

(October 16, 1933)

Changing Conditions in Europe

BY CAPTAIN H. G. SCOTT OF CALGARY.

PRESIDENT SIFTON:—We have with us today a man very interesting on account of his subject and on account of himself; and particularly on account of his subject, because of the news which we are reading about in today's papers. I will give you a few facts about the speaker. He was born in Scotland and he is the police magistrate of Calgary, the two most important things about him. He served with the Canadian Corps at Ypres, where he was permanently lamed, and later served with the British Intelligence Corps in Greece. Since the war he has made a number of visits to various parts of Europe where interesting and critical situations arose. He was in Albania and Jugo-Slavia just after the Dictatorship had been proclaimed in 1929, and on the Russian and Lithuanian frontiers in 1930. He has just returned from a visit to Germany, Austria and Hungary, where he made a careful study of European conditions, with particular reference to the present critical political situation. Captain Scott.

CAPTAIN SCOTT:—Mr. Sifton and Gentlemen, it is rather less than fifteen years since Armistice Day which closed the war, but again Europe is facing the danger of war and again the source of that danger lies in Germany. Perhaps it is well before considering the present situation to recall to our mind what defeat in the Great War cost Germany. Before the war Germany was certainly one of the great nations of the world with the dream of world power and at the close of the war Germany was on her knees. The Versailles Treaty cost Germany the whole of her colonies, practically all her navy and her merchant marine, one seventh of her home territory in Germany and

one twelfth of her home population, an occupation for a number of years and with indefinite demand for an indemnity which she did not pay.

You remember that in the immediate years after the war there was in Germany a state of despondency and confusion. There was no clear political leadership and perhaps it is out of that despondency and confusion that the present situation and the rise of Hitler has come. There is no time to tell the story of Hitler, but one might just remember this that he is not a German by birth, but an Austrian, a man of obscure origin rising, without any assistance of birth or wealth, to his present position. One might ask how this man has got to his present position and perhaps this may be the explanation; that Hitler has imbued and put into fiery expression the things that Germany wants to hear and that Germany wants to get. What she wants to hear is that she has been treated with gross injustice. What she wants to get is recovery of her old position, restoration of lost territories, and revenge on her enemies. And possibly it is just because Hitler has expressed these objections in his own peculiar way that he has come to be the leader of the German nation at the present moment. It was suggested to me when I was in Germany that one of the reasons of his success is that he is something of a novelty as an orator in Germany. The German political orators in recent years appear to have been on the whole rather stodgy, possibly business-like, but not very appealing to the emotions of their audiences. Hitler appears to the emotion personified; and apparently the style of his speeches, his constant driving reiteration of a few simple basic facts, has a special appeal. As I have suggested to you, these facts are, the claim for justice, recovery of her old prosperity, restoration of her lost territories.

Whatever the secret of it is, there is no doubt that the man has acquired an extraordinary hold on the German nation and possibly I can best make that clear in this way. I think most of you know that all over Germany now, the stock greeting of German to German in the streets is that dramatic old Roman salute of the raised hand and the

words, "Hail Hitler." Now what would that mean if it were translated into every day terms for us Canadians. Supposing we do translate it into our own terms and do so without wishing to be discourteous. What would we think if the average Canadian citizen going along the street and meeting any complete stranger, were to raise his hand above his head and say perfectly solemnly, "God Bless Bennett", and pass on? Well, we do not do these things. That expresses perhaps fairly vividly what a position this man has attained in Germany.

Now, it is generally admitted that Hitler himself is a perfectly honest German patriot. So far as I know, I have heard no questioning of the man's sincerity and honesty. On the other hand there is a great deal of question as to the character of his immediate supporters. They were described to me variously as a gang of thugs, a gang of professional adventurers and a gang of gun men. Of course that does not apply to all. I understand his immediate henchman or second in command, a man by the name of Hess, is considered to be a very fine specimen of a German and they are absolutely devoted to their leader. Rightly or wrongly, Hitler seems to have got the knack of inspiring intense personal devotion amongst the men surrounding him.

What is the characteristic of that government that he has established in Germany? Well, I fancy its outstanding characteristic is the somewhat discreditable one to our minds that it is based on a ruthless use of violence and at times of cruelty. He and his associates have swept their opponents out of existence without the smallest regard for law, or to a certain extent at any rate, for humanity. Those of you who are students of history may find it rather interesting to read up again, if you are not too familiar with it the story of the rise to power of Napoleon III in France between 1848 and 1852. There are quite striking analogies between the two situations and it is perhaps interesting to see if the final results will be as tragic for Germany and for Hitler as it was for France and Napoleon.

Then there is the question of the method by which

Hitler has obtained power. It looks a little as if when he first began his campaign he realized that in order to unite behind him the autonomous force, at any rate, if not the majority in number of the German nation, he must provide them with a target, or if you like to put it that way, with an enemy. As it was out of the question, for the moment at any rate, for Germany to embark on any foreign adventure, it does look a little as if he had decided to select the most convenient home enemies and those were the Communists and the Jews. You have probably all read that at the time of Hitler taking over power there was danger of Germany going Communist. I venture to doubt it. You remember at the last free election the number of Communist votes polled was rather less than one fifth of the total and it seems open to grave doubt whether the danger was anything like the danger which Hitler and his men have suggested.

Then there was the attack on the Jews which has aroused so much attention all over the world and really seems as if it was as great a blunder from the Hitler point of view as the German invasion of Belgium in 1914. Of course there are two sides to every question and one should consider the Hitlerite contention with respect to the Jews. The Hitlerites say that the Jews may be a small minority in Germany but that there is tendency in certain sections of public life to find them out of all proportion to their numbers, particularly in the professions and also, to some extent at least, in the civil service. As to whether it is true or not I cannot say—I merely give it for what it is worth—but the Hitlerite's contention is, that in the civil service in particular the Jewish proportion in respect of numbers has become exceedingly high and as that proportion increased the tone of the civil service deteriorated. There is one phase of that which is probably worth nothing. You remember as a result of the Versailles Treaty certain sections of Germany in the east were restored to Poland, after being in German hands for a little over a century. Poland always had a large Jewish population and when that restoration took place there was a large exodus of Jews into Germany and when they first arrived

they were welcomed by the German authorities and welcomed because they were excellent fodder as propoganda. It was possible for the German authorities to say to the world, "Look at the result of this transfer of German territory to Poland. Thousands of good German citizens are fleeing from their homes and taking refuge in Germany." But after the Jews had been in Germany for some little time the Germans noticed that they were obtaining a very considerable proportion of the best positions in the country and then of course, the tone changed and the Hitlerites suggested there was a definite lowering in the tone of the civil service as a result of the infiltration of Jews. The old German civil service was not only efficient; it was also incorruptible and the Hitlerites suggested that that quality of incorruptibility was definitely being encroached upon as a result of Jewish infiltration. That is the Hitlerite story. We should take it into consideration. It may be entirely unjust.

Then there is the Jewish side of the question and one may sum that up by saying this, that whatever the defects of the Jews, if there are defects, nothing could excuse the methods employed against them. If it was necessary for a nation of Germany's strength to employ such methods as these against a comparatively small minority like the Jews then Germany's civilization has made very small steps since the middle ages and what we have got in Germany is the mentality of the middle ages with the machinery of today. That is the Jewish contention. I do not propose to go into any of the stories that are told as to the atrocities that have been perpetrated in Germany. All I can say is that speaking to people of our own nationality, living in Germany and not disposed to exaggerate or distort any incidents, it does appear as if there had been some disgraceful cruelty perpetrated in various districts with the approval, if not at the actual instigation, of the Nazi authorities. It seems to be perfectly clear that conditions vary with districts, that when you get in the Nuremburg district, a notorious Nazi government of particularly brutal anti-Jewish tendency, you will get dreadful incidents. In other districts where more moderate, reasonable people are

in charge you will get very little of which to complain. That is certainly true, but the net result has been to stain the whole German name.

What is the net result, as far as one can see, to Germany of the Hitler leadership? Let us try and balance it and take the two sides. Undoubtedly it is giving to the German nation, and particularly to the young Germans a sense of leadership that they have not had since the war, a sense of marching behind leaders who know what they want and are prepared to get it at all costs. You have got the feeling amongst young men of Germany that they can march in disciplined serried columns to the objectives at which the whole German nation aims and know that their leaders will take them there if they possibly can. And with that sense of leadership has come also a sense of discipline, a sense of duty to the state which is good. It is open to argument whether other nations, ourselves included, could not benefit at the present time by something of that same sense of discipline and duty.

What is the cost that has been paid? Some of the price, at any rate is the complete extinction of anything approaching what we know as self-government. You probably remember that one of the first results of the seizure of power by Hitler was the passage, by an entirely obedient German Reichstag, of an act giving Hitler power to dispense for at least four years with the sovereignty of Parliament and govern more or less as an autocrat; and to all intents and purposes Parliamentary government has ceased in Germany. And the press, as we know it, has also ceased to function. The press in Germany now is simply a vehicle for propaganda of the views which the government wishes its people to hear and the news which it chooses they should receive.

Let me illustrate. A correspondent of one of the great English newspapers, (I mean written in English, because I do not propose to give you any indication which newspaper it is, for the simple reason that foreign newspaper correspondents in Germany just now are carrying on their work with a definite element of personal risk)—this correspondent told me a little while ago that some of his German

colleagues in German journalism said, "Have you heard the news of the foreign aeroplanes flying over Berlin and dropping anti-government pamphlets?" He said, "Yes, I have heard the news and I think it is as absolute rubbish as the story that the Communist burned the Reichstag." And the reply of the German journalist was to laugh and say, "Yes, we know that just as well as you do, but we do not dare to say so." If that is typical you see what it means. It amounts to this, that the mentality of the German people, with respect to events on crucial matters in the realm of foreign affairs, is being formed on a basis of deliberate falsehood and you can understand what an extremely dangerous result that must have for the whole nation.

Then there is also a definite suppression of independent news coming from outside. Not only have newspapers like the *Manchester Guardian*, which during the war was consistently kindly to Germany (so much so it incurred considerable odium in Great Britain as being somewhat pro-German) and has been very very lenient in its post war attitude, been banned from Germany because it ventured to criticise the Nazi government and policy, but newspapers in the main independent have been banned in the same way. Not only has that happened but even private news is being stopped. Again let me illustrate. I met in Germany on the Austrian frontier a family of Americans and one of the girls of that family was being educated in Munich whose mother had occasion now and then to go and see her. When she went on these visits, if entering a Munich store such as a hairdressers' establishment, where she was known, she found people who whisper in her ear, "Can you give us any news of what is going on outside Germany, because we do not hear and we do not trust our own press? Or can you bring us in an Austrian newspaper?" And her reply was very wisely but quite untruthfully that she took no interest in these affairs and did not read them. As a matter of fact she was up to the neck in politics. That suggests the people are being deliberately deceived as to the situation they are in and as to the attitude of the whole world towards their government.

The mails have ceased to be a safe vehicle of com-

munication in Germany. They are being habitually tapped and censored and not only are the mails out of Germany being tapped but mails going out of Germany to foreign countries are being interfered with and even mails crossing Germany. So much is the case that some correspondents of foreign newspapers are deliberately distorting their dispatches in order to conceal their origin, to conceal the source of their information and conceal the dates and places from which they are sent; and some of these correspondents in South Germany have been making a point of crossing the frontier into Austria when they want to make sure their dispatches will get home and not be interfered with on the way. That is the somewhat extraordinary condition in a time of what is supposed to be complete peace.

There has been a definite movement to get rid of women in the public life of Germany. I came across a lady in Munich who had had a very prominent position in the life of Bavaria, had been a member of state Parliament and held the presidency of a number of women's organizations and she told us that when the Nazis took over, not only was she deprived of her seat in Parliament but dismissed from all her positions and told to take no part in the public life of the country. She said, "I do not complain for myself because I am in exactly the same position as a very large number of women who held government positions of one sort or another and who have been dismissed on the ground that the Nazis do not intend that women shall take any part in the government of the country and in many cases have been dismissed after years of service with either no allowance or only a very meagre one. Naturally that must leave a feeling of great bitterness, great despondency among some sections of the German people.

Then one may ask what is the German attitude with respect to another of those great objectives, the lost territory. It is perhaps instructive to note what Hitler himself in his book says as to the lost territories. "It must be thoroughly understood," he says, "that the lost lands will never be won back by solemn appeal to the good God nor

by pious hopes in any League of Nations, but only by force of arms." That statement as far as I know has never been modified or toned down.

In what way is that being kept before the German people? Well, in such methods as this. In Munich there is the Hall of the Marshalls, a large building on one of the main streets and in the front hall there are hanging ten wreaths and under each of these wreaths is the name of one of the lost provinces of Germany, Alsace, Lorraine, Posen, Silesia, Schleswick, the colonies and so on. You will remember that in the years between 1870 and 1914 the question of Alsace-Lorraine lay like an uneasy sort of nightmare over the whole peace of Europe and here you have in Germany ten Alsace-Lorraines being proclaimed to the German people. On their Polish frontier you will find a monument erected to the lost territories and you will find an inscription which declares that this bleeding frontier calls to the whole German nation for restoration. There is not a sign of anything like the weakening of the German demand for the restoration of these Eastern territories, and in view of the fact that the Polish government and the other governments that hold such territories have made it perfectly clear that they will not surrender these lost territories you can understand what a difficult and almost hopeless situation exists in view of that German expressed determination to recover these territories.

Where is the line of least resistance for the Germans in attempting to obtain at least some expansion? The line of least resistance for the moment is certainly in Austria. The most crucial question is probably the Polish corridor, but for the moment there is no question of making an attack there. The line of least resistance is Austria and perhaps it will help us to visualize the situation in Austria if we remember that roughly the relation of Austria to Germany is not unlike the relation of Canada to the United States. You have about the same proportion. Germany is about ten times the population of Austria, much as the States is to Canada. You have two nations speaking the same language. You have, roughly speaking, the same basis of rational origin — German. And until the Hitler

government's seizure of power undoubtedly the bulk of Austrian opinion favored union with Germany. I do not think there is any doubt about that. And that union was forbidden almost entirely because the allied powers, in particular, France, and the nations of the Little Entente, (Czecho-Slovakia, Roumania and Jugo-Slavia) were afraid to see unity because of the great accession of power it would give Germany. But that position has changed since the Hitler government took over power and although there is undoubtedly in Austria a very strong minority, which is in complete sympathy with the Nazi government, it does appear to be a minority. The figures that were given to me by reliable people were that approximately thirty to forty per cent. in Austria are pro-Nazi and sixty to seventy per cent. are hostile to the Nazi government of Germany and to union.

What has been the behavior of the Nazi government toward this kindred race in Austria? Possibly I can best make this clear in this way. Here is a poster issued by the Austrian government and placarded all over Austria. It is in their stations and on their public buildings. It is a record of the Nazi outrages in Austria since the beginning of this year and there are twenty-five separate outrages recorded there. They range over quite a large sphere of activity. They include the bombing of Austrian police travelling along a road, the killing of some and wounding of others, the shooting of one Austrian cabinet minister, Dr. Seidell, the blowing up of railways, the kidnapping from across the frontier of Austrian frontier guards—in fact every possible form of outrage short of organized invasion. What would we say if that were going on across our border with the United States, What would we say if it were necessary for us to keep our border patrols hidden; if it were not possible to allow our uniformed frontier guards to go within two miles of the Canadian-United States frontier?

At one of the Austrian frontier towns I met the officer commanding the Austrian garrison, and as I wanted to have a prowl along the frontier, I asked him if he would take me. He said he was sorry he could not because his

orders were that they must not go nearer to the frontier than two kilometres for fear of attack from across the German frontier by the Nazis. "If you want to go up I must send somebody with you in plain clothes." And he did that, and we went up. One of the things we saw was a spot where there was a little notice up and a number of wreaths and they marked the spot where in August of this year an Austrian frontier guard peacefully patrolling the frontier was riddled with bullets by fifteen German Nazis who came across. They put fifty bullets into that boy and left him dead and I saw photographs of that body after it had been taken back for burial. You can understand the situation. Is it surprising that within the last couple of days we have seen that the Austrian government is erecting barb wire all along the frontiers? Is it surprising that during this last Summer the French army was holding its manoeuvres in Alsace-Lorraine and the Italian armies standing in the Pevna? There were three divisions ready to cross that little strip of Austria to defend that frontier from invasion. It is calculated that from three to seven thousand Austrian Nazis have escaped across the frontier into Germany and it is suggested and with certain reasons that some of them at least were encouraged by the Austrian government to go because it was thought better to have a concentrated enemy outside its borders than a concealed enemy inside. Anyway they are concentrating in the south of Germany in a camp and there they are being trained for the invasion of Austria. But the information is that invasion is not likely to take place at the present time. They are too late. It is said to have been planned for June of this year but the Austrian government got wind of it and the moment passed. And now it is too late because the Austrian frontiers are being strengthened and as I have suggested there are other forces behind the Austrian government.

Then there is another extremely interesting question as to the foreign policy of Germany. You probably know that one of the difficulties of the European situation is the jealousy that exists between France and Italy with respect to North Africa. It is a question of Italian expansion

and French hold in Tunis and until a comparatively short time ago it was not at all certain which way Italy was inclined in her sympathies. There are affinities between the Fascist government of Italy and the Nazi government of Germany, and it was by no means certain which way Italy would go in the event of conflict but the German attitude towards Austria seems to have decided the Italian government that they will not countenance German absorption of Austria and during August of this year certain meetings took place between the Chancellor of Austria and Mussolini in Italy and as a result of those meetings it seems to be just possible that the outlines of a great scheme are being formed, the object of which is to draw the whole of south-eastern Europe into something like at least an economic federation, which will bring their trade south through the great port of Trieste under Italian auspices. If such a thing as that comes into existence, it will mean the loss to the German Baltic North Sea ports of a great amount of trade. It will mean a slight change, possibly an unimportant change, in the general trend of European trade and that of course may have political results. It may mean the increasing isolation of the German people as the result of their own political blunders. That is only an outline. It may not come off. It is one of the movements worth watching at the present time.

Then there is this very important question, the result of the Nazi policy both at home and abroad, that at home they have attained absolute mastery, almost certainly at the cost of creating for themselves a very large number of bitter enemies. You can suppress the trade unions by force of arms. You can beat down the Catholic organization. You can concentrate the Communist and Socialist leaders in prison camps, but you cannot do it without creating for yourselves a very large number of internal enemies and if the whole policy of a country is to educate its people to rule by violence as the chief means of obtaining an objective then the government that does that is running a tremendous risk if it fails to give that people what it has promised.

The Hitler government has promised the German peo-

ple the restoration of internal prosperity and as far as one can see by attacking the tremendously powerful Jewish community, by attacking its own trade union, by alienating the sympathies of all its neighbors, it has made economic restoration extremely difficult if not impossible. Remember Germany on the whole is a great industrial nation organized for a tremendous export to the world markets. If those markets are closed, either because of politics or because of the increased tendency to tariff barriers all over the world, what becomes of the Hitlerite promise to its people to restore internal prosperity at the price of depriving that people of its old self-governing rights? And the second great promise was the restoration of lost territories.

What is the result so far of the Nazi government policy? You have got the whole of Europe at the present time alarmed and standing on guard around Germany. Is it conceivably possible that that promise can be kept? If it is not kept what are the consequences likely to be to the government of Germany at the present moment and to that government's leaders? Germany has been encouraged by her present government to dream of world power, and if that dream changes into a nightmare by increased depression and hardship at home and increased isolation abroad, what is the result likely to be for the leaders of that nation? That is why at the present time British observers in Germany are asking themselves very anxiously what is likely to happen in Germany in the course of the next Winter? It is almost certain it will be a time of great economic hardship. It may be a time of some very dreadful events taking place.

Of course all I have tried to do is to give you just a few points of a tremendously involved and difficult situation but it does look as if the situation in Germany (and it is a very tragic situation for the whole world) is that that great nation (and whether you like the Germans or not, we have got to recognize they are one of the great nations of the world) appears to have reverted in spirit to something like medieval barbarism and as a result of that reversion the peace and civilization of Europe are at the present moment in grave jeopardy.

PRESIDENT SIFTON:—I know that I may speak for the entire audience when I tell Captain Scott how deeply we appreciate the unparalleled opportunity for hearing such a fair and penetrating analysis of a condition which today threatens the world. We are very grateful indeed for his presence today.