

sense of the absurd, that flicker of watchful irony about things treated over-seriously which is characteristic of the French eighteenth century does not come easily to the English mind. We suspect it—to our loss. We forget how this quality has showed itself compatible, in Voltaire or Mme. du Deffand, Gibbon or Stendhal, with passion, with epic grandeur, with romantic fire. That irony Lytton Strachey made ours; it suited our post-war mood of repentance and leisure. His more romantic side succeeded less happily in *Elizabeth and Essex*; whether in some more creative form it might have found fuller expression we shall never know.

But what he has left, as critic or as biographer, will not soon be forgotten. As the past swells and bulges behind us, future immortality becomes more and more of a speculation; he who was dupe of so little would have smiled at vain attempts to prophesy. But one lesson at least that we should have learned by now is the survival value of sheer style. There he was unsurpassed, in an age of far more distinguished prose than verse. What reads with such perfect ease was, as always, written with difficulty; though, like Gibbon, he perfected his whole sentence or paragraph in his head, and his page showed deceptively few corrections. But he gave to English the best qualities of French prose—its point, its clarity, its agility, its grace—to a degree which few have ever approached. Future historians of English literature and English thought will see in him as a stylist and an ironist one of the most representative figures of his generation; but where shall we find (and he would have smiled at the implications of that question) a biographer to paint him as vividly to posterity as he has painted others in the past?

#### RUDOLF BREITSCHIED, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADER

By DR. GEORG KECSKEMÉTI

Translated from the *Pester Lloyd*, Budapest German-Language Daily

THE LEADER of the Social Democratic Party in the Reichstag receives me in the large Reichstag Building, most of which is now dark and empty. His slender figure and narrow, intellectual head do not suggest the labor leader. But his eyes shine with determined brilliance. These eyes seem to be looking always in one direction with self-assured will power. The man's position is almost as difficult, and his responsibility for the destiny of Germany is almost as great, as that of Chancellor Brüning. Perhaps that is why he says less than he actually thinks. We sit in a half-lit lobby of the huge building and our conversation covers the fate of Germany and Europe.

'How do you feel, Mr. Delegate,' I inquire, 'about the growing radicalization of the German masses?'

'The radicalization of the German masses is the result of economic distress. The fact that many large sections of the middle class are becoming

National Socialists is the result of the inflation, which deprived these people of their means of existence and turned them into anti-capitalists, who now expect that National Socialism will bring them salvation. The question of reparations has also influenced them, but the essence of the situation lies in the economic field. Desperate poverty and shattered careers are forcing large groups, especially of young university men, into the camp of the extremists.'

'But might they not see the error of their ways if there were some change in the international situation?'

'One should not overestimate the significance of a change in foreign policy. Some settlement of the reparations question is to be desired, more faith between nations is needed; but the weaknesses of the world economic system are so profound and chaos is so universal that the solution of one question such as reparations cannot in itself mean any fundamental improvement. The things that have affected Germany are the failure of long-term investments and the unorganized rationalization of a considerable part of our industry. These factors have caused most of our present misery. Other nations have made similar mistakes, and even America is now suffering the consequences of its frenzy of prosperity. We, too, have been living beyond our means for years.'

'What do you think of the prospects for collaboration between the nations of Europe?'

'Such collaboration is to be wished for, but before one can have any opinion on its prospects we must wait until the forthcoming international conferences have been concluded. If France stands firm on the legal foundations of the Young Plan, her attitude will in no way strengthen international confidence.'

'What are the prospects of a European Union? Is there any hope in Germany for a solution of international disputes along such lines?'

'All attempts made in this direction have failed. Of course we must hope that international reason will ultimately prevail. Nations must some time recognize that the present methods of economic warfare, in which everybody fights everybody else, can lead only to universal collapse. But of course we have no great hopes that international understanding will prevail.'

'**D**O YOU believe that the Hitler movement is likely to triumph? Do you believe that there will be a dictatorship?'

'Such a danger does not exist so long as the Government shows sufficient determination and sufficient will to live.'

'What methods would you suggest to maintain the present Government?'

'More propaganda. More manifestations like Brüning's New Year speech on the radio. German citizens, especially the rural population, must be shaken out of the fatalism that is now making them support a

possible Hitler régime. Such methods can and must strengthen the Government. The National Socialists cannot attain power by legal means because they are a minority, and they would not dare to risk a *Putsch*. One possible line that they might take is that of terrorizing the population, a method that could be used effectively in rural districts. In many places the attitude of the middle class has been made utterly nihilistic by reason of their despair.'

'Will the Social Democratic Party stick to its present line?'

'We can make no binding promises as to the future. Up to now the Social Democratic Party has supported Brüning at great sacrifice. At the present time the trade unions and the *Reichsbanner* have organized themselves against the danger of any attack from the right. Future developments naturally depend on the economic situation and on the political measures that the Government undertakes, on how far it is willing to assert itself.'

'What is your opinion about the intellectual basis of the right-wing movement and about the theory that democracy has failed?'

'That theory is a product of hopelessness. All the ideas of our anti-democratic young men are a reflection of their misery. I do not believe that these ideas are rational. What do people really want? Dictatorship? A dictator would bring no salvation to Germany. The discontented demand a dictator, but a dictator actually in power would only make more people more discontented and the domestic situation would become still more intolerable.'

'Would a Hitler dictatorship automatically lead to a Bolshevist dictatorship?'

'It would certainly strengthen Bolshevism in Germany. A great many of Hitler's followers are only a hair's breadth away from Communism, and vice versa. It is hard to draw a line between the two movements, but I do not believe in the Bolshevization of Germany. The youth of the country still contains sound elements that have not been swept off their feet in the crisis of ideas. Germany cannot be Bolshevized so easily.'

The words of the Socialist leader die away in the dark lobby, whose walls are silently awaiting the outcome of German destiny. And the destiny of Germany is also the destiny of Europe.

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Translated from the Bengali by the *Modern Review*, Calcutta Literary Monthly

**T**O-DAY all of us who live in the Ashram will joyfully celebrate Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. I want to indicate the spirit, the mood, to which the whole function is to be attuned. In modern times such festivals have to a great extent become things of use and wont, lacking the proper inner