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AUTOCRACY VERSUS DEMOCRACY IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE, II*

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Having made some general observations on the aspirations and obstacles of fascist ideology in democratic countries, we shall now attempt to weigh the actual possibilities of a further spread of autocratic rule in the principal states of Europe. Herein we cannot abstain from a certain amount of prophecy, with all the hazards of statements not entirely based on undisputable fact; but we shall try to keep the forecast within reasonable bounds and to fortify it by reference to actual experience in the different countries under survey. Instead of travelling rather haphazardly over Europe, we should prefer a systematic grouping of the different countries which have not yet adopted autocracy. However, we shall find it rather difficult to discover a reasonable line of division; and accordingly we shall deal with each state separately and determine in the course of our journey whether some synoptical conclusions are permissible.

We have observed that those countries where a safe tradition of self-government and democracy is lacking are more susceptible to fascist propaganda and therefore more exposed to a surreptitious change of government. It is by no means impossible, or even improbable, that some or all of these countries will one day succumb to dictatorship. Under this aspect, the position of the only Balkan states which have thus far retained the outward appearance of constitutional life, Rumania and Greece, is of a disquieting precariousness.

It is, perhaps, more to the point to speak of Rumania as an

* This instalment covers developments to September 1, 1935.

autocracy rather than as a constitutional state. The constitution of 1923 describes Rumania as a constitutional monarchy, with parliamentary institutions of the pattern which prevailed in Central and Eastern Europe before the war. The political reality, however, shows a government class in which the big landowners and the aristocracy are predominant in controlling the parliament. The suffrage is nominally free, but in fact the government manipulates the elections. The government party is labelled liberal, while the large masses of the peasants have almost no share in the government. To call this system democratic in the Western sense of the term would be utterly misleading.

Rumania's political structure is not unlike the system existing since 1929 in Yugoslavia, and, with some sociological differences, since 1920 also in Hungary. In Yugoslavia, a military caste is the rallying-point of the autocratic forces behind the crown, while in Hungary a petty gentry of landowners and public officials has dislodged the formerly ruling aristocratic class of the big agricultural interests which the territorial cessions imposed upon Hungary by the treaty of Trianon had shorn of their traditional financial resources. Rumania is a sort of autocracy under the guise of a still working parliamentary machine, and she may follow any day in the path which Bulgaria, although nominally a constitutional monarchy, took in 1934. The Iron Guards of Celea Codreanu which, as the rumor goes, are supported by German money, have met so far with official disapproval, but the success of the government against plain fascism may be only temporary, because, as a recent manifesto of leading parliamentarians in favor of racism shows, large and influential parts of the nation sympathize with the new movement. The position of the king is not strong enough to check a fascist rising which any moment may sweep the country. Unlike Scandinavian monarchy, the institution of royalty in Rumania will be no serious obstacle against fascism. The popular animosity toward the Jews in this country of traditional anti-Semitism, the desolate situation of the exploited peasants, and the manifest corruption of the ruling classes provide a fertile soil for fascist seed.

In Greece, the political scene since the war has undergone a kaleidoscopic change. Monarchy, republic, and even a short-lived dictatorship of the military junta of General Pangalos succeeded rapidly one another until, in 1927, a democratic constitution on

familiar lines was adopted. Under the leadership of the builder of the Greek national state, Eleutherios Venizelos, a period of peaceful reconstruction was inaugurated, to be followed, however, by an alarming revival of monarchist tendencies allegedly sponsored by the generals controlling the Tsaldaris government. In March, 1935, the tension between the two rival factions provoked a violent rebellion of the Venizelists against the government. Yet the attempt to overthrow the government by force lost the day because a resolute government in command of the ordinary military powers cannot fail to win the upper hand. After a bloody civil war, Venizelos fled to Italy, and sweeping constitutional changes in the direction of a concentration of powers in the hands of the government party are already under way. Whether in the future the democratic constitution will be more than a camouflage of fascist government remains to be seen. Too often, in similar situations, when a rebellion against the government in power was defeated, the repressive measures for the pacification of the country followed the beaten track of quasi-fascist methods and ended in full-fledged fascism in which the victorious faction stabilizes its domination by the single-party system and the complete suppression of civil liberties. The precedent of Austria is a striking example of such a development.

At the present moment, the problem of autocratic versus democratic government has receded somewhat to the background because the strife of parties focuses on the restoration question. At the general elections in June, 1935, the victorious Tsaldaris government had little difficulty in obtaining a crushing majority, since Royalists and Republicans, although for different reasons, boycotted the balloting. Since then, the trend toward restoration has been visibly increasing. The ultimate result of the plebiscite on the restoration to be held in November is less doubtful, despite the outspoken republican predilections of large sections of the people, since recently the government, controlling the political machine and the press, came into the open with a conversion to monarchy. Anyway, monarchy in succession to dethroned democracy cannot but be a veiled form of autocratic rule, even under the flag of constitutionalism, because monarchy deprived of its legitimate tradition must necessarily rely on force instead of genuine allegiance. The situation is similar in Austria and Hungary, where reëstablished monarchy does not involve a return to the free play of public

opinion in accepted democratic forms. The coming new era of kings does not mean an abolition of autocratic instrumentalities in practice.

The political situation of Spain seems to develop on similar lines. Only after centuries of absolutist rule, and after a comparatively short period of constitutional monarchy, has a democratic republic been established in that country. In reality, the clerical classes and the big land-owners were always in unrestricted possession of the state and its resources. When the mild fascism under the leadership of the well-meaning Primo de Rivera failed, the political pendulum swung vehemently to the left, and in 1931 a republican constitution was imposed upon a nation untrained and inexperienced in self-government. The inevitable results were that the extremists of the left wing—Socialists, Communists, and Syndicalists (always very radical in a country of continued suppression)—came to power and used it unwisely in a premature attempt to eradicate the deep-rooted preponderance of the Catholic Church, and to shift, by a redistribution of the land, the agrarian property from the big landowners to the farmers, who always had been democratically minded but were unable to run the farms without the support of a system of extended agrarian credit. The old powers, recovering from the first shock, won the elections of 1933. Like Germany, Spain failed to build up a strong middle-class party holding the balance between right and left. What was called the reactionary spirit of the democratic minority of Señor Lerrouc's government provoked, in October, 1934, an ill-advised revolt of the left parties, aided by a feeble fraction of the intelligentsia, against the armed forces of the state. But, like similar enterprises in other countries, it was doomed to failure from the start, and accelerated the return to power of the reaction. The menace of a dictatorship of the proletariat served as a pretext for the organization of a ruthless white terror preparing the way for the establishment of fascist or authoritarian rule.

The similarities between the downfall of the German democracy and the developments in Spain are obvious. The Spanish socialists were not backed by a substantial section of the bourgeoisie, and the conservative forces of the middle classes were not versatile enough to adapt themselves to the exigencies of a moderating influence on the old powers striving for the reconquest of the lost domain. The triumphant entry of the combined forces of clerical-

ism and conservatism of the old capitalistic type seems only a question of time and tactics, and already plans have been launched to supplant the allegedly worn-out forms of parliamentary democracy by the new catch-word of the corporative state, which means nothing less than the reëstablishment of the old order under the guise of a new principle complying with the demands of the current political fashion. The leader of the Catholic People's party, Señor Gil Robles who already has obtained the key position as minister of war in a badly balanced cabinet, proclaimed openly as his ultimate aim the establishment of a Christian fascism on a corporative basis (not unlike the political system existing in Austria) into which the restoration of monarchy might fit in time. A dictatorship of one kind or another will possibly ensue. In history, democracy has never been reached in the first attempt, and the recrudescence of autocracy in the transition from absolutist to democratic order is a rule without exception. Fascism in Spain, however, will take the form of social reaction as it has done in Austria, and not of an ambitious middle-class revolution as in Italy and Germany. When the follies of the Spanish extremists have paved the way to power for fascism, Spanish dictatorship will probably follow the pattern set by other dictatorships, and will be a far less magnanimous specimen of the new order than Primo de Rivera's benevolent régime. Civil war has accumulated enough hatred to bid for a ferocious application of the fascist suppression. Although the chances of Spain to avoid dictatorship are not yet fully exhausted, it is very likely that the Aristotelian cycle will be closed in the near future, and fascism may boast that it has conquered a new province in its world-wide empire.

Among the countries where democracy is on trial, Czechoslovakia is in a very singular position. It offers a manifest demonstration of the vitality of the democratic idea. Under the rule of that wise leader, the venerable President Masaryk, democracy has worked surprisingly well and has been shown to be admirably suited to the mentality of the Czech people, where a ruling class in the strict sense does not exist. The masses of workingmen, peasants, and the middle-class bourgeoisie agree in their national aims, and no provocative social distinctions between the different layers of society constitute a target for fascist propaganda. The deep democratic conscience of the grand old man in the Hradshin, his sense of duty, and his unequaled prestige as a leader make a

fascist development impossible during his lifetime. However, Thomas Masaryk is in the biblical age and national differences in the tripartite community are strained. National Socialism arose in Bohemia long before Hitler was known. The advent to power of the Nazis on the other side of the border has kindled the fascist fire among the German-speaking population, and only the stringent defense measures against political associations addicted to fascist forms and aims, the prohibition of the National Socialist party, and the warning example of Gayda's abortive military "putsch" have for some time been successful in repressing a dangerous extension of fascist ideas among the three millions of Germans living in the territory.

Yet the well-tried political technique of organizing the masses by using democratic instrumentalities and undemocratic moral pressure could not be prevented from displaying itself among the republic's German-speaking population. By a sudden flash, the general election of May, 1935, revealed the beginnings of a dangerous situation. Herr Konrad Henlein, a gymnastics instructor in a German town of northern Bohemia—yesterday an unknown man, but one who might come very soon into the center of the scene in Central Europe—succeeded in welding almost the whole German population into a single party, the Sudetendeutsche Front, thereby not only decimating the Socialists but also making his party the strongest numerically in all Czechoslovakia. The new *Führer*, as he is officially styled by his followers, proved himself an excellent tactician; during the electoral campaign, he paid abundant lip service to the principles of democracy and the necessity of maintaining the unity of the state. But his triumph at the polls was due less to his oratorical talents than to the unblushing reference to and appliance of German National Socialist symbols, catchwords, and devices, to which the German Bohemians, witnessing the revival of nationalism beyond the border, were decidedly susceptible. The enigmatic man has not yet shown his hand. He found it wise to proclaim loyalty to the common state and form of government, and what he demanded, in a sensational speech in August, 1935, was nothing more than the full recognition of minority rights within the frame of the state. Furthermore, he has carefully abstained from any open connection with official National Socialism. But it is beyond doubt that in his Sudetendeutsche Front, which is Hitlerite to the last fiber, he has created an efficient and powerful

fascist organization which, while formally avoiding conflict with the letter of the law, is ready at a moment's notice for any action. Although Masaryk's presumptive successor, Edward Beneš, is a strong personality commanding universal confidence, the situation might become pregnant with danger when, in the midst of international troubles, the Reich should attempt to fulfill its racial dream of incorporating all Germans into a Greater Germany.

Yet, on the whole, optimists may expect that the tangible advantages of a prosperous democracy, by which the Czechoslovakian state would be able to remain an island of the rule of law in the midst of a surrounding fascist sea, are appreciated even by the German-speaking population of the state. They must certainly be fully aware of the fact that fascism in Czechoslovakia would mean a Czech brand of the new order and not a German one. If the old feud between the two races were renewed, the prospects would be hopeless for the German Bohemians, unless the Reich should step in to protect the German irrendenta. Fascism in a community racially so divided as Czechoslovakia is a double-edged enterprise. The situation is similar in Switzerland, where a fascist form of government cannot but lead to the disruption of the unity of the state and the extermination of the country's independence. The test of democracy will still have to come in Czechoslovakia, but there is much reason to believe that the country will, for emotional and rational motives, remain faithful to democracy. A second generation educated in democracy is slowly coming to the front now; with the advent of the sons, the worst is usually over and the democratic form has found its stability, as shown by France after 1875.

Next, we may turn to the Scandinavian states. Although according to reliable sources, German money, to promote fascist ideology, has been spent lavishly in Sweden, Finland, and perhaps also in Denmark, the fascist movement has made no headway at all in these countries. The three northern monarchies are on a sound basis economically, and unemployment, from which fascism usually draws its recruits at the beginning, has never reached disquieting figures. They have withstood the crisis surprisingly well, and the political education of more than a century has helped to develop an immunity against the temptations of autocracy. Fascism, in the form of National Socialism, is negligible in Denmark, a country which always has been very reluctant to imitate the political institutions of its southern neighbor. In Norway,

where the influence of the British example is felt in every walk of public life, National Socialism has also failed completely. Foreign policy in Denmark and Norway has never been pro-German.

Even Sweden, where the potentialities of German influence traditionally have been greater than in any other European country, has taken a firm stand against fascist ideas and practices. This has disappointed National Socialist hopes inasmuch as, during and after the war, the Swedes displayed a staunch loyalty to the German cause—a circumstance engendered and fostered by a deep appreciation of German culture among the educated classes. Furthermore, the Swedish nation, in its racial homogeneity, is dear to National Socialism, because of its affinity to the Nordic ideal preached by the official creed. No device of Nazi propaganda, therefore, was left untried to persuade Sweden to follow the German pattern. But in vain; the socialist and liberal majorities in Sweden combined forces with the conservatives to oppose a form of government which is alien to national traditions and national spirit. Moreover, the Swedes are Protestants, like the mass of the North-Germans, and the fight of the state against the church in Germany has destroyed much of the customary sympathy for Germany. It was from Sweden that three centuries ago the great hero of Protestantism, Gustavus Adolphus, led his soldiers south for the liberation of the faithful from Catholic oppression. To religious antipathy aroused by the persecution of the Protestant church in Germany must be added the impressions of the "purge" of June 30, which horrified the law-abiding nations of the North.

The Scandinavian governments, dominated by parties of the left during the critical years, did in time, as militant democracies, what republican Germany failed to do: they used their parliamentary powers to enact the necessary legislation against the fascist propaganda and laid a strict ban on the display of fascist paraphernalia. The wearing of uniforms and badges and of other insignia of party allegiance and the formation of semi-military associations were forbidden by laws of 1933 and 1934, directed against Nazism as well as against communism. Moreover, military symbols used by fascism are devoid of attraction in northern countries. Military submission is not considered a distinction and a pleasure, but rather a burden undertaken only as a patriotic duty for the defense of the soil. Communism, which might constitute a menace, is less radical in Scandinavia (with the exception of Finland) because of

the absence of big cities. Industrialization has not proletarianized a population of small landowners and farmers who toil laboriously on the land and know no social discriminations. In the three Scandinavian countries, the rôle of the monarchy in maintaining the rule of law and free institutions is not to be under-estimated. In face of the decline of monarchical prestige after the war, Scandinavia has been able to hold her own, and the moderation and modesty of the royal rulers has been rewarded by a popularity which in the long run has proved to be one of the priceless assets of kingship in all constitutional monarchies. Thus the death of King Albert in Belgium and the royal wedding and the Silver Jubilee in England were events of great political implications. Fascism has in Scandinavia less chance than in any other country of the world. At the last communal elections in Sweden, which form the basis for the composition of the Senate, the National Socialist party was unable to obtain a single mandate.

In Finland, at times the dangers were greater. Communism, strong because of the influence of adjacent Russia, was successfully suppressed when the Riksdag backed a government determined to steer a middle course, as in the other Scandinavian nations. On the other hand, the government, in its efforts to avoid dangerous experiments, was able to suppress the fascist Lapua movement which in 1930 threatened the existence of democratic government. Finland offers an encouraging instance of a country where extremists from the left and from the right meet with the strong resistance of the middle classes against political expedients that arouse the hostility of strong sections of the nation.

Similarly, in the Netherlands the national character is disinclined to the violence and suppression of free institutions essential in fascist doctrine. Liberty of the faith has been won through endless sacrifice in the resistance to Catholic Spain. Civil liberty is not less cherished by a nation which for centuries has enjoyed the blessings of a popular and constitutional monarchy. The bourgeois life of a respected and beloved queen corresponds to the bourgeois style of living in a country where thus far the capitalistic order has not created a militant labor movement as in other countries of similar economic structure. The communist disturbances in Amsterdam in 1934 are by no means symptomatic of the situation in Holland. The predominant middle classes from which fascism usually draws its strength are disciplined and unambitious. The

weight of the crisis on a country dependent on world trade and the high price of raw materials is borne, if not with complacency, with the patience and experience of a mature commercial mind. The uniform-wearing habit in Holland seems even more ridiculous than in the Scandinavian countries; for goose-stepping before a so-called leader is not in the least within the inclination of the slow, freedom-loving, anti-militaristic, and individualistic mentality of the Dutchman. Fascism has found no response in the soul of the people, and the efforts of a few busybodies, ambitious for the laurels of their colleagues in other countries, are regarded with unrelenting suspicion. In Holland, also, the government has taken the necessary legislative precautions against the formation of private armies and the building up thereby of a dangerous militant opposition. The pan-German activities have not failed to increase its watchfulness, because in the dreams of a Greater Germany the Dutch are meant to be incorporated; but the Dutch are proud of their independence and of their achievements of national self-expression.

At the provincial elections of April, 1935, however, the new Dutch National Socialist party won a substantial victory, polling eight per cent of the total vote, and thereby sending, for the first time in history, representatives to the upper chamber. As usual, the success was obtained at the expense of the moderate democratic parties of the center, and the National Socialist vote was especially heavy in the provinces bordering upon Germany and hence particularly exposed to fascist enterprise. The fact as such is by no means alarming inasmuch as it is not indicative of a fundamental change in political trends; the Netherlands only paid tribute to the political fashion of the day. The cabinet crisis in July, 1935, by which the government of Colijn fell, only to be commissioned again, revealed the typical defects of the present parliamentary structure under which the government, relying on changing majorities, is unable to steer a straight course. The next step might be the reshaping of parliamentary government in the form of an enabling law with wide powers in order to deal with the crisis and under ultimate parliamentary responsibility, such as has been tried successfully in France and Belgium. More and more, it appears that the old democracies seek a remedy for lack of decision in the new devices of delegated authority under democractic control, rather than permit themselves to surrender to mystical belief in the wisdom

and vision of popularly irresponsible leaders according to fascist ideology. Summing up, it may be said that the political traditions and mentality of Dutchmen build up a solid dyke against the rising tide of fascism, and there is every prospect that in the Netherlands democratic institutions will remain safe against autocracy.

In Belgium, the situation is more complicated. The country is highly industrialized and thickly populated, and it labors under the racial cleavage between the French-speaking Walloons and the idiomatically different Flemish population. The severe pressure of the crisis, the prolonged maintenance of the gold standard, and the alleged inadequacy of parliamentary government provide a favorable ground for fascist propaganda. In fact, among the Flemish elements of the population, where, during the war, nationalism was cultivated by Germany for political reasons, a fascist movement of Green-shirts has grown up and has reached a considerable momentum by skillful imitation of the German pattern, and aided probably by monetary subsidies from outside. The government, however, has shown a firm hand in dealing with the fascist danger, and the results of the purge of June 30 in Germany could not fail to make themselves felt. Here again the old traditions of democratic and parliamentary government, the *pouvoir moderateur* of a young and inspired king, the relative stability of parliamentary majority rule, the absence of radicalism, even among the Walloon miners, and, foremost, the unemotional clear-thinking of the middle classes, work together to maintain an atmosphere of good-will and mutual confidence which thrive only if the self-expression of the nation is unfettered. No fascist leader of conspicuous ability appeals to the masses, which retain the customary lines of party organization. Moreover, the resentment aroused by the German occupation during the war is still alive, and everything coming from Germany encounters suspicion and distrust.

The situation would be different if France were to turn fascist. It is true that the political dependency of Belgium on France is less marked than the cultural affinity; the Belgian parliamentary system is shaped more on the lines of the English than of the French, and the outstanding defects of the French parliamentary structure, namely, the instability of governments and the influence of extra-parliamentary powers, are less manifest in Brussels than in Paris. Yet the fate of Belgian democracy is tied up with French

political events, and France crossing the floor in search of fascism would inevitably draw Belgium behind her. For the moment, however, the customary parliamentary system has shown the elasticity needed in times of serious crisis. When Belgium recently was compelled to abandon the gold standard, the parliament, free from coercion, delegated vast powers to the government for a given period, thus following the example of other democratic countries such as England and the United States. Parliamentary democracy under economic or political strain has always been in a position to adapt itself to emergency by conferring adequate powers upon the executive without endangering the structure of the governmental fabric.

Before turning to France, however, we may briefly describe the situation in Switzerland. At first sight, the aspect is discouraging enough. The "fronts," as the fascist groups are called, have developed a mushroom growth and appear not only in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino and in the German-speaking regions, but lately are growing up also in the French cantons of western Switzerland. The atmosphere is heated; political factions clash all over the country; public meetings and theatrical performances are disturbed by opposing parties. Even the stolid peasant in the mountains is stirred up; semi-military bands demonstrate in public places in the cities. Communism is gaining force, and the Socialist party is militant and radical. The deflation crisis affects the traditionally well-to-do middle classes, while unemployment figures rise in a country to a great extent dependent on travellers and foreign exports. The language of public opinion, which always was frank, and even rude, in Switzerland, is nothing short of belligerent. Good will and understanding between the different sections of the population, which have been a priceless treasure in the past, and which withstood the severe trial of the war, appear shattered. Furthermore, the Swiss citizen, albeit peace-loving and sober, has acquired, from time immemorial, the habit of wearing and using arms, and the service-gun hangs behind the door in almost every Swiss house. The Swiss is not militaristic, but he has a martial mind and military obedience and discipline are among his most conspicuous virtues. Military training in fascist associations is not needed to make the citizens a military body. The strong capitalistic structure of the bourgeois classes serves as a point of attack for radicalism, while the counter-reaction of the fascist ideology will

not fail to appeal to the irrational motives of blood and soil which invade the country from the German border.

The significance, however, of these menacing elements must not be overrated, for behind the agitation on the surface there is still a solid body of democratic conviction, and the political maturity of the Swiss will overcome the alluring slogans of a new order unsuited to their national character. The greater part of the Swiss population realizes that fascism of any kind must ultimately lead to the disruption and dissolution of the Eidgenossenschaft. Fascism in Switzerland is tantamount to a German plus a French plus an Italian fascism. The Italian would hardly submit to a German dictator, and it is inconceivable that the Germans, comprising three-fifths of the whole state, would yield to an Italian fascism. Fascism would break up the Swiss nation in three parts, drawing the Italians to Italy, the western cantons to France, and the German parts to a fascist Germany. Only the institutions of free self-government were able to insure the peaceful coexistence of the three races united in the confederation during an age of extreme nationalism. Fascism would mean the end of Swiss independence, for which the Swiss have fought against German emperors, the duke of Burgundy, and many other aggressors. The basic idea of Swiss nationality, namely, the peaceful amalgamation of the three different races under one independent jurisdiction of a free self-governing Swiss nation, is inconsistent with the acceptance of fascism as a form of government. Switzerland turning fascist would deprive the world of one of its finest examples of political wisdom and tradition. Emotional and rational considerations alike argue against the abolition of a government which has weathered so many storms.

Furthermore, closer investigation reveals the fact that Swiss fascism has already reached its climax. The idea is visibly disintegrating. The existing organizations of the fascist "fronts" are in process of rapid dissolution. Dissensions among groups and "leaders" contending for supremacy are a daily experience. Sordid libel suits involving the infallible "leaders" are a hilarious or repulsive spectacle for the majority of the nation. Without exception, the so-called "leaders" exhibit no more than a second-rate appeal, and their moral authority is by no means impressive—a fact which counts for much in a small country where everybody knows everybody. The vigilant authorities are strongly determined to main-

tain democratic standards and the achievements of free institutions, although in March, 1934, a moderate extension of police powers for the Federal Council was rejected by a referendum.

It is true that in Switzerland much ground for complaint exists, and that not a few among the prosperous classes secretly sympathize with a movement which might stabilize the existing capitalistic order against an attempt at social reconstruction. It is not less true that the Swiss bourgeois classes are perhaps the least idealistic among the democratically-minded nations in Europe; they enriched themselves in the war and commercialized their ideals in peace. Plutocratic society needs a rejuvenation more than any other. They are complacent and saturated with luxury and still entangled in what is called in this country "rugged individualism," and each sacrifice for the common weal involves bargaining and haggling.

Despite these visible defects of the existing socio-political system, the Swiss people demonstrated twice within recent months that they still adhere to the principles of democratic government bequeathed to them by their ancestors. First, in March, 1935, came the failure of a popular initiative intended to grant to the Federal Council wide powers to fight the crisis, similar to emergency legislation in other democratic countries. While this proposal was sponsored largely by the left parties, another movement in favor of a complete revision of the constitution of 1874 was launched by the fascist "fronts" and was supported by considerable sections of the Conservatives and the Catholics. The latter took up the corporative idea, although in a modified and tentative form, to the effect that the referendal democracy should be replaced to a large extent by an authoritarian technique of government concocted from Italian and Austrian recipes. Thus the only novel contribution to the total revision of the constitution came from conservative quarters. The "fronts" have been unable to offer a constructive program of reform; when the ruthless agitation against the existing democratic institutions boils down to the necessity of making concrete proposals which must be submitted at the polls by way of the constitutional referendum, it may appear that fiery speeches in the public halls are easier than the sober work of drafting a reform bill. Although the combined forces of the revision movement had but barely obtained the figures prescribed by the consti-

tution for the initiative, the decisive result of the referendum itself came as a surprise. In September, 1935, the plan for a total revision was rejected by an overwhelming majority, which incidentally revealed that the "fronts" have no roots in the masses, despite or because of the wild and reckless agitation against the existing democratic system. The Swiss are national inasmuch as they vehemently disapprove of political ideals imported from abroad.

Moreover, the Swiss people have always bowed to popular decision; the referendum having unmistakably revealed the numerical weakness of the fascist movement, the deep-rooted habits of democratic government will render futile any attempt to seize the power of the state by violence. In the case of Switzerland, the application of democratic institutions may serve fatally to expose the fascist technique. Furthermore, the shots of the firing squads of June 30 had a reverberating echo in the Swiss mountains. The Swiss is self-critical and over-skeptical. He does not believe in the infallibility of others where he can rely on his own judgment. With him, the political spellbinder has no great chance. The atmosphere of lawlessness and vaingloriousness in fascist countries is alien to his nature, and he sets against mass movements the sobering attitude of his individualism. His educational standard is too high to make him an easy prey for ready-made slogans. Unless an unforeseen emergency like war arises, Switzerland will, despite the disquieting appearance of her political life, remain a stronghold of liberalism and the heart of democratic tradition in Europe.

The unknown x in the political equation of Europe is at the present moment France, a riddle which causes deep anxiety to all lovers of peace and freedom. Since 1789, France has served the world as a political laboratory. All forms of government and constitutions have been on trial there, from a radical democracy and mass rule to a despotic one-man government of the most totalitarian type. Twice France has been under a dictatorship, the first inspired by the genius of the greatest war lord of modern times, Napoleon Bonaparte, the second under his shrewd nephew; yet both ended in defeat, and the French paid for what Lamartine has called "the burial of public conscience under a flag of glory" with political humiliation and territorial losses at Waterloo and Sedan.

Since 1870, democracy has steadily won its way among the

French people, who were supposed to be more fit for monarchy than any other European nation. At one time, the French democracy was imperiled, when, in 1889, General Boulanger failed by only an inch to sway the nation into dictatorial rule again. Even the earthquake of the *affaire Dreyfus*, the most formidable political scandal of modern times, could not destroy democracy, although the political foundation of the state trembled. A second generation living under the frame-work of the emergency constitution of 1875 developed, against expectation, a sincere loyalty to liberal principles and democratic institutions. After disquieting vicissitudes, France emerged gloriously from the pandemonium of the war, another serious trial of her democratic structure. While the defeated nations without exception were forced to change their form of government, France could maintain the democratic system which had demonstrated an amazing adaptability to the necessities of the concentration of powers demanded by the war. The usual argument against democracy, that in foreign policy it is inferior to monocratic government, was disproved.

The economic crisis reached this rich and socially well-balanced country later and with less vehemence than any other European nation. We are on safe ground in assuming that the political intelligence of the French middle class, which is identical with the greater part of the population, is still permeated by the conviction of the advantages of democratic institutions. Most Frenchmen are still imbued with the traditional ideology of liberalism and deeply conscious of the shortcomings of the communist and fascist paradises which a spirited press depicts daily in glowing colors or in bitter irony, as the case may be. It is true that there have recently been scandals of far-reaching consequence, and that the prestige of several cabinets has been seriously compromised. It is also true that, from the unsuccessful attempt to clear the *affaires*, belief in the impartiality of justice has suffered. It is obvious that the political instability of the French ministries is a commonplace object for attacks on parliamentary government. The system compares unfavorably with the apparent stability of British cabinets, not to speak of the apparently unshakable stability of the "strong man's rule" in fascist states. The assault on parliamentary democracy usually relates to French politics. Monsieur Doumergue's abortive reform of the French constitution in 1934 was intended as a remedy against this evident deficiency.

On the other hand, it is generally overlooked that the administrative machinery with which the ordinary citizen comes in contact in the daily routine functions tolerably well. The average Frenchman is far too intelligent not to realize that behind the swift changes of his governments the solid system of the permanent bureaucracy fulfills its task with skill and competence. There is less real poverty in France than elsewhere, though Paris, with the striking contrasts of a metropolis, is an exception. The laboring classes exposed to unemployment have not yet severed their ties with the agricultural basis of the population, and this fact so far has prevented the proletarianization of the strong middle-class elements. On the whole, the living standard of France has not deteriorated. The complaint is better founded that it is too high as compared with the income of the *rentier* class. None of the commonplace incentives to the emergence of fascism in other countries are visible.

Despite the absence of all factors engendering a violent change of government, despite the manifest benefits of the democratic system and its traditional environment, France is, according to the best observers, in permanent danger of a revolution which, after the fashion of the period, revolves around a fascist or a communist reorganization of the state. Why things have gone so far nobody can understand, for everybody agrees that it is utterly unnecessary. Nevertheless, the tension is real. Perhaps the only plausible explanation of the phenomenon consists in the admission of a sort of mental instability and psychological changeability resulting from the prolonged political strain of the last twenty-five years. The pathological causes are more discernible in Germany, where the pressure of the peace treaty and its exactions on the national self-respect necessitates an outlet for the disturbance of the mental equilibrium.

In France, the national restlessness has not found a compensation for the restoration of the parallelogram of the forces. On France, with her declining birthrate, the war imposed a terrific sacrifice in manhood. The attempt, dictated by national ambition, to enforce a political leadership on a politically unbalanced continent has assigned to France a task which she is unable to bear, and which her pride forbids her to renounce. She is in the position of an elderly man who undertakes a mountaineering excursion far beyond his real strength, but keeps up the appearance of enjoying it because the admission of yielding powers would mean for him

the humiliation of failure. This protracted drain on her moral and political strength has resulted in an irritability and instability of mind which the remotest occasion may upset; a growing impatience with the existing political conditions may set loose any moment an outbreak of revolutionary activity which the insight of the majority of the nation abhors and is yet unable to repress. If it is true that Germany has fallen a victim to fascism by the operation of what has been called an inferiority complex, France is exposed to political upheaval by what paradoxically may be termed a superiority complex, all the more disquieting because the evil is a result of a long and glorious history.

The situation may be summed up in the Portuguese phrase: *Nenha o qui vier sea come foristo na pode continuar* ("Come what may, be it what it will, things cannot go on in this manner"). There is no leader aspiring to power; there is not even the typical preparation of public opinion by descriptions of the paradise which the fascist ruler will bring to his country; there is no semi-military organization of fascist forces of any importance; the advocacy of the corporative state is weak and fails to attract public attention; there is not even a class sponsoring fascism for the maintenance of the existing capitalistic order; youth also is rather evenly divided among both camps of right and left. In short, there is nothing which is fascism in the proper sense of the term. Nevertheless, in an amazingly short time fascism in this ultra-democratic and liberal France has developed from a topic of theoretical discussion among political scientists into a threatening reality.

It is true that thus far none of the several groups with fascist leanings has got hold of the general mass of the population. In a nation so deeply imbued with republican and democratic traditions, fascist ideology cannot break its way into the people so easily as in other countries suffering from the crisis and deprived of the moral resistance which a long tradition of self-government has given the French. Although various antiparliamentarian groups or "movements" were competing for political or moral influence, until recently none of them—with negligible exceptions—professed an outspoken fascist creed. All of them, however, are intent upon replacing what they call a vacillating and weak parliamentary democracy by a strong authoritarian government. While the royalists in the *Action Française* are by far the noisiest among the supporters of an anti-parliamentary movement, their program finds

no favor with the other anti-clerical and decidedly republican associations, such as the *Jeunesses Patriotes* (founded by Taittinger) and the league of the *Croix de Feus*. The only clearly fascist associations are at present the *Solidarité Française*, created by the industrialist Coty, which apparently defends the existing capitalistic order of society, and, last and least, the so-called Francists, a vehemently nationalist and anti-Semitic group which, built up on lines similar to Nazism, is in many parts of the population not even known by name.

While until the spring of 1935 none of these groups could claim ascendancy over the others, the *Croix de Feus* suddenly emerged as the most powerful center of authoritarian opposition which, against all expectations, might yet be able to focus dispersed anti-parliamentarian dissatisfaction into a unified and strongly organized front for a political turnover. The *Croix de Feus* consists mainly of war veterans, to whom are added organizations of the younger generation under the same military code of obedience and discipline. Its undisputed leader, Colonel de la Rocque, a soldier trained in colonial warfare and administration under Marshall Lyautey, became almost overnight a political power; in his taciturn and deliberate manner, he exercised influence for and against outgoing and incoming governments in the grave financial crisis which shook the country in the spring of 1935. He has carefully refrained from revealing his ultimate political ambitions, and it would even be without foundation to call the *Croix de Feus* a fascist organization in the proper sense of the term. M. de la Rocque has never proclaimed any fascist doctrines, and his republican convictions may not be doubted. What he aims at is a revolution of the *moeurs* rather than of the form of government. He seems, however, willing and prepared to employ the organized forces under his command, which are secretly supported by regular army officers, against any attempts at revolutionary action from the left. Paradoxically enough, it may be said that the *Croix de Feus* constitutes a party army without a party, while in Italy and Germany the building up of the Black- and Brown-shirts corresponded closely to the expansion of the respective party organizations in those countries. Once again the democratic governments of the day in France are not in a position to forbid the display of semi-military organizations rivalling the regular forces of the state if they remain within the borders of the guaranteed institutions of free speech and free assembly, and

thus M. de la Rocque, as well as the *Front Populaire*, was allowed to show his strength in public demonstrations in Paris on July 14. Owing to the good-humoured discipline of the Parisians, this critical day passed, however, without incident. But it would be unwise to overlook the fact that the *Croix de Feus* has become the nucleus of a potent antiparliamentarian movement and that, in the person of Colonel de la Rocque, a leader of at least conspicuous organizing and tactical abilities has arisen.

On the other side of the fence stands the *Front Populaire*, which at present embraces, at least theoretically, the totality of the left parties, extending from the former *Front Commun* of the Communists and the Socialists to the great bourgeois party of the Radical Socialists. Beyond doubt, the fighting potentialities of this leviathan created for defense against fascism are much stronger than that of the German *Reichsbanner*, once considered an effective counterweight against the National Socialists. Many of the former *combattants de la guerre* have joined the ranks of the *Front Commun*, and French revolutionary tradition will most probably lead this militant body of opposition to attempt proletarian dictatorship rather than submit ignominiously to a fascist *coup d'état*. On the other hand, the actual constructive values of this strange copartnership between heterogeneous sections of public opinion as represented by Cachin, Paul-Boncour, and Herriot should not be overestimated. It has shown impressive strength in public demonstrations, but it lacks cohesion, unity of command, and identity of political ideals. With the exception of determined minorities in both camps, none of the groups mentioned is intent upon anticipating the normal course of French politics.

The real danger, however, lies in the high mental tension of a nation which is no longer under the control of causality. Because of the absence of most of the preliminaries of a fascist upheaval, the situation does not fit into the familiar picture of the transitory stage of a country on the way to fascism. Any casual irregularity in the realm of public order can mobilize the two opposing armies of the left and of the right, which may attack out of fear of being attacked. Both sections of the nation fear the dictatorial ambitions of the other and are therefore determined to anticipate the arbitrariness of the others by imposing their own autocracy. There is no doubt about the ultimate result. Any government, even if sincerely addicted to democracy—and France would not tolerate

a ministry with fascist leanings—might be forced to apply fascist methods, namely, martial rule and suppression of the civil rights to cope with a disturbance of order and safety. France could not stand another February 6 without running the risk of a civil war spreading like a running fire through the provinces, which, for once in French history, would claim their share in deciding the political fate of the country.

So far, no attempt to establish the dictatorship of a socialistic or communistic pattern has been successful in any country, the majority of which consists of peasants or small property-owners; the Bolshevist experiments in Bavaria and in Hungary in 1919 were not more successful than the desperate uprising of Austrian Socialists or the Spanish masses in 1934 or the general strike of British labor in 1926. If the regular forces of the army and the police remain loyal to the government of the day which calls upon them for the repression of a leftist rising, the application of the *état de siège* will inevitably develop into a permanent dictatorial system justified by past dangers and possible recurrence in the future. Only from this angle can the failure of Doumergue's constitutional reform be understood. It had the moral support of a great part of the nation and would have provided a remedy against some of the major defects of the French parliamentary system without impairing democracy at large. It failed, however, because both the camps in which the nation is aligned apprehended that the powers entrusted to a government would ultimately be used for the suppression of the one section by the other. France suffers from a latent Caesar-complex explainable by her history.

No one may venture beyond the limits of reasonable prophecy by forecasting coming events.

In May, 1935, the cabinet of Laval succeeded in obtaining, by a sweeping enabling act unprecedented in French history in peacetime, the indispensable powers for the salvation of the franc and the stabilization of the budget, after the Chamber had denied such powers to Premier Flandin and the one-day government of M. Buisson. Evidently thinking more in terms of economics and less of party politics, Laval, with surprising courage and determination, embarked upon a wide program of planned deflation and enacted by *décrêts-lois* many financial and economic reforms which otherwise never would have passed the Palais Bourbon. Despite violent agitation from the left parties, the bulk of the French nation is too

clever to overlook the necessity of the reforms. But the cabinet becomes the target of unpopularity and stands much in the same position as the government of Brüning in Germany after the emergency decrees of December, 1932, which amounted to an equally fruitless attempt at mitigating the crisis by deflation. The inevitable crisis will be accelerated if Parliament, meeting probably again in November, should, for the sake of party tactics in view of the coming general elections, abrogate some of the important decrees—which, however, is not too likely. But the fact remains that, more and more, unrest and nervousness accumulate from diverging political and economic theories.

Will the truce last, and will the menace of fascism be removed from France, a country which has lost nothing of its thorough democratic structure or of its abhorrence of violence and dictatorial pressure? The internal difficulty remains a serious one, and the spectre of fascism is not yet banned from the smiling fields of one of the most beautiful countries of the world. Yet to another grave danger attention must be called, namely, the implications of the serious international situation for France. If the crisis provoked by Germany's rearmament calls for action, the internal dissensions will certainly be submerged by patriotic unity, and democracy once more will yield the concentration of power needed in the case of national emergency. Will the government on which such a plight is incumbent be strong enough, when the danger has passed, to waive the dictatorial powers it was forced to assume?

In no country do better prerequisites for a successful stand against fascist doctrine and practice exist than in Great Britain. Two factors contribute to the expectation that England will be immune from fascism. One is the time-honored acceptance of democratic ideals and institutions in the country in which free government originated. The British mind is given to compromise and to attempts at solutions which appeal to both parties. The other reassuring fact is that England, having apparently reached the deepest point of the depression, seems on the way to recovery. One must bear in mind that fascism not only is a political device but displays far more the qualities of a para-political creed, namely, the hope of the despairing, the refuge of those outwitted by the burden of daily life. Now, unemployment has been steadily declining in Great Britain without the artificial aid of relief by public works and similar unproductive enterprises. After the devaluation

of the sterling currency was undertaken at the right moment, and without the attempt to raise prices and wages by questionable inflationary methods, trade and industry gained ground slowly but unremittingly. The customary tenacity and the traditional self-confidence of the English mind bear fruit, and England has set to work without much talk about the psychological reinforcement of public opinion. On the other hand, the British governmental structure has been elastic enough to concentrate the powers necessary for crisis government in a cabinet more morally supported than effectively controlled by Parliament. The general elections of October, 1931, provided for a National government which rallied, by constitutional means, an overwhelming and unchallengeable majority. This result of the verdict of the electorate was the significant contribution of Great Britain to crisis government, a government with quasi-dictatorial powers in substance but not in form and entirely on the basis of the constitution. The cabinet of Mr. MacDonald attained monocratic powers without impairing a single one of the fundamental principles of the British constitution. The events in England are exemplary of the elasticity of the democratic structure, which permits the adoption of monocratic powers without recourse to the methods of violence and repression detestable to the British mind.

The policy followed by the National government may be open to criticism in details, but it has accomplished its historical mission to maintain democracy under the pressure of an unprecedented economic crisis. The British variety of fascists, Sir Oswald Mosley's Black-shirts, did not get hold of the country because the middle classes, which in England are less affected by the crisis than in other parts of Europe, are repelled by violent methods of political behavior imported from abroad and Englishmen do not believe in the advantages of government by dictation over discussion and persuasion. The success of British fascists has so far been much less than the noise it makes in line with the policy suggested by fascist propaganda. In other countries less endowed with political talent and tradition, Sir Oswald could have become a leader for the masses. One must be careful, however, not to over-estimate his prospects as a fascist leader, especially since the initial advantage of apparently substantial monetary support and benevolence from influential quarters has been withdrawn. Since his catastrophic failure at the general elections in 1931, he has not dared to present

his cause to the nation in by-elections or in local elections whence rising fascist movements usually derive their first successes. The stability of the British system could even afford the advertising publicity given to the fascists by a recent libel suit of Sir Oswald against a metropolitan newspaper, resulting in a judgment which was nothing short of an endorsement by the Lord Chief Justice of the legality of the movement. Furthermore, in no other country has the German "purge" of June 30 done more harm to fascist aspirations. Immediately after the fateful day, Lord Rothermere dissociated himself from the Black-shirt movement and joined the united front of indignant public opinion against what British sentiment called a relapse into mediæval arbitrariness repulsive to the humanitarian spirit of the country.

In the opinion of the parliamentary majority of the House of Commons, the existing democratic institutions were deemed so strong that Parliament desisted from a legislative prohibition of armed private forces and the display of uniforms and party badges in public, which has been repeatedly advocated in public discussion. So far, the confidence of the government and the reasonableness of the public mind have been justified and the visible effects of the unobtrusive work for the improvement of the economic situation have done more to weaken fascist tendencies than any prohibitory measures could have achieved.

Yet a chance is left for fascism in Great Britain, to which attention must be called as a warning. The Labor party bids for power at the next general elections, which will normally be held in 1936. After five years of conservative rule, the swing of the pendulum may be strong enough to bring a working majority of Labor to the next House of Commons. Much of the ultimate fate of England, and perhaps of Europe, depends on the use this Labor government will make of its constitutionally unrestricted powers. If the left-wing radicals in the party get the upper hand, and if an ill-advised attempt should be made to transform the bourgeois society of the country into a Socialist Commonwealth, then the appointed hour for fascism in Great Britain may strike. Against the expected extravagances of an extreme socialism, a violent and militant reaction would be called to arms which will be supported by the conservative part of the nation, even if the conformity of the Labor stratagem with the rules of the political game was not challenged. Conservative reaction could hardly refrain from the application of

fascist devices to meet what will be called "the attack against the foundations of society." Perhaps Sir Oswald waits for this opportunity in order to be called upon as the rescuer of the state from the "red menace," and it is up to the wisdom of the Labor leaders to determine whether or not he will have his chance. A conservative victory at the next election might avert this danger. Perhaps the moderating influence of a revived liberal party holding the balance of power between right and left will ensue; perhaps the new leaders of Labor will be moderate enough to continue on the traditional path of evolution in Great Britain. In the latter alternative, the chances of fascism in Great Britain will be none too auspicious.

It is rather indicative of the cogency of British traditions that the Irish Free State thus far has avoided deviation from the principles of free self-government universally accepted as the basis of the new state in 1922. On the Green Island, the conditions for political violence inherent in fascism are particularly favorable. During 1934 the outlook for the maintenance of democracy in Ireland was gloomy, if the term democracy may be applied to a government whose parliamentary majority renders it constitutionally monocratic. It is remarkable that every country which has grown up under the direct or indirect influence of British parliamentary traditions finds, after a period of political oscillation, the center of political gravity in the two-party system. Ireland emerged comparatively soon from the ambiguities of the multiple-party dynamics, and public opinion began to run in the channels of two great political groups absorbing more or less all minor ramifications of political interests. Even proportional representation, which usually fosters the growth of many small parties, could not delay the advent of a system in which two great parties or two groups of affiliated parties bid for power. When Mr. de Valera's republican party finally succeeded in dislocating the Anglo-phil constitutional party of Mr. Cosgrave, the latter was, by natural development, compelled to become the alternative power in the contest of parliamentary forces.

The rise of a fascist party, the Blue-shirts, significantly under the leadership of a soldier, General O'Duffy, could not surprise anyone in a country where violence and the drastic methods of political warfare had been practiced against the common enemy over a long period. The economic pressure in an agricultural country, ag-

gravated by the anti-English policy of the government, paved the way for the emergence of a fascist party appealing to the Irish temperament of the impoverished masses of peasants and the lower middle class. The fascist movement combined forces with the formerly constitutional party of Mr. Cosgrave in the attempt to recapture the control of the state by non-parliamentary methods. It is very doubtful whether this desperate effort could have been successful, because the majority of the country stood firmly behind the constitutionally appointed Prime Minister de Valera. Yet the country was in fact for some months on the verge of a fascist turnover. The attacks of the Blue-shirts would have forced Mr. de Valera also to apply dictatorial methods against the aggressor. The unholy alliance between Mr. O'Duffy's Blue-shirts advocating a corporative state and the former government party under Mr. Cosgrave broke down, and Mr. de Valera was enabled to continue to govern Ireland democratically. The traditional appeal of the two-party system was stronger than the untried scheme of a corporative state. It remains to be seen whether a lasting return of Ireland to the normalcy of alternative government will be possible or whether the government will be forced to resort openly to dictatorial forms.

VI

We have so far confined the scope of this survey to the European nations, but if we cast a hasty glance over other parts of the civilized world, it appears that democracy is comparatively stable in all countries enjoying the privilege of British free traditions and democratic institutions. What has been said of the mother country is equally true for the dominions beyond the sea. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa are still parliamentary democracies where the constitution works, if not altogether smoothly, yet tolerably well, and fascism has failed to implant itself. We may omit Japan, which never has been a genuine democracy, but always a more or less disguised camouflage of semi-military dictatorship apparently suited to a country with a religious veneration of authority and scarcely emancipated from the influence of mediaeval traditions. The cruder forms of fascism crouch around the corner. If communism extends its power, they might leap upon the country, unless the patriotic fervor of a war should temporarily subdue both tendencies.

We may equally dismiss from our survey the South American and other Latin American countries where unmitigated dictatorships alternate with a sort of unstable and precarious parliamentarism, not excepting the politically most advanced nations of Argentina and Chile where *Aprismo* offers a new variety of revolutionary impulses. We shall, therefore, conclude our survey by mentioning the United States.

This country is so remote from European experience in fascism and the ideology of fascism is so alien to American thought, nourished by the British traditions of self-government over a long period, that it seems unreasonable to expect the appearance or the growth of any brand of European fascism. The efforts of some irresponsible elements—adventurers or idealists—to import the European brand of fascism and dictatorship seem hopeless. It is possible, however, that under continued economic pressure, the governmental powers will be so enlarged that the time-honored institutions of free self-government may become assimilated to the needs of a government monocratic in substance if not in form. Whether this result is compatible with the maintenance of the classical institutions of democratic type, and whether the political mentality of the average American will offer resistance to a development in the direction of monocracy, belongs to another chapter.

Attention, however, must be called to one specific feature of the battle between democracy and autocracy which has been revealed by recent European experiences, namely, the fact that confidence in the superiority of democratic institutions and belief in the soundness and reasonableness of the masses do by no means suffice to safeguard the existing order against the constitutionally cloaked ambition of the crypto-fascists. European contemporary history is abundant in warning examples. To protect democracy in these times of unparalleled moral and economic crisis, perhaps some democratic rights which are exposed to misuse by the enemies of free government, and which in normal times may be deemed indispensable, must be jettisoned. *Nomina sunt odiosa*, but the masses are unreliable and forever waiting for their messiah. Any observer of American contemporary politics who desires the maintenance of American democracy cannot but feel grave apprehensions when he notices the apparent incapacity of the existing

economic system to absorb the vast mass of unemployed forming the nucleus of a future fascist army. On the other hand, he realizes with increasing anxiety the readiness of many average Americans hit severely by the crisis to accept the economic fallacies and the political catchwords propagated by the "Pied Pipers" as solutions of our present discontents. Spiritual movements of today have a common aetiology and demand a common therapy. No democratic government which has to bear the brunt of economic responsibility should disregard the warning experience of democracies in Europe under similar strain. *Videant consules, ne quid detrimenti capiat res publica.*

VII

If we may summarize the results of our travel around the contemporary European political scene, we are on safe ground in stating that, at the present moment, the army of fascist countries in Europe may enlist, as new recruits for fascist rule, all states in which democracy is not rooted in long tradition and experience, and where democratic self-expression is not strong enough to overcome the dangers arising out of the economic or political situation, viz., Spain, Rumania, Greece, all of the Baltic states, and eventually the Irish Free State. On the other hand, democracy seems safe in Great Britain, in the Scandinavian states of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, in Switzerland, in Belgium and Holland, and, certainly for the lifetime of Thomas Masaryk—and perhaps even after that—in Czechoslovakia. He who wishes the future of civilization well, and who believes in the prospects of mankind for peace and happiness, would gladly add to this list France. In reality, France is the critical point in the battle waging between dictatorial and democratic rule, which coming generations will probably consider as the predominant political feature of our age. The relapse of France into authoritarian rule of any kind would be the worst blow to the future of democracy and free institutions conceivable, while the adherence of France to democracy will be an impregnable obstacle to autocracy and a definite check on the further spread of fascism in Europe. France is once more the milestone in European history from which the path bifurcates to democracy and peace or fascist imperialism and war. The present situation confirms the dictum: If France is quiet, all Europe is quiet.

VIII

It is a widely different problem whether the existing European dictatorships are stable enough to allow for a certain permanence in the near future. Here no prophecy resting on scientific assumptions is permissible. It is a matter of political belief, which is not less controversial than religion itself. The author is personally convinced that dictatorship in all countries, with the possible exception of Russia, is a temporary expedient originating in the post-war disturbances of international equilibrium and in the economic crisis, both of which will disappear in the normal evolution of history. Modern history is an unrelenting process of revolutionary movements from autocracy to democracy, in which each retrogression is in turn followed by a progression towards the ultimate end. We do not wish to convey the impression that we regard democracy in its present form as the final and ultimate type of free government, but we think that the dictatorships of today, which are incompatible with much of what has been accepted by human dignity, will not last.

It would be premature to state that the dictatorial form of government has already reached its zenith as to time or geographical extension, although in at least two dictatorships there are unmistakable signs that, after the disappearance of the dominating figure, public opinion slowly begins to assert itself again, namely, in Poland after Marshal Pilsudski's and in Yugoslavia after King Alexander's death. Viewing impartially, however, the main strongholds of dictatorship in Europe (Russia has always been and is still an Asiatic power), namely Italy and Germany, world opinion is more and more inclined to believe that this most interesting experiment of irresponsible one man-rule is beginning to lose the day. It may be different in countries where political education remains undeveloped, and where monocratic government is more or less in harmony with national traditions, as is the case in Russia, Turkey, and some of the Balkan and Baltic states. But on the whole, the moral, and even the technical, superiority of an admittedly defective democratic organization over unrestricted monocratic rule cannot fail to win over even those whom dissatisfaction with some lamentable results of democracy has driven into the opposite camp. We must always bear in mind that human institutions share the imperfection of the human mind.

One conclusion, at least, may be drawn from observation of the structure of modern autocracies, namely, that the downfall of one of the principal dictatorships of contemporary Europe must necessarily be fatal to all of the others. The apparent stability of dictatorship rests on the assumption that autocracy has entrenched itself as the definite form of modern government. If one of the régimes breaks down, by internal rebellion or (what is more likely) by a failure in foreign policy entailing internal revolution, autocracy at large is likely to suffer such a loss of prestige that an ultimate replacement by a more liberal and democratic form of government in all of the other dictatorial states will in the long run become inevitable.