed to put as many unemployed people to *work* as quickly as possible.

WPA

(Works Progress Administration: 8 April 1935)

Harry Hopkins in charge

Its main achievement was to provide some kind of work for about three million of America's ten million unemployed. They were paid, on average, about \$52 a month—barely enough to keep a family. Because of the haste to get the unemployed off relief and back to work, many WPA projects were “make-work assignments of scant value”. But by 1941 the WPA had pumped \$11,000,000,000 into the economy; had built or improved over 2,500 hospitals, 5,900 school buildings, 1,000 airport landing fields, and nearly 13,000 playgrounds. The WPA also ran three cultural organisations. The Federal Theatre Project employed actors, artistes, directors and craftsmen to produce plays, circuses and other entertainments throughout the land. In four years its audiences totalled thirty million people. The Federal Writers' Project produced about a thousand publications, including guides to cities and to the countryside. And the Federal Art Project gave work to unemployed artists to produce paintings and statues for public buildings, and to teach classes in painting, weaving, modelling, carving, etc.

Finally, the WPA ran an organisation aimed at solving the problems of youth unemployment: the NYA (National Youth Administration) gave part-time work to 600,000 college students and 1,500,000 high-school pupils in the seven years of its existence. It also aided 2,600,000 youths who had left school but had not gone on to college.

RA (replaced by FSA)

(Resettlement Administration: 1 May 1935)

Attempted to deal with the problem of rural poverty

It aimed to give poverty-stricken farmers and sharecroppers new starts on good land. It planned to re-

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settle 500,000 families, but, mainly because of shortage of funds, resettled fewer than 5,000.

The agency would be replaced in 1937 by the FSA (Farm Security Administration) which granted long-term, low-interest loans to enable poor farmers to buy family-sized holdings, and which also set up clean, well-run camps for migrant workers and their families.

REA

(Rural Electrification Administration: 11 May 1935)

Attempted to bring electricity to the countryside

In 1932, nine out of every ten American farms were without electricity. The federal government now gave loans to private power companies to encourage them to run their lines out to the farms. If the companies refused, the government was willing to lend money to farmers' cooperatives instead. By 1941, four out of every ten American farms had electricity.

NLRB

(National Labour Relations Board)

Set up by the Wagner Act of 5 July 1935

The Act protected workers who wanted to bargain collectively with employers for better wages and conditions of work. The NLRB was set up to prevent management practices such as sacking workers because they were members of trade unions, or setting up employer-dominated company unions.

Social Security Act: 14 August 1935

The start of the American 'welfare state'

The Act was passed in August 1935. It set up a national system of old-age pensions for most employees. At sixty-five workers would get pensions financed by taxes on their wages and on their employers. The rate of benefit would vary according to what they earned during their working lives. The government would start to pay pensions in 1940.

The federal government also offered to share equally with the states the cost of the care of people over sixty-five who couldn't take part in the pensions scheme; to cooperate with states in a system of unemployment insurance; and to help states with the care of dependent

mothers and children, the crippled and the blind.

Achievements and Failures

What did it all add up to? Well, first it was the most extraordinary burst of law-making in American history; and those laws gave the federal government powers to affect every aspect of American life. President and Congress had once seemed remote from the people. Now it was difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the doings of a national government whose agencies directly affected how millions of people earned or were given their daily bread, whether they held on to their homes or farms, whether their young children got an education and a hot lunch, whether their boys and girls fresh from school or college were provided with a job to do.

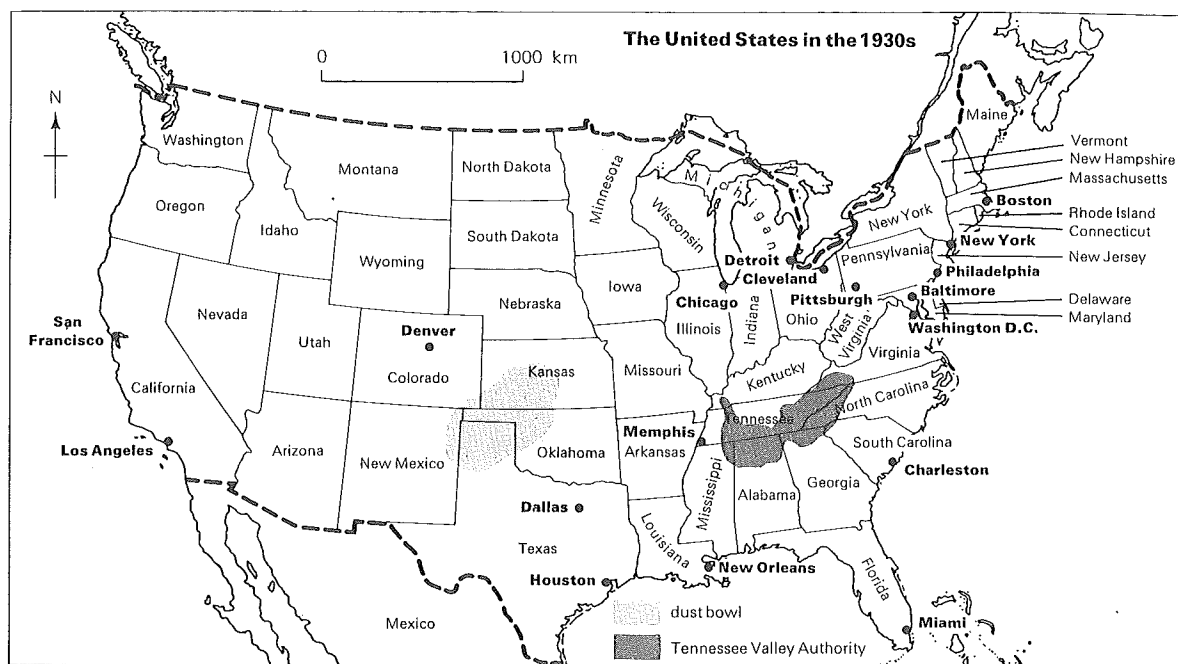
For many people the 'alphabetical agencies' were far from a joke: they seemed like a godsend. Former President Hoover could make wisecracks about FERA, CWA and the rest, but then he hadn't been hungry in the winter of 1933-34. Nor had he been in danger of losing his home by failing to keep up the payments on a mortgage. Hundreds of thousands of American citizens had felt that chilling fear and they took a very different attitude to Roosevelt's 'New Deal'.

Dear Mr. President,

This is just to tell you that everything is all right now. The man you sent found our house all right, and we went down to the bank with him and the mortgage can go on for a while longer. You remember I wrote you about losing the furniture too. Well, your man got it back for us. I never heard of a President like you.

Nor had anybody else. Roosevelt received between 5,000 and 8,000 letters a day. He and his staff were available, accessible to the people. One of his first orders as President had been that people in distress who telephoned the White House should never be cut off: someone must be found to talk to them about their problems. Roosevelt himself explained the programme of the New Deal to the people on radio, in his 'fireside chats', when he talked "like a father discussing public affairs with his family in the living room". He had a growing 'family': between 1930 and 1940 the number of American households with wireless sets rose from twelve million to twenty-eight million.

Roosevelt and the New Deal



Some people admired Roosevelt to the point of adoration: "when he locked his [leg] braces and appeared in public, people literally reached out to touch the hem of his cape". One Congressman compared him to Jesus Christ, and "in a poll among New York schoolchildren God ran a poor second to FDR". One working man, probably with the Wagner Act in mind, expressed his admiration for the President less reverently: "Mr. Roosevelt is the only man we ever had in the White House who would understand that my boss is a sonofabitch."

Unemployment in the USA, 1933-36

Year	Numbers of unemployed	Unemployed as % of the labour force
1933	12,830,000	24.9
1934	11,340,000	21.7
1935	10,610,000	20.1
1936	9,030,000	16.9

These figures begin to tell another part of the story. Four years after Roosevelt was elected President, nine million Americans were still out of a job. The agencies had worked no miracles for them: they remained on relief, many of them living in states that were unwilling to spend much on unemployment assistance. The

Social Security Act of 1935 had laid down no national rates of benefit for people in need – for the unemployed or for the 'unemployables' – nor had it set up an insurance scheme for workers who lost their jobs because of illness. Roosevelt's social security programme was little more than a promise of 'jam tomorrow'. Nor did his Works Progress Administration substitute jobs in place of relief for most of the nation's unemployed: it affected only a large minority of them – roughly about a third.

In the countryside, the AAA had got off to an unpopular start with its policy of destroying crops and livestock in an attempt to keep up agricultural prices. In 1933 vast amounts of cotton were ploughed back into the earth, and six million piglets and 200,000 sows were slaughtered – and that in a land where the poor were desperately short of both clothing and food. Even more serious was one side-effect of the AAA's policy of persuading farmers to reduce the acreage under cultivation: many tenants and share-croppers were simply driven off the land.

Between 1933 and 1935 many of the poorer people of the American countryside must have wondered whether the New Deal wasn't, in fact, a 'raw deal'. And to cap their misfortune, drought and wind turned a vast area of land into a 'Dust Bowl'.

Many of the small tenant-farmers, like the Joad

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family in John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (published in 1939), fled with their belongings west to California. They went from Texas, Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, lured by offers of work at decent rates of pay. They were the 'Okies', and Steinbeck described how they were welcomed into a land of plenty:

"In the West there was panic when the migrants multiplied on the highways. Men of property were terrified for their property. Men who had never been hungry saw the eyes of the hungry. . . . And the men of the towns and of the soft suburban country gathered to defend themselves. . . . They said: These goddamned Okies are dirty and ignorant. They're degenerate, sexual maniacs. These goddamned Okies are thieves. They'll steal anything. . . .

. . . they formed units, squads and armed them—armed them with clubs, with gas, with guns. We own the country . . . And the men who were armed did not own the land, but they thought they did. And the clerks who drilled at night owned nothing, and the little storekeepers possessed only a drawerful of debts. But even a debt is something, even a job is something. The clerk thought: I get fifteen dollars a week. S'pose a goddamn Okie would work for twelve? . . .

And the migrants streamed in on the highways and their hunger was in their eyes, and their need was in their eyes. . . . When there was work for a man, ten men fought for it—fought with a low wage. If that fella'll work for thirty cents, I'll work for twenty-five.

If he'll take twenty-five, I'll do it for twenty.

No, me, I'm hungry. I'll work for fifteen. I'll work for food. The kids. You ought to see them. Little boils, like, comin' out, an' they can't run aroun'. Give 'em some windfall fruit, an' they bloated up. Me, I'll work for a little piece of meat.

And this was good, for wages went down and prices stayed up."

As you saw on page 121, the RA, and later the FSA, tried to help some of these people. But New Deal aid to the 'Okies' was a mere drop of government goodwill into an ocean of misery.

Opponents of the New Deal

There were those who believed the New Deal went too far and spent too much in the interests of people who wouldn't try to stand on their own two feet.

There were others who believed it didn't go half far enough to provide solutions to America's economic problems and glaring social inequalities. And there were millions of Americans, from the desperate 'Okies' in the West to the haggard victims of long-term unemployment in the eastern cities, who *knew* that the New Deal was not enough: they proved it by the wretchedness of their lives. Many of them kept their early faith in Roosevelt, convinced that he would do more for them. Others were tempted away by 'messiahs' who preached the need for radical changes throughout American society. Of the three 'messiahs' who threatened to wrench the support of ordinary Americans away from Roosevelt, one was a Catholic priest (Father Charles Coughlin), and one was a country doctor (Francis Townsend). The third was a spectacularly ambitious Senator from Louisiana—Huey 'Kingfish' Long, who declared:

"All the people of America have been invited to a barbecue. God invited us all to come and eat and drink all we wanted. He smiled on our land and we grew crops of plenty to eat and wear.

He showed us the earth, the iron and other things to make anything we wanted. He unfolded to us the secrets of science so that our work might be easy. God called: 'Come to my feast'. Then what happened? Rockefeller, Morgan and their crowd stepped up and took enough for 120,000,000 people and left only enough for 5,000,000, for all the 125,000,000 to eat. And so many millions must go hungry and without these good things God gave us unless we call on them to put some of it back.

I call on you to organise Share Our Wealth societies."

Long had started his national political career as a supporter of Roosevelt. In January 1934, disappointed by the New Deal, he set up his own 'Share Our Wealth' movement. By early 1935 he claimed it had over 27,000 branches and a mailing-list of 7,500,000 people. Maybe it had, maybe it hadn't (Long was never a modest man), but the Senator's political programme certainly appealed to very large numbers of poor people. He proposed to redistribute wealth: to take away the fortunes of the very rich (like the Rockefellers and the Morgans) and to give to every family enough money to buy a house, a car and a radio. All the old people would get pensions, there would be a national minimum wage and

a shorter working week. And for those people who said that it all sounded marvellous but they didn't understand how such a share-out of the nation's wealth could be achieved, Long had a simple answer: "You don't have to. Just shut your damned eyes and believe it. That's all."

There were enough Americans willing to shut their eyes (after all, it felt better than keeping them open on familiar scenes of poverty) to make the 'Kingfish' a powerful figure in the land. But in September 1935 their dream came to an abrupt end when Long was assassinated. 'Share Our Wealth', the movement he had created to sweep him into the White House, died with him.

Like Huey Long, Father Charles Coughlin started off as a Roosevelt supporter. Like the President himself, Coughlin had a talent for broadcasting—only he was even more successful than Roosevelt. By 1934 he had the largest regular radio audience in the world, and he received more letters than any other person in the USA. Gradually he moved away from support of the New Deal into outright opposition, and in November 1934 formed his own 'National Union for Social Justice', which offered Americans a political programme strikingly similar to Italian Fascism—it was violently anti-communist, anti-trade union and anti-freedom of speech.

The historian William Manchester has described Coughlin as "exploiting aspects of the national character which were then but little understood: American innocence, the nation's yearning for simple solutions, ... and the carnival instinct for collecting shiny junk". In return for sending him money, Coughlin's supporters received a tiny chrome-plated crucifix which, the Radio Priest assured them, had "touched a relic of [Christ's] True Cross".

In the 1936 Presidential election, Coughlin and others put forward William Lemke as the candidate of the 'Union Party'. He polled fewer than a million votes. Coughlin dropped Lemke and moved further to the Right as a pedlar of political hate. He became openly anti-Semitic, referring to the New Deal as the "Jew Deal"; and his 'platoons' beat up Jews in the streets of American cities. He was a self-styled 'messiah' whose vision was, in the end, empty of anything but vicious intolerance. "When we get through with the Jews in America", he proclaimed in 1937, "they'll think the treatment they received in Germany was nothing!"

If Coughlin stood out as the fascist who attracted

most support in the USA in the 1930s, Dr. Francis Townsend was, quite simply, unique. He appealed to people whom most politicians ignored—the old—and he organised them into a political crusade. In 1934 he set up an organisation which sounded like a weak joke, 'Old Age Revolving Pensions, Limited', through which he proposed to pay \$200 a month to every citizen over the age of sixty, provided that he or she retired from work and promised to spend every last cent of his or her 'pension' within the month—whereupon he or she would get another \$200. The money for the scheme was to come from a two per cent tax on business transactions, which would be paid into a "revolving fund".

The scheme looked impractical, unworkable, daft; but it was supported by many otherwise sensible people. It appealed to a belief that America still had immense wealth which, somehow, all her citizens could tap. It put forward the far from ridiculous notion that if all the old folk retired from work, there would be more jobs for the young.

In 1935 America's old people finally got their cut of the New Deal—the Social Security Act introduced old-age pensions, but not for all. Because the new federal scheme left vast numbers of elderly Americans *without* pensions, they joined Townsend's movement in their millions. But in 1936 'Old Age Revolving Pensions, Limited' fell apart as a political organisation after Townsend's partner, Robert Clements, was found to have been revolving some of the funds into his own pocket. In the Presidential election Townsend, like Coughlin, supported Lemke; but to his credit he denounced the fascists who were trying to use the 'Union Party' for their own ends. Gradually, the man who had been called "the outstanding political sensation" of 1935 faded away as a national political figure.

The Other Opposition

Long, Coughlin and Townsend all challenged Roosevelt's influence over the broad mass of the American people. But more important, the popularity of their movements clearly revealed that many citizens were not satisfied with the President's package of New Deal reforms.

It was easy to understand why the New Deal was opposed by many employers, bankers and Republican politicians. They dismissed 'relief' as a waste of taxpayers' money and saw government regulation of in-

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dustry as a sure sign that communists were running the White House. Good old President Coolidge (see Chapter 21, page 83) had declared that "the business of America is business", and these men believed that no damn fool of a Democratic President had any business sticking his interfering nose in it. When he did interfere—especially when he appeared to support organised labour against employers—some of them were almost incoherent with rage.

Among those who kept their tempers were some whose attacks on "that man" in the White House were revealing as well as funny. This one was printed on the back of business cards:

"Four thousand years ago Moses said to his people: 'pick up your shovels, mount your asses, load your camels, and ride to the Promised Land.'

Four thousand years later Mr. Roosevelt said to HIS people: 'Throw down your shovels, sit on your asses, light up a Camel:* THIS IS the Promised Land.'"

The following jibe against FDR and all his works began with definitions of some of the other 'isms' of the 1930s:

"SOCIALISM—If you own two cows you give one to your neighbour. COMMUNISM—You give both cows to the government and the government gives you back some of the milk. FASCISM—You keep the cows but give the milk to the government, which sells some of it back to you. NEW DEALISM—You shoot both cows and milk the government."

However, most of the opposition from business men and bankers was anything but funny. Few of them would have recommended, as Father Coughlin did, that the President should be removed by "the use of bullets"; but just as few would have shed any tears over his grave. Roosevelt recognised their feelings and in his 1936 campaign for re-election he lashed back at his enemies:

"... business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking... organised money.... Never before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome their

* Camel—a brand of American cigarette.

hatred.... I should like to have it said of my first administration that in it the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second administration that in it these forces met their master!"

But well before that time President Roosevelt had met *his* master—the Supreme Court of the United States of America. In May 1935, in what became known as the "sick chicken" case, the nine justices of the Supreme Court struck down the NRA (National Recovery Administration) and threatened the rest of the New Deal. A firm which bought and sold poultry, Schechter Brothers, had been convicted of breaking an NRA 'code' by selling diseased chickens and not abiding by regulations on workers' wages and hours of work. The justices said that the power to prescribe 'codes' of employment belonged to Congress, not to the President and his agencies. They also ruled that the federal government had no authority to regulate working conditions in the Schechter Brothers' firm, since that was the business of the state in which the firm sold putrid poultry to its unfortunate customers. The "sick chickens" would stink in Roosevelt's nostrils for a long time to come.

President Again

In November 1936 Roosevelt won the Presidential election by a landslide: 27,700,000 votes to Republican Alf Landon's 16,600,000. William Lemke was simply buried in the avalanche. Despite Coughlin and Townsend, despite the opposition of "organised money", Roosevelt had triumphed. America prepared for another '100 Days', for a burst of reforms even more radical than those of 1933 to 1935. Instead, in 1937, the New Deal stopped dead in its tracks. Roosevelt asked Congress not for laws to aid the unemployed and the poor, but for reform of the Supreme Court.

According to the President, the Court was getting behind with its work and its justices were too old. He therefore recommended that if a justice didn't resign six months after his seventieth birthday, the President should be allowed to appoint an extra justice to the Court—up to a total of six extra justices in all.

His plan was a sham. What Roosevelt wanted was to 'pack' the Court with justices who would not oppose him. The Court knew it, Congress knew it, and most of the people knew it. The Court was the defender of the Constitution, the protector of the people against

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Presidents who wished to be tyrants. Even if Roosevelt didn't want to be a dictator, what guarantee could he give that he wouldn't become one if the Supreme Court was packed by 'all the President's men'?

Roosevelt's case for reforming the Court lost any force it might once have had when in March and April 1937 the Court reversed the decision of the Schechter case; and in May it declared that old-age pensions and unemployment insurance, as set up by the Social Security Act of 1935, were *constitutional*. The New Deal was safe from destruction by a conservative Court, and Roosevelt was persuaded to abandon his plan. But the damage had been done. The Democratic Party had torn itself apart over the issue; and an angry Congress would now resist making more New Deal reforms into law.

Sit-downs and Recession

Back in 1935 militant trade unionists had formed the Committee for Industrial Organisation (CIO), whose aim was the formation of single unions for each major industry in America to bring pressure to bear on employers for higher wages and better working conditions. The CIO and its members backed Roosevelt in the 1936 election—and they gave him \$770,000 to help pay for his campaign, as well as their votes. When Roosevelt was re-elected, the trade unionists decided the time was ripe for taking on their most powerful enemies, America's biggest industrial corporations—US Steel, the Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Firestone Tire and Rubber, General Electric, American Woolen, and the rest of the giants. Walk-out strikes were no longer effective enough so trade unionists organised 'sit-downs', occupations of factories by strikers. Company bosses up and down the country responded by taking new employees on their payrolls—strike-breakers. A striker in a General Motors factory in Flint described one of the inevitable clashes:

"A hundred of us started walking through the plant calling a sit-down. The company police and thugs sprung up from nowhere. They kept them shut in the employment office and sprung them loose on us. In a moment there was fighting everywhere. Fighters were rolling on the floor. They had clubs and we were un-

armed. They starting shooting off tear gas. I saw one fellow hit on the head and when he swung backwards he cut his head on the machinery. He started to stagger out. Two of the thugs knocked him down again. I let go on a couple of thugs. You kind of go crazy when you see thugs beating up men you know."

Some employers, notably Henry Ford, were prepared to fight to their last hired hoodlum, but most gave in rather than risk pitched battles in factories stuffed with expensive machinery. By 1938 it was clear that the trade unionists had come out on top, but it was far from a complete victory of the workers against the bosses: by 1940 only twenty-eight per cent of America's non-agricultural workers were members of trade unions. Even so, it was a vital battle to have won and one in which Roosevelt indirectly helped the workers by refusing to use force to eject sit-down strikers.

But if 1937 was a good year for the organisers of industrial unions, it meant disaster for millions of others. In June Roosevelt, worried about inflation, cut government spending on two of his major relief agencies, the WPA and the PWA. At the same time the federal government was taking large sums of money from people in new social security taxes. This meant that demand for goods went down, which put more and more people out of work. America lurched back into the darkness of the worst Depression years.

In April 1938 Roosevelt altered course. Instead of cutting spending further, he asked Congress for huge funds with which to face the new emergency. Congress obliged, with nearly \$1,000,000,000 for the PWA and \$1,400,000,000 for the WPA; and slowly the economy began to recover.

Over in Germany, the Nazis crowed gleefully that the New Deal had failed and that its failure was one more proof that democratic governments could not cope with economic depression. In Washington DC Roosevelt believed the New Deal had not failed, that it had bought Americans time to think out ways of coming to grips with profound economic and social problems. He knew that the events of 1937 and 1938 had severely harmed his own reputation; that the New Deal was beginning to look old and tarnished. No American had ever been elected President three times. It was unlikely that he would break that record.

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Hammer and Sickle

In an extraordinary period of ten years, between 1928 and 1938, Joseph Stalin forced the people of the Soviet Union through the most rapid and far-reaching changes in their ways of life that any people in history had ever been made to accept and take part in. But before we can understand what Stalin did to the Soviet Union and why, we have to grasp some of the features of that country as it was before he came to power.

Back in 1925 (a date well within the lifetimes of some of your grandparents) the country had been ruled by Communists for only eight years. In the first three of those eight years, Russia had been grievously mutilated by a vicious civil war and her people had spent the next five years picking up the pieces of their shattered lives. Lenin's New Economic Policy (see Chapter 13, page 56), which in 1921 allowed private trade and small-scale private industry to start up again, was an admission that together the Great War and the civil war had reduced the Russian economy to a shambles. There was little to suggest that in the rubble there were the makings of a thrusting, industrialised super-power.

In the vastness of the new USSR there were few great cities: the land east of the Ural Mountains was, for the most part, an under-populated wilderness. Russia's rivers flowed unused or under-used to the seas; and enormous mineral deposits lay untouched underground. There were railways—even from Lenin-grad to Vladivostock—but other modern forms of transport were rarely to be seen. In 1925, in the whole of the Soviet Union, there were 7,448 cars, 5,500 lorries, and just 263 buses!



Just pause for a moment to think about that emblem of the new Communist state. The hammer was the symbol of the industrial workers, the proletariat; and

the sickle represented those who worked on the land: together they would forge a new society of equals, a new prosperity in which all would share. But if we used those symbols to represent the real Russia of 1925, and not the dream, the sickle would be a great deal larger than the hammer: fewer than twenty out of every hundred people lived in towns or cities. Apart from a few nomads, the rest were peasants—120 million of them—and to a fervent Communist they felt like the dead weight of Russian history: conservative, narrow-minded and superstitious; working from sunrise to sunset in the summer, and spending the long Russian winter on top of the stoves in their wretched hovels, counting fleas.

In contrast, we can make a less one-sided generalisation. Most peasants were desperately poor, and many farmed the land as if the twentieth century had not yet begun. As late as 1928, five-and-a-half million families still broke the earth with a *wooden* plough; half the grain harvest was reaped by scythes and sickles; and forty per cent of the crop was threshed with flails.

There were, of course, the richer peasants, the *kulaks*, who owned farm machinery, employed other peasants or labourers, and produced surplus food to sell to the towns. Some of them acted as the local moneylenders—and the very word *kulak*, which meant 'fist', was originally a term of abuse for peasants who made loans at high rates of interest. The *kulaks* were hated by some peasants and envied by more. They were the local boys who had made good—though it was a very poor 'good' by Western standards: most of them owned no more than two cows and two horses and employed no more than one labourer, and even then for only a few months in the year.

Left and Right

Somehow the Communist Party had to make the hammer and the sickle work together. But as agriculture recovered from the civil war more quickly than industry, so food prices went down and the prices of manufactured goods continued to go up. Peasants had no incentive to sell their surplus food to the towns, so they either ate it themselves, fed it to their animals or kept it in store. It seemed that if the peasants could not get the manufactured goods they wanted from the

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towns at reasonable prices, then the towns could starve. Yet many Communists believed that to develop the production of such things as clothing, footwear and kitchen utensils, at the expense of heavy industries (such as coal, oil, iron and steel), would be a suicidal policy. Their new state *had* to be made stronger to resist armed attacks which might soon come from the capitalist nations of Western Europe.

Within the Party two groups emerged, each with its own approach to the problem. The moderates (later to be damned as “right-wing deviationists”) were led by Bukharin and Rykov, and they believed it essential to continue with Lenin’s NEP, perhaps for as long as twenty years. They thought that any attempt to force the peasants to part with their surplus crops would lead to rebellion in the countryside and starvation in the towns. Communism could not be built in the Soviet Union in a fortnight or six months, but only at a pace which 120 million peasants would accept.

The ‘Left Opposition’ was impatient. Its leading figures included Trotsky, Preobrazhensky and (from 1925) Zinoviev and Kamenev; and they believed that Russia must be industrialised more rapidly than the NEP would allow. They were convinced that the capitalist nations would try to destroy the new Communist state; so the safety and development of the Soviet Union depended first and foremost on the international revolutionary movement bringing communists to power in the advanced countries of the West. They insisted that, in the meantime, Russia could not afford to wait for the NEP to create enough wealth to pay for massive investments in heavy industry. The Party must take the lead by mobilising shock troops, groups of dedicated Communists, to build new factories, railways and canals, and sink new mines. But they offered no real solution to the basic problem of how to persuade the peasants to provide the grain needed for export and to feed the towns.

Where did Stalin stand in all this? Between 1923 and 1927 he supported the moderates because he needed their support to defeat his chief rivals for supreme power—most of whom, like Trotsky, were members of the Left Opposition. Stalin was considered by most people in the Party a rather dull committee man—from 1921 he was General Secretary of the Party Central Committee, member of the Politburo, the Party’s policy making body, and member of the Orgburo, which ran the Party organisation. What they didn’t realise was that dull bureaucrats are capable of quietly acquiring

a great deal of power for themselves. As General Secretary of the Party Central Committee, Stalin was able to appoint his supporters as full-time Party officials throughout the country. This meant that he could easily call on his supporters to vote against Trotsky’s schemes. At public meetings, for example in factories, he instructed his yes-men to boo and shout down Trotsky and his followers. In the Politburo and in meetings of the Party Central Committee, Stalin’s creatures made sure that Trotsky’s proposals were always rejected.

Trotsky had once been second only to Lenin in the Party leadership. He was a hero of the Revolution, the founder of the Red Army, Commissar for War. But as Stalin’s control of the Party increased, so Trotsky’s power and prestige declined. In 1925 he was forced to give up his post as Commissar. In 1927, along with Kamenev and Zinoviev, he was removed from the Politburo and then expelled from the Party. A year later he was forced into exile abroad. Now Stalin was able to push the Soviet Union further to the left than the Left Opposition had ever dared to propose, but under a different slogan. Trotsky had spoken of Russia as the headquarters of “International Socialism”: Stalin was going to industrialise the USSR under the banner of “Socialism in One Country”.

The Plan

From the earliest days the Russian Communists had believed in planning. As soon as they came to power, the Bolsheviks had set up VSNKH (the Supreme Council of National Economy) (see page 55). In 1921 *Gosplan* (the State Planning Commission) had been created as a kind of board of management for all the major industries and public services. The work of VSNKH and *Gosplan* was to estimate the production and profits likely to be made by different sections of agriculture and industry and to decide the best ways of increasing them.

In 1927 they were asked to do something different. There was to be an “all-union plan, which . . . would facilitate the maximum development of economic regions on the basis of their specialisations, . . . and the maximum utilisation of their resources for the purpose of industrialisation of the country”—a plan not to guide but to force through economic change. When the Plan was published in 1929 it was clear that the government of the Soviet Union had abandoned planning in the old

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sense. The first Five-Year Plan was a blue-print for a *command economy*: it was a list of targets for industries, power supplies and transport; targets which were not just expected but demanded.

Under Joseph Stalin plans would now have the force of government orders. A look at the chart which follows will tell you that considerable force would be needed. The first column records what was actually produced in the year 1927–28; the second column shows what the government wanted to achieve by 1933; and the third column reveals what was called the “optimal variant” – or, in everyday language, the Communist Party’s wildest dreams.

Some industrial targets in the first Five-Year Plan

Industry	1927–28	Target for 1933	‘Optimal variant’
Electricity (<i>milliard kWh</i>)	5.05	17.0	22.0
Coal (<i>million tonnes</i>)	35.4	68.0	75.0
Oil (<i>million tonnes</i>)	11.7	19.0	22.0
Pig-iron (<i>million tonnes</i>)	3.3	8.0	10.0
Steel (<i>million tonnes</i>)	4.0	8.3	10.4

To come within reach of even the lower targets of the Plan would require immense efforts from the Russian people. It would also require answers to be given to the questions which had been raised earlier in the twenties by Bukharin and Trotsky about the relationships between the industrial hammer and the peasant sickle. For example, how could the government guarantee supplies of food to the towns if they developed heavy industries at the expense of those producing goods for the peasants to buy? How could the government buy vital foreign-made machinery if the peasants would not release enough grain to sell abroad? And how could the targets of the Plan be met unless there was an enormous increase in the numbers of industrial workers? The stock answer to those questions was that the peasants should be persuaded gradually to join their small plots of land together to make farms large enough to use modern machinery and advanced agricultural techniques. Production would increase; and since fewer farm-workers would be needed, the surplus labour could be released for work

in industry. In 1927 Stalin had publicly given his support to the idea:

“The way out is to unite the small and dwarf peasant farms gradually but surely, not by pressure but by example and persuasion, into large farms based on common, cooperative; collective cultivation of the land ... there is no other way out.”

But that was before the first Five-Year Plan had made it clear that methods of gradual persuasion had been abandoned in the Soviet Union. In late 1929 Stalin announced his unexpected and brutal answer to all the questions about the peasants: they were to be ‘collectivised’ at once.

Collectives and Kulaks

But what was ‘collectivisation’? What was a *kolkhoz* (collective farm)? That was the curious thing about this farming revolution that happened slap-bang in the middle of the Plan: no-one had prepared for it; no army of experts had worked out what to do with 120 million bewildered peasants.

As the orders were sent to local party leaders to carry out collectivisation, only one thing was clear: the peasants of a village must pool their land and their equipment and work in future under the orders of a collective farm committee over which the Party would keep a tight control. But no other details were given: it was left unclear whether a collective should pay its workers ‘by eaters’ (according to the number of mouths in a worker’s family), according to the work they did, or according to the tools they contributed. In some areas peasants were allowed to keep their livestock: in others, the cows, pigs, sheep, goats, horses and chickens were all collectivised. And the same was true of the peasants’ small vegetable plots.

In February 1930 it was announced that half the peasant population of the Soviet Union had joined collective farms. Just think what that meant: sixty million people uprooted and re-settled in less than two months! And then suddenly Stalin put a stop to it. He declared that on the collectives “small vegetable gardens, small orchards, the dwelling houses, some of the dairy cattle, small livestock, poultry, etc. are *not socialised*”. Well, well, well! – if the cows were allowed to leave the collectives, maybe the peasants were too. Some villagers decided to break up the collectives, and to their astonishment no-one stopped them (except in

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key grain-producing areas such as the Ukraine). By June half the collectivised peasants had withdrawn. And Stalin had got what he wanted – with the Party officials off their backs, the peasants got on with the vital spring sowing of Russia’s crops.

It was only a temporary halt. When the harvest was in, collectivisation started up again. By July 1931, fifty-three per cent of all peasant families were on collective farms; by July 1932, sixty-two per cent. Some peasants resisted as best they could, determined to hand nothing over to the local Party tyrants. In his novel *The Soil Upturned*, Mikhail Sholokov described what happened in just one village:

“Stock was slaughtered every night in Gremyachy Log. Hardly had dusk fallen when the muffled, short bleats of sheep, the death-squeals of pigs, or the lowing of calves could be heard. Both those who had joined the *kolkhoz* and individual farmers killed their stock. Bulls, sheep, pigs, even cows were slaughtered, as well as calves for breeding. The horned stock of Gremyachy was halved in two nights. The dogs began to drag entrails about the village; cellars and barns were filled with meat ... ‘Kill, it’s not ours any more ...’ ‘Kill, they’ll take it for meat anyway ...’ ‘Kill, you won’t get meat in the *kolkhoz* ...’ crept the insidious rumours. And they killed ...”

And the government took away from the peasants more grain than ever to feed the towns and to sell in exchange for foreign currencies. You can see below the effects of collectivisation on grain production, and imagine the effects of the government biting into harvest yields with its “state grain procurements”.

Grain harvests and procurements (in millions of tonnes)

	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Grain harvest	73.3	71.7	83.5	69.5	69.6	68.4
State grain procurements	10.8	16.1	22.1	22.8	18.5	22.6

In places the chaos caused by collectivisation, the smaller harvests (except for that of 1930) and savage state procurements led to famine. Many peasants could not feed themselves, let alone save the seed for next year’s sowing or feed their animals. You have already read something of a massive butchery of animals in Russia’s villages. You can now see the effects of that

great blood-letting and of the shortage of fodder on Russia’s livestock population.

Livestock (million head)

	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Cattle	70.5	67.1	52.5	47.9	40.7	38.4
Pigs	26.0	20.4	13.6	14.4	11.6	12.1
Sheep and goats	146.7	147.0	108.8	77.7	52.1	50.2

If the ways of life of most of Russia’s peasants were brutally and permanently changed by collectivisation, the *kulaks* suffered worse: they were obliterated. In a speech in December 1929 Stalin had described the fate he had in store for those better-off peasants whose ‘wealth’ we described on page 128:

“We have passed from the policy of restricting the exploiting tendencies of the *kulaks* to the policy of eliminating the *kulaks* as a class. ... To launch an offensive against the *kulaks* means that we must prepare for it and then strike at the *kulaks*, strike so hard as to prevent them from rising to their feet again. ...”

Stalin’s language was unmistakable. It was a declaration of war against a million Russian families. To those who argued that the *kulaks* should be allowed to enter the collectives, Stalin’s answer was firm: “Of course not, for they are sworn enemies of the collective farm movement.”

The “enemies” were divided into three categories. Those described as “actively hostile” to the government were handed over to the OGPU (the political police) and put in concentration camps, while their families were deported to the north, the Far East and Siberia. The wealthiest were also rounded up and deported. The third category, the poorer *kulaks*, were allowed to stay in their own regions but given the poorest land to farm and required to hand over to the state large quantities of grain and to pay very high taxes. If they failed to deliver their produce or their taxes, they were deported. In reality, it didn’t seem to make much difference which category you were in. According to the historian Alec Nove, “it is quite probable that in the end all the persons described as *kulaks* were in fact deported”.

You will notice that Professor Nove is not *certain* about the fate of all the *kulaks*. No-one can be: we do

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not have all the facts. Deportation must have been, in most cases, a sentence of death, by cold or by hunger, in forced-labour camps where the *kulaks* helped to build, among other things, new industrial cities. Professor Nove has calculated that in 1929 there were about four-and-a-half million people in *kulak* families. A French historian, Professor Sorlin, has estimated that three million of them died as a result of deportation. We can only guess at what happened to the other one-and-a-half million – and our guesses can hardly be anything but gloomy.

The *kulaks* performed a last service for their country: the treatment dealt out to them frightened other, poorer peasants ‘voluntarily’ into Stalin’s collectives. The sickles had been forced into a new relationship with the hammers of the proletariat. Watched over in the collectives by Party officials and police, their task was now to pay for the industrialisation of the Soviet Union. They would pay in taxes and in the proportions of the crops the state took from them. The *kulaks*, who would not have bent easily, had simply been broken and discarded.

The Plan and the People

On page 130 we described some of the targets set for various industries in the first Five-Year Plan. Let us now look at what was actually achieved by 1932. (You could, at this stage, make your own chart or block graph to record the differences between the planners’ targets and actual outputs.)

Some industrial production figures in 1932, at the end of the first Five-Year Plan

Target for 1933 17 →	Electricity (milliard kWh)	13.4
68 →	Coal (million tonnes)	64.3
11 →	Oil (million tonnes)	21.4
80 →	Pig-iron (million tonnes)	6.2
8.3 →	Steel (million tonnes)	5.9

It will not have taken you long to work out that only one of those industries, oil, reached its target. But before you are tempted to write off the Plan as a failure, consider these facts. Late in 1929 it had been decided to ‘complete’ the Five-Year Plan in a little over four

years. In that short time the output of electricity had been more than doubled, while the output of oil, coal and pig-iron had all been nearly doubled. And in 1932 there were factories and power stations still being built, and oil-wells and mine-shafts being sunk, which would all pay off handsomely in the future. Consider also that much of the work had been done by uneducated, and often illiterate, peasants who had been recruited or had fled in terror from the collectivised countryside – men and women who had never seen an electric light before, let alone a lathe, a conveyor belt or a furnace.

The planners had expected to add an extra 800,000 workers to an industrial labour force of just over three million. Instead, by 1932, there were nearly six-and-a-half million people employed in large-scale industries. It was a sharp contrast to what was happening in the depressed capitalist countries of the West, but it brought its own fearsome problems of how to feed, how to clothe and how to house vast numbers of new industrial workers and their families. You have already seen that the peasants were made to ‘solve’ the food supply problem: by the end of 1929 the allocation of that food to the people in the towns was being made through a system of rationing. And gradually rationing was applied to manufactured consumer goods as well as to food, which meant, in many cases, that if you needed a new coat or a pair of boots, you didn’t get them. The footwear and clothing industries came a long way down Stalin’s list of priorities.

Altogether, something like thirteen million men, women and children were added to the populations of the USSR’s towns and cities in the period of the first Five-Year Plan. Many were brought to established cities in the western and central regions, cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, Kazan and Gorki (the new name of Nizhni Novgorod). Others volunteered or were forced to move to the Urals, to Siberia, to the Far East, where the first task was to build the new industrial towns they were to work in – towns like Magnitogorsk, Karaganda and Stalinsk.

In the old cities there was appalling overcrowding, with several families sharing one room and kitchen-space in apartment-buildings that came to look more like warrens than living quarters. And Professor Sorlin has described what a typical new town (in this case Stalino, in the west) looked like:

“... endless streets laid out on the grid pattern ran right up to the mine shafts; the persistent smell of coal and

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smoke fouled the air; outside the city centre, there were no pavements and hardly any roads, only huge avenues – which were too wide and usually untarred – where carts and trucks raised clouds of dust. The new quarters were almost always ugly. . . . housing was still extremely scarce; a family of five with two rooms considered itself fortunate. . . . The government erected two or three prominent public buildings in each city – a university, a ‘palace of culture’ and a department store – and, having made this bow to the concept of public, proletarian luxury, it finished off with the cheapest possible housing.”

Everywhere the impression was one of haste, of building tomorrow today and never mind the petty comforts of everyday life. In a speech to industrial managers in February 1931, Stalin explained why speed was essential, why a slow-down was unthinkable:

“Do you want our Socialist fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence? If you do not want this you must put an end to this backwardness as speedily as possible and develop genuine Bolshevik speed in building up the Socialist system of economy. There are no other ways. . . . We are fifty to a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us.”

Anything could be, and would be, sacrificed in the cause, and that included the Marxist principle of ‘egalitarianism’, of treating men as equals. Marx had taught that in a communist society people would work for the common good, not for selfish, private gain: “to each according to his need; from each according to his ability”. Stalin now taught that until the Soviet Union could produce enough to satisfy everyone’s needs, egalitarianism was mere pie in the sky. Workers who acquired new skills and stayed in their jobs were paid the highest wages. But in times when even high wages could not buy (openly or on the black market) scarce foods and consumer goods, the government also rewarded the more valuable workers and, of course, the ever-increasing numbers of officials with ‘perks’. Such benefits included permission to buy scarce goods in shops which were closed to ordinary citizens, the allocation of a decent place to live in, and permits to buy clothes which would not fall apart after a couple of months. Nadezhda Mandelstam, the wife of the poet, Osip Mandelstam, recalled in later years how

deeply privileges and ‘perks’ bit into the new Soviet Communism:

“... even the medicine you get depends on your status. I once complained about this in the presence of a Soviet official who held high rank before his retirement. I said medicine was something everybody needed. ‘What do you mean, everybody?’ he asked. ‘Do you expect me to get the same treatment as a cleaning woman?’ He was a kind and perfectly decent person, but nobody was unaffected by the ‘fight against egalitarianism’.”

Saboteurs and Slaves

If workers in factories and mines, on building sites and collectives reached or surpassed their targets, they were rewarded. But how could the government deal with those who failed? And an even more difficult question: how could it explain the apparent failure of whole sectors of Soviet industry?

It could not be admitted, in public, that the planners, or the Great Planner himself, had made mistakes. If Stalin was seen to have made or approved impossible targets, then how could he justify the terrible sacrifices he had demanded of the people? The answer was that the finger was never pointed openly at him. Nor was it pointed at the other real reasons for failure to achieve targets – at peasants who broke machines, not out of malice but because they hadn’t a clue how to work them; at Russia’s inability to pay for all the foreign machinery she desperately needed; at a transport system which could not meet the new demands made upon it.

Instead, the blame was placed on “them” – on murky enemies who worked silently and in the dark to sabotage the great work of Comrade Stalin and the Soviet people. Let us take just one example – the official explanation of why the railway system could not do what was asked of it by 1933. The real reasons were fairly clear: there was not enough railway track (only 5,500 kilometres of new track had been laid down, while the first Five-Year Plan had demanded an extra 16,000 kilometres); there were not enough spare parts for the old and overworked engines and wagons; and there were not enough skilled technicians to repair and run the system. But the official explanation put the blame squarely on “them”:

“Until now many party cells show class blindness and

do not unmask class enemies who creep into the railways and attempt to wreck and disrupt. As a result, class enemies, white guardists [anti-Reds], *kulaks*, still have the opportunity here and there on the railways to creep into 'modest' and 'insignificant' jobs, like those of greasers, and . . . they carry on their wrecking, becoming organisers of crashes and accidents, destroying essential parts of the railway and disorganising its work. . . . To raise the level of watchfulness over the class enemy which has crawled into transport, to show up and unmask every kind of open and hidden saboteur so that . . . their criminal activities can be ended, that is the duty of every communist . . ."

It would have been laughable if it had not been so threatening: for "watchfulness" was not just the "duty of every communist"; it was at the very heart of the job of the secret police, once called the *Cheka* and now vastly enlarged as the *OGPU*, headed by Genrikh Yagoda. Like the *Gestapo*, which was soon to be set up in Hitler's Germany (see Chapter 25, page 113), the *OGPU*'s task was not only to root out and destroy opposition but to terrorise ordinary people into silence and passive obedience.

The *OGPU*'s job did not end with the close supervision of the Soviet people going about their daily business. When the People's Courts dealt out sentences of death, Yagoda's men did the shooting; and when prisoners were sentenced to exile or to periods of forced labour they were handed back to the police who had arrested them. The shadow of the *gulag* (the system of forced labour camps) spread over the land. No-one knows exactly how many prisoners (or *zeks*) they held, though the historian Martin Gilbert has estimated a minimum of three-quarters of a million as early as 1930.

The *zeks* may have been sentenced to five years or ten, or to longer periods, in the camps. In effect they were slaves at the disposal of the *OGPU*, and their lives were lavishly spent by their masters on construction sites and in mines. Machinery was expensive; *zek* labour was free and easily replaced. Between September 1931 and April 1933 a canal was built between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea. Altogether about 300,000 prisoners worked on its construction of whom it is 'estimated' (again that hazy word when we try to count Stalin's victims) that at least 100,000 died.

Victors and Victims

As night followed day, so a second Five-Year Plan was to follow the first. Drawn up in 1932, the plan was to cover the period 1933–37, and the Party planners showed all their old enthusiasm for making other people work harder. By 1937 the Soviet Union would be producing, so they said 22 million tonnes of pig-iron, 250 million tonnes of coal and 90 million tonnes of oil, not to mention 100 milliard kWh of electricity.

It was just not on. The Soviet people could not maintain the frantic pace of the first plan, could not shrug off the widespread famine which killed peasants like flies in 1933. The targets for the second five-year period had to be scaled down, and new figures were finally agreed at the 17th Congress of the Communist Party which met early in 1934.

Some of the revised targets for industries in 1934

Electricity	
(milliard kWh)	38.0
Coal	
(million tonnes)	152.5
Oil	
(million tonnes)	46.8
Pig-iron	
(million tonnes)	16.0
Steel	
(million tonnes)	17.0

That congress was called the 'Congress of Victors', a meeting of a Party which had put an end to the NEP, liquidated the *kulaks*, collectivised seven out of every ten peasants, and taken the first giant strides along the road to industrialisation. But there were people present, powerful people, who believed that enough was enough—that now was the time to end the bloodshed, relax the terror and cut Comrade Stalin down to size. Again, no-one knows for certain what happened, but we are now reasonably sure that at a secret session of Party leaders it was decided to reduce Stalin's influence and increase the power of Sergei Kirov, the popular secretary of the Leningrad Party organisation.

On 1 December 1934, Kirov was shot, almost certainly on Stalin's orders. The assassin and thirteen others were tried in secret and executed. Two old Bolsheviks, Kamenev and Zinoviev (do you remember them from page 129 as leaders of the Left Opposition in the twenties?), were tried and imprisoned. And that was merely the beginning of Stalin's purge of the

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Party: where once he had paddled in blood, now he would swim in it.

The OGPU (renamed the NKVD in 1934) began its work of rounding up those suspected of opposition. Two of Stalin's chief supporters, Zhdanov and Khrushchev, took over as the party chiefs in Leningrad and Moscow; and in 1936 police-chief Yagoda was replaced by another of Stalin's creatures, the unspeakable Yezhov. In that year and in 1937 'show trials' were held in Moscow. To the astonishment of the Soviet people, old heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution stood up in open court and 'confessed' their parts in plots to overthrow the government and kill Stalin. The NKVD had worked on them for months: they knew what they had to say.

One by one they followed Kirov to the grave. Kamenev and Zinoviev were shot in 1936, Bukharin and Rykov in 1938. Of the seven men who had controlled the Party after Lenin's death in 1924, only three escaped being gunned down: Tomsky took his own life in 1936; and Trotsky was finally hunted down and his head smashed with an ice-axe in Mexico in 1940. Which left Stalin.

One of those who survived the purge of the Party leadership, Nikita Khrushchev, would later tot up the 'victors' who became 'victims':

"Of the 139 members and candidates of the Party's Central Committee who were elected at the Seventeenth Congress, 98 persons, i.e. seventy per cent, were arrested and shot. . . . Of 1,966 delegates . . . 1,108 persons were arrested on charges of counter-revolutionary crimes, i.e. decidedly more than half."

The old leaders did not just confess and disappear: they were rubbed out of history. Nadezhda Mandelstam described how a little girl showed her one way in which that was done.

"She showed us her school textbooks where the portraits of Party leaders had thick pieces of paper pasted over them as one by one they fell into disgrace – this the children had to do on instructions from their teacher. . . . At this time the editors of encyclopaedias and reference books were sending subscribers . . . lists of articles that had to be pasted over or cut out. . . . With every new arrest, people went through their books and burned the works of disgraced leaders in their stoves."

It could not, and did not, stop there. The Red Army

was purged (at least one-fifth of all its officers were shot); the NKVD was encouraged to purge itself; and local Party officials disappeared by the thousands. And what happened to the ordinary people of the Soviet Union? They were at the mercy of a state which used imprisonment and murder as political weapons to discipline citizens into obedience and to punish slackers and critics. Millions disappeared into the *gulag*; and the rest trembled, especially at night, for that was when the police called. Osip Mandelstam was taken at night. "Why do you complain?" he had once asked his wife. "Poetry is respected only in this country – people are killed for it. There's no place where more people are killed for it."

They were killed for all kinds of reasons – for having known the wrong people, for saying the wrong thing, or not saying the right thing. Nadezhda heard how:

" . . . mothers prepared their children for life by teaching them the sacred language of their seniors. 'My children love Stalin most of all, me only second,' Pasternak's* wife, Zinaida Nikolayevna, used to say. Others did not go so far, but nobody confided their doubts to their children: why condemn them to death?"

Everyone 'loved' Stalin: in the public worship of the Leader lay the hope of safety from his terror. Solzhenitsyn has described how people loved him at a district Party conference in Moscow Province in 1938.

"At the conclusion of the conference, a tribute to Comrade Stalin was called for. Of course, everyone stood up (just as everyone had leapt to his feet during the conference at every mention of his name). The small hall echoed with 'stormy applause, rising to an ovation'. For three minutes, four minutes, five minutes, the 'stormy applause, rising to an ovation' continued. But palms were getting sore, and raised arms were already aching. . . . However, who would dare be the *first* to stop? After all, NKVD men were standing in the hall applauding and waiting to see *who* quit first! And in that obscure, small hall, unknown to the Leader, the applause went on – six, seven, eight minutes! . . . They couldn't stop now till they collapsed with heart attacks! At the rear of the hall, which was crowded, they could of course cheat a bit, clap less fre-

*Boris Pasternak, author of the novel *Dr. Zhivago*.



The cult of the Leader: Stalin in 1937.

quently, less vigorously, not so eagerly – but up there with the presidium where everyone could see them? The director of the local paper factory, an independent and strong-minded man, stood with the presidium. Aware of all the falsity and all the impossibility of the situation, he still kept on applauding! Nine minutes! Ten! In anguish he watched the secretary of the District Party Committee but the latter dared not stop. Insanity! ... Then, after eleven minutes, the director of the paper factory assumed a businesslike expression and sat down in his seat. And, oh, a miracle took place! ... To a man, everyone else stopped dead and sat down. They had been saved!...

– That, however, was how they discovered who the independent people were. And that was how they went about eliminating them. That same night the factory director was arrested. They easily pasted ten years [in a labour camp] on him on the pretext of something quite different.”

Soviet Progress and its Price

Let us now look at what the people actually achieved during the Great Terror, and at how near they came to reaching the targets of the second Five-Year Plan. (If you made a chart or block graph of the targets

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and achievements of the first plan, you might do a similar exercise for the second plan, using the figures on page 134 and the ones below.)

Some industrial production figures in 1937, at the end of the second Five-Year Plan

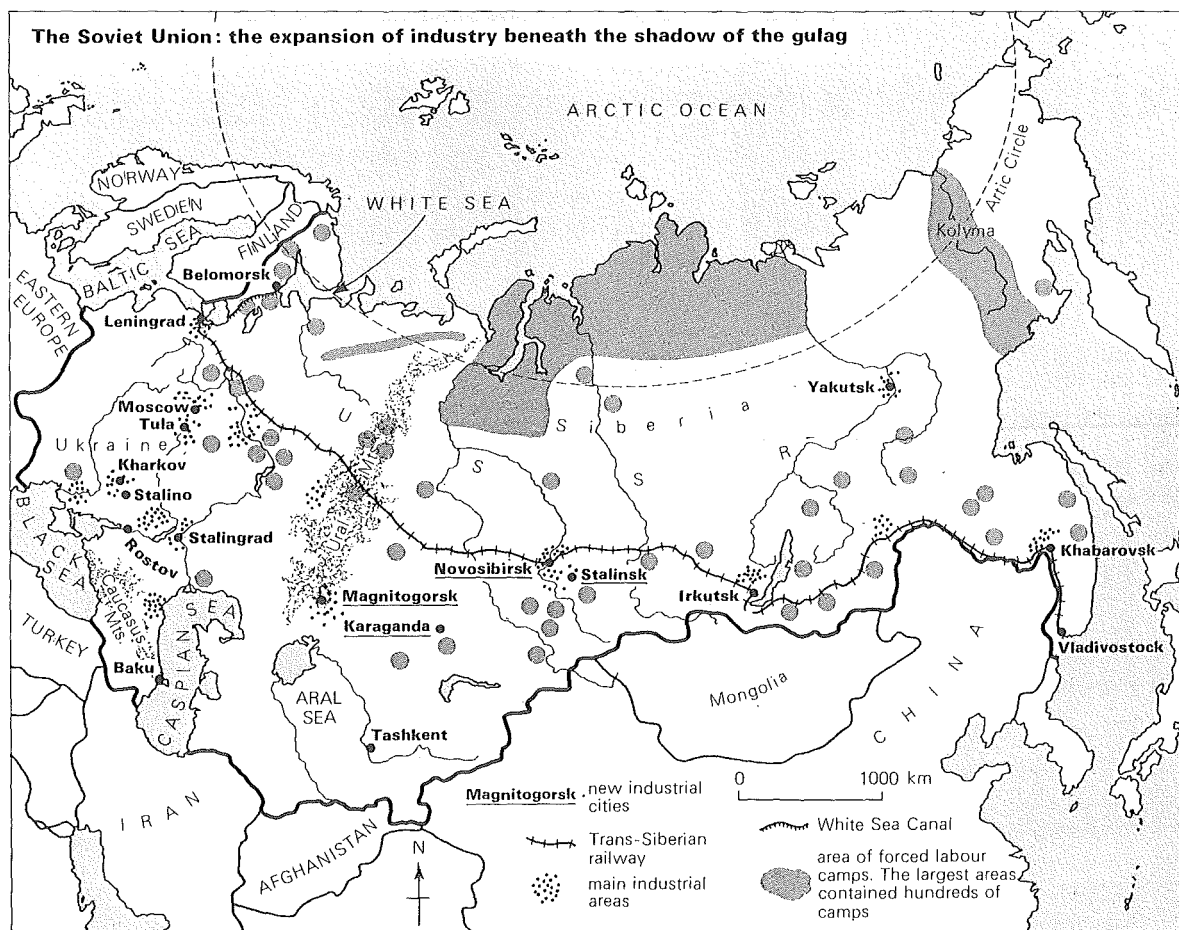
Electricity	
(<i>milliard kWh</i>)	36.2
Coal	
(<i>million tonnes</i>)	128.0
Oil	
(<i>million tonnes</i>)	28.5
Pig-iron	
(<i>million tonnes</i>)	14.5
Steel	
(<i>million tonnes</i>)	17.7

Again the targets had not been reached, except for steel. But look back to Russian production figures for 1927–28, the year before the first plan, and consider

just how much had been done in less than ten years. By any standards, it was a staggering achievement.

Russian society had been wrenched out of its old patterns. By 1937, nine out of every ten peasants had been collectivised: and the countryside was cultivated by the workers of 243,000 *kolkhozes* and nearly 4,000 state farms. Production of food had begun to recover from the chaos of the early thirties: the grain harvest of 1937 yielded 97.4 million tonnes; and by 1938 there were in the Soviet Union nearly fifty-one million head of cattle, well over twenty-five million pigs and more than sixty-six million sheep and goats – most of them the private property of collectivised peasants.

The urban population had continued to expand very rapidly: during the period of the second Five-Year Plan another sixteen million people were added to Russia's already overcrowded towns and cities. By 1939, when the total population of the USSR had risen to over 170



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million, 33 out of every 100 people were town-dwellers. And gradually, after the rationing of food was ended in 1935, workers' standards of living began to improve, although they nowhere near approached those of the country's seven million civil servants and officials. A factory director or a government planning specialist could earn up to 4,000 roubles a month in 1937—twenty-five times as much as an ordinary workman.

But even so, many workers were given opportunities to train for skilled, higher-paid jobs; all workers' children now got a free primary education; and increasing numbers of people had access to better medical facilities. Much of that was good—it was what we can all recognise as 'progress'. The Soviet Union was still a poor country, but by 1938 it was no longer poor as old Russia had been. Although many of its people were hungry, ill-clothed and crowded into inadequate housing, they no longer lived under the old threats of periodic famine and epidemic disease.

But that progress had been bought at an appalling price. We have counted some of the cost in earlier sections of this chapter. The map on the previous page will tell you more about what was achieved and how people paid for it with their freedom and their lives.

Let us remind ourselves of the price in human terms. There is no point in trying to estimate the total number of *zeks* in the *gulag* in 1938, or 1939, or 1940. No-one knows—or if someone does, he hasn't yet dared to print it. Still, would it be worse if the number turned out to be ten million instead of five million?

According to the map, the Kolyma is a place in the USSR—distant, bleak and cold, but still just a place. According to a man, Ivan Karpunich-Braven, the Kolyma meant the destruction of all civilised values, the descent of man below the level of the beasts.

“The prisoners were so famished that at Zarosshy Spring they ate the corpse of a horse which had been lying dead for more than a week and which not only stank but was covered with flies and maggots. At Utiny Goldfields the *zeks* ate half a barrel of lubricating grease, brought there to grease the wheelbarrows. At Mylga they ate Iceland moss, like the deer. Multitudes of 'goners', unable to walk by themselves, were dragged to work on sledges by other 'goners' who had not yet become quite so weak. Those who lagged behind were beaten with clubs and torn by dogs.”

In these pages we have met Nadezhda, wife of the poet Osip Mandelstam. In June 1940 she learnt that she was a widow when Osip's death certificate was passed on to her.

“The issue of the death certificate was not the rule but the exception. To all intents and purposes, as far as his civil status was concerned, a person could be considered dead from the moment he was sent to a camp, or, indeed, from the moment of his arrest, which was automatically followed by his conviction and sentence to imprisonment in a camp. . . . Nobody bothered to tell a man's relatives when he died in a camp or prison: you regarded yourself as a widow or orphan from the moment of his arrest. When a woman was told in the Prosecutor's office that her husband had been given ten years, the official sometimes added: 'You can remarry.' . . . In the circumstances, death was the only possible deliverance. When I heard that M. had died, I stopped having my nightmares about him.”

It was as if he, and all the other victims, had disappeared in war.