After the Great War I had a serious talk in Switzerland with one of M. Clemenceau's advisers, Captain Bucher; this conversation was about the future of Austria. I drew Captain Bucher's attention to the dangers of an Anschluss and I expressed my conviction, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, that the defeat would do much more for Germany than a victory could have accomplished in the destruction of the super-national Austrian Empire, which was the natural opponent of pan-Germanism. The defeat inflicted on Germany would be a stage in the journey of the Germanic block in Europe, and that only the liberating and democratic ideas of the West, which, if cultivated in South-Eastern Europe, could break the advance of Germanism and prevent the latter from dictating to the Continent.

Captain Bucher grasped the idea which foresaw the need for a new combination of succession States, and he answered "Right, we will think of this. There is no hurry. The young people must have their honeymoon before a mother-in-law is imposed upon them!"

The process desired and foreseen by Clemenceau's adviser was identical with what Masaryk called "dis-Austrianising" the States formerly assembled within the Danubian Empire. Certainly, once liberation was an accomplished fact, this new consolidating of the new States became indispensable, but the alliance of these countries, which is needful for their protection against the absorbing tendencies of Italy and Germany has now been too long delayed. The strength of their history, their biology and their ideology has been under-estimated, while their power of holding on to the all too general, too abstract and too unreal principles of Geneva has been exaggerated. Above all, the following points have not been realised:

1. That pan-Germanism is the main object of Hitler and that all other measures are subordinate to this.
2. That this pan-Germanism is not merely a desire to link together all Germans in Europe in one State, but that it has a Prussian soul, is fundamentally warlike, dominating, anarchical and unscrupulous, and that to quote Gneisenau: "What Prussia is to Germany, Germany must become for the whole of Europe..."

During the last few months the Danubian States have at last seen the unalterable character of Prussianised Germany,
and have begun to be pre-occupied about their own economical and political unity, which unity alone can protect them and can assure to them some measure of support from the Western Powers. Germany, very watchful of all that the Danubian States are preparing in order to escape her domination, has put the whole of her energy into an effort to prevent the consolidation of the States of the old Austrian Empire, for Hitler desires to keep at all costs within the orbit of pan-Germanism, those Germanic elements which might be prepared to associate themselves with a Danubian system.

In order to arrive at the desired end, the Third Reich has, very ingeniously, secured the help of British opinion. The South East of Europe has been advised by many newspapers in England that it will be to the interests of European peace if Germany is yielded to. Such British advice, however well meant, is making a most prodigious and catastrophic blunder in this affair, a blunder which may be paid for by the whole of Europe, and may destroy the very basis of peace. Why do I say this? Because by giving such advice the British are, however unknowingly, supporting the pan-German idea at the very moment when the Danubian nations are endeavouring to erect against it the only defences strong enough to withstand it. That is to say, they are considering a system which, while ready to collaborate with either Germany or Italy, would treat with both these great powers collectively and as a great power, and by this means would remove the danger of the absorption of the Danubian countries by the dictatorial and expansionist States.

Actually it is the Austrian people, the guardians of the genuine Germanic tradition, who, faithful to the ideals of Western civilisation, are at this moment devoting themselves to the cause of the Danubian peoples, and who are endeavouring to resolve the difficult task of drawing Budapest nearer to her neighbours. Do not these efforts, which are both clear-sighted and prudent, deserve the encouragement of the Western Powers? And is it not deplorable while decisions of so high a nature are being worked out in Eastern Europe that British opinion should be so misinformed as to the essentials of the case? It may perhaps be answered that though the importance of the reconstruction of Eastern Europe is great it is surely not imperilled by listening to certain legitimate claims put forward by the Third Reich? Should we not endeavour to satisfy Germany in order to prevent her from assaulting her Southern neighbours?

What are these legitimate claims? There are two great
questions: (1) That of the German minority in Czecho-
slovakia, and (2) The question of the existing régime in
Austria which, says Germany, excludes Nazis from govern-
ment. In regard to the first, certain English opinion supports
Germany’s claim and reproaches the Czechoslovakian Govern-
ment for not having adopted, for the benefit of her German
minority, the system of the Swiss Confederation. Nothing is
more misleading than a false analogy. The situation in
Czechoslovakia can in no way be compared to that in
Switzerland, firstly, because the Union of the three Swiss
peoples is based upon a long adherence to a free system of
government which has made Switzerland the refuge of the
three nations whose blood she shares during periods of autocratie régimes in her neighbours. She has a common de-
nominator for all three races in her stout democratic ideals.
In consequence of this she can count upon the loyalty of all
her citizens. Never have the Italian Swiss been stirred up
against, or diverted from, their love of their country by
Italian propaganda. They do not regard the Duce as the
leader of all Italian-speaking men, no German-Swiss regards
Herr Hitler as the “Führer” of the German-speaking Swiss.
This fact has been wholly overlooked in England.

It is true that after the War, Czech nationals did not always
carry out the ideas of their great leaders, and that they did
not behave too well to the German minority, but if we speak
of such faults we must remember what the age-long German
domination has inflicted upon the Czechs. Such memories
die slowly. To obliterate them would have needed an effort
to live at peace and to repair old wrongs, on the part of the
Germans, as well as an endeavour to collaborate within the
new state. No such thing occurred. On the contrary, from
the very first moment the furious nationalism of the Germans,
and their collusion, both open and secret, with the nationalists
on the other side of the frontier, became evident and this
naturally excited the misgiving of the Czechs and created an
obstacle to concord. It was difficult to envisage granting
autonomy to a pan-German population which had lost all
comprehension of the great historical work of German and
Slav collaboration; that work which has ever seemed the
natural task of the inhabitants of Czechoslovakia.

What then should be done? A German, who knows and
fully understands his own people and the situation in South-
Eastern Europe, ventures to say to the British, with all the
force of tested conviction and in view of the catastrophic
results of their misunderstandings of a great problem:—

“Do not encourage the revolt of German minorities. Do
not forget that some evidence of loyalty must be given before autonomy is granted to a people. In this Czechoslovakian affair you are encouraging an agitation which aims at the conquest of a bridge-head to serve as a passage into the Danubian area. Know that in spite of this dangerous situation Czechoslovakia now follows a policy which gives to loyal minorities all they can legitimately ask. Do not forget that the adherents of Henlein* do not represent the German elite, nor that the loyal constructive and peaceful elements, who bar the way to that pan-Germanism—which speaks such good English—are the real friends of all that the British Empire stands for. Discite Moniti!

"The second great question of South Eastern Europe is the Austrian question. This is the question of the preservation, in the interests of Europe and of Germanism, of those Germans who are linked with Western and Christian civilisation, who are resolute in their desire to resist ‘Nordic nationalisation’ and who desire to remain the link between Western and Eastern Europe. Hitlerians answer to this: ‘But if the majority of the Austrian people renounce their own traditions and desire to join the Third Reich? Is great Germany to tolerate such an oppression of the German majority by a small minority?’"

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by such declarations. It is true that Nazi propaganda, with its vast resources, has gained active partizans all over Austria, that these are noisy and that they use all forms of propaganda and intimidation. But these individuals are without roots. The real Austrians want to stay by the old Austrian traditions and would rather have a Customs union with their Danubian neighbours than one which would tie them to the all-devouring Prussians. Austria desires to continue her thousand years of history. Such a long tradition cannot be obliterated from one day to another, even though certain of the intelligentsia, having forgotten the old super-national rôle of Austria, have been seduced by the intoxicating dream of Prussian pan-Germanism. As against these propagandists of the Reich, stand the clear-sighted leaders of Austrian political thought. They have reached the point of thanking God that the Anschluss with Germany has not yet been made, for they see now that the smallest concession to the Third Reich along those lines would land Austria in all the difficulties in which Germany is now wallowing, and would totally ruin her international position. That is why it is disastrous to encourage

* The Nazi leader in Czechoslovakia.
Austria to make concessions to Herr Hitler. On the contrary, she must be helped in every possible way by the Western powers to refuse all concessions which facilitate Nazi penetration, for it is here, and everyone should know this, that the destiny of Europe will be decided. The triumph of pan-Germanism in South Eastern Europe would definitely destroy European equilibrium, and the domination of Nazi barbarians on the Danube—and further—would carry the menace to the Near East. We should be back to the programme of Berlin-Baghdad.

"Wait and See" is a well known maxim which has had some success in the past, but in face of what is now preparing should we not rather say: "Foresee and Forestall?"

Political leaders on the Continent do not understand the difficulties which now prevent England from a forward line in Eastern Europe, and it is true that as long as the little Danubian States were separated, and therefore coveted by the two great powers who wish to control the Balkans, England disliked the idea of interfering in so confused a situation, but she can, and should, insist that if these States get together to found a new federation they should be allowed to do so, and that such a League of Danubian nations should be recognised as a contribution to European equilibrium. It is Austria's task to serve as a bridge between Budapest and the Little Entente, and to proclaim aloud and with courage her devotion to this constructive solution of the Danubian question. She cannot rock between a thousand and one possibilities for ever, and the time for hesitation is over. If Austria misses her spring now she will be lost, and with her, Europe.

The great illusion, the father of so many of the errors committed in international politics in regard to Germany since the War, consists of the natural but erroneous supposition that the governing classes of Prussianised Germany are like other men, and that one can make arrangements to collaborate with them in common loyalty to Europe. The truth is quite different, for these people are possessed of abnormal ideas, and are without any sense of reality or of right. And all concessions made to their sinister proposals will be abused in the name of their furious obsessions, and will be infinitely regretted by their dupes.

There is only one thing which could stop the present rulers of Germany, one thing which could liberate the German people from the madness which has diverted them from their best traditions and that is a wall of steel which should be
opposed to all the claims made by the men who now govern Germany, even when these are made in the name of equality, justice and peace, for this design is to destroy all these three blessings of humanity.

Strange news has come to me during the last few months from all parts of Germany; it is that those who suffer most under the present régime are convinced that only a War can release them from their nightmare. This is significant and should cause illusionists in other countries to reflect, for a war is not necessary to release Germany. The will to say “No” is all that is required.

The British Government did well in adjourning indefinitely the discussions on Colonies and in linking this matter with other questions going to the root of international relations. But this postponement is just as necessary in the question of the “Cantonization” demanded by German minorities outside the Reich. For it is impossible to give the same confidence to Nazi-driven groups which would be readily accorded to people who were ready to work loyally in the interests of the nations to which they belonged. But in any case let British Ministers close the era of that international pacifism which has led us to where we now are. Do not fear. The worshippers of violence have missed their moment. The organiser of revenge, General von Seeckt, is dead. He died convinced that the folly of the Government had ruined the preparations made by the soldiers. The Nazi leaders are now trying to get by bluff what General von Seeckt intended to get by power. It is too late!

I admire those English and French who say that German collaboration is necessary to Europe and that she must be persuaded to return to her true mission, but as a German patriot and Christian I fear those among them who have yielded to the delusion that this result can be reached before Germany is cured of the terrible disease which now afflicts her.

Fr. W. Foerster.