MISSING: A FATHER FOR A "WAR-GUILT LIE"

THE SQUL OF GERMANY entered once more into a demonstration of protest the other day against what all the newspapers of Berlin persistently refer to as "the war-guilt lie." This attitude toward "the war-guilt lie," as certain Paris dailies are reputed to be so fond of reminding mankind, is the basis of all Berlin diplomacy—exactly, to borrow an expression from the Manchester *Guardian*, as the "revenge" comprised the foundation of all Paris diplomacy until the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine by France. If we keep this point in mind we shall not, as the great Liberal organ of England tells its readers from time to time, dismiss "the war-guilt lie" as an academic discussion of interest to students of history only. For upon "the war-guilt lie," as German dailies like the *Koelnische Zeitung*, the *Kreuz Zeitung*, and the *Hamburger Nachrichten* assure us, rest the Versailles Treaty, the reparations and the present map of Europe. These are the considerations which explain the importance attached in the European press to the demonstration of the whole German people with President Hindenburg at their head.

No doubt is cherished by Germany's Foreign Minister, Gustav Stresemann, the Paris *Humanité* tells us, of the ultimate if not speedy collapse of what all German dailies call the "dictatorship" of Versailles, what this Communist daily sometimes terms the "imperialism" of Poincaré. Perhaps the view is expounded most consistently in the *Koelnische Zeitung*, which regards Raymond Poincaré as the champion of the war-guilt lie. It thinks his toil to sustain "the lie" a vain one. Dailies in England, among them a conservative one here and there, seem highly alarmed at the prospect. For no government could now exist at Berlin if it did not, at least unofficially, reflect in its diplomacy the popular German attitude toward "the lie," and, it is charged, pessimistic reflections on the prospects of European peace are accordingly inspired from time to time in the Paris *Temps* and the Paris *Matin*. This is the state of affairs, according to the latter, which in Europe tends more and more to render world politics a difficult science.

What now lends peculiar importance to the "war-guilt-lie" agitation in Germany is the phase marked by the recent Berlin demonstrations. No longer do German dailies of importance, like the *Kreuz Zeitung*, content themselves with denunciations of the "lie." There is a tendency to retort with a countercharge that the World War was hatched by a group of the French Foreign Office in control at the Quai d'Orsay. If we accept the arguments set forth from time to time in the *Koelnische Zeitung*, there would seem no doubt of the guilt of the men thus pointed out. Such German arguments usually trace the out-

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break of the World War to a concrete fact—the Russian general mobilization decreed by the late Czar Nicholas II. This ruler is pictured as trapt into signing the fatal order by the diplomatists of the Quai d'Orsay, abetted by Raymond Poincaré. Thus Hans Delbrück in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung:*

"The German Government and German scientists generally, German statesmen, and German scholars have again and again demanded—and now they make the demand once more—that the charge embodied in the Versailles Treaty to the effect that Germany deliberately brought on the World War be investigated by a neutral commission. With the reparations issue this demand is but indirectly involved.

"Poincaré himself affirmed that if Germany be not guilty of bringing on the World War, she need pay no reparations. Yet even were she found innocent of the charge, an international court might decide that Germany must pay because she lost the war, and it is an old axiom of international law that the loser in a war must make good.

"For this reason many Germans do not take the discussion of the war guilt seriously. They overlook the fact that the moral standing of the German people in the world and the standing of every individual German abroad is determined to a great extent by the Versailles war-guilt proposition. It is accepted among the nations generally, and our generation of Germans is thus misjudged and condemned. For that reason it is right to demand an international commission. Why has its formation been so long delayed? Its verdict could do much to satisfy the peoples of the world."

To this last point a reply is vouchsafed by the distinguished Pierre Renouvin in the *Esprit International*. A commission of the sort suggested in Germany must prove useless, he says. Scholars of unimpeachable neutrality are not to be found or, if they are, there can be no agreement as to their qualifications. Nor is there such a thing as official finality in historical research. The one possible expedient would be for individual scholars to go their own way in an investigation of the truth until some sort of unanimity was secured.

Replying to this, Hans Delbrück concedes that there is some truth in it. The difficulty, according to him, is that the learned world of France, with the exception of a few independent spirits, has withdrawn from the discussion. The newspapers of the Entente Cordiale countries and of the Associated Powers, he adds, leave their readers in ignorance of the real state of the case:

"At present the situation is that the champions of Germany's side of the case speak out while the accusers of Germany are silent.

"Renouvin himself concedes that through this agitation, now beginning to pervade the world, weighty results have been accomplished. It has been possible to arouse a wide-spread interest at last in the war-guilt question and thus to inspire doubt of the justice of the verdict upon which rests the Treaty of Versailles."

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