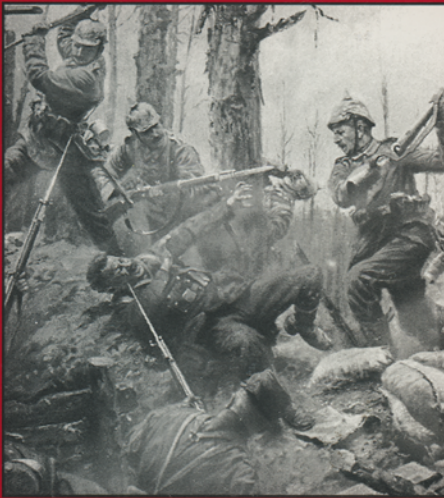


VICTORY MUST BE OURS

Germany in
the Great War
1914-1918

Laurence V. Moyer

*Introduction by
John Keegan*



Victory Must Be Ours

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Introduction

by John Keegan

THIS IS AN ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION in English historical literature to our knowledge of the First World War. It is about the German side, of which so comparatively little is known in Britain or the United States, and it is about the war behind the lines rather than in the trenches, an almost equally overlooked subject.

Britain's civilian population underwent severe privation as a result of the submarine blockade, but that became effective only in the penultimate year of the war. Germany, however, was blockaded from the start, while the war on the eastern front also cut her off from the Ukraine, which had become the wheatbowl of Europe in the two decades before 1914. As a result, German industry was denied imports of scarce materials, particularly non-ferrous metals and chemical raw materials, on which it had depended in peacetime and needed even more urgently in war. The German civilian population experienced actual want, of food, clothing and fuel, from as early as 1916. By 1918, despite the occupation of the Ukraine under the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, shortages were so acute that starvation was a real threat. It was the Allies' maintenance of the blockade, after the Armistice of November 11, which forced the post-war German government to sign the Versailles treaty on dictated terms, since the prolongation of wartime hardships had become unendurable.

Laurence Moyer has constructed a detailed and convincing pic-

ture of what such hardships actually meant for civilian Germany. They were not only directly material, as manifested in the rise of diseases of malnutrition, but also financial, with long as well as short-term implications. The middle class responded loyally from the outset to appeals for war loans, drawing on their savings to buy government paper. By 1917 inflation was so severe that professional people and civil servants, who made up a disproportionately large sector of the German middle class, were having to liquidate their savings to live. The immediate post-war hyperinflation therefore overwhelmed an already weakened bourgeoisie, which had almost no resources to see itself through the financial crisis.

As the author points out, the financial hardships imposed by the war ensured that the effect of the other sufferings it inflicted would persist, with calamitous political consequences. The Germans recovered from malnutrition. They harboured lasting rancours about the destruction of their personal security and respectability. Above all, they had suffered deep psychic wounds by the loss of so many of their young men—sons, brothers, husbands—in the trenches. France and Britain had suffered respectively worse and almost as badly; but they had emerged from the war as victors. The Germans had sacrificed a generation for—as it appeared in the aftermath—no reason at all.

I have long believed that the success of Hitler's appeal to the Germans lay in its underlying message of revenge. The willingness they showed in following him into a second world war can only be explained, it seems to me, in terms of an offer he made to reverse the result of the first. The sufferings they accepted could be justified only if they could achieve victory. Denied it in 1918, they were ready to risk a second round of sacrifices in 1939 on his assurance that 'victory must be ours' at the reprise. Laurence Moyer's remarkable study lends weight to the view that the origins of the Second World War can be found only in the most thorough understanding of what defeat in 1918 had meant for the vanquished.

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FREDERICK THE GREAT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY is said to have remarked that the best wars were those fought without the knowledge of the king's subjects at home. In his day, paid hirelings, many of them a few steps removed from the jails or even kidnapped by the king's agents, fought battles lasting only a few hours, long enough for the opposing monarch's hireling army to give up or flee the field. Apart from monarchs and their entourage, the only people who cared much about the conflict, or even knew of it, were angry peasants who saw their fields destroyed. For most persons, one king's rule turned out to be much like any other and regardless of who won, conditions of life would not change much. Wars, often fought to decide which family dynasty would succeed the throne, held little interest for most peasants or even town dwellers.

This, of course, is no longer the case. Once the French Revolutionaries forged an army composed of citizens and the industrial revolution generated weapons requiring huge expenditures, ordinary citizens became very much involved. As they began to feel part of a nation, many accepted with considerable enthusiasm the idea of sending their sons off to battle and parting with some of their treasure in order to preserve their nation. By the time of the First World War, nationalism had so welded people together that the link between the fighting front and the home front became indissoluble.

The home front thus became a necessary adjunct to the fighting

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front, linked so intimately that one depended on the other. It was not merely concern over the fate of a son in the line of fire. From the home front came colossal quantities of weapons of war and other materials which made the war effort possible. Inevitably, this forced civilians to cut back or do without many of the products that had been a routine part of civilian life. Often, this involved the food they ate and the clothes they wore. As never before, the "War Effort" involved some degree of genuine sacrifice on the part of millions of civilians.

Out of this arose much concern over popular sentiment on the home front. If civilian support for the war would weaken or decline, vast trouble could ensue which could jeopardize battlefield success. It is no accident, therefore, that nations devoted much attention to civilian attitudes to the war. Those which failed to do this found themselves in deep trouble. When the going got tough on the home front, the message became: This is the price we must pay for winning the war. Your support is needed. Hold on, Stand fast and endure the sacrifice because defeat will spell disaster. Victory must be ours—or else.

In early August 1914, shortly after World War I erupted, a nineteen-year-old German soldier wrote from the battlefield, "Victory for us will not be easy. But if there is justice and divine guidance in history—and of that I am absolutely certain—then victory must be ours, sooner or later." He fell in battle three weeks later and thus did not live to witness the outcome. But his conviction, or hope, of victory continued to be a potent driving force throughout the entire war. Those who propelled this message within Germany arose from many quarters, their message directed as much to civilians as to the soldiers, many of whom raised their voices in Paul Lincke's song, *Wir müssen siegen*, Victory must be Ours. In this endeavor, they conformed to a hallowed European tradition.

More than a century before the First World War, Revolutionaries during the French Revolution faced a monumental crisis. Hostile foreign armies closed in, about to destroy both them and the Revolution. In desperation, they tried something which had never been tried before. They drafted all the youth of the country into an ad-hoc citizen's army and told the old men to preach virtues of love of country. It succeeded. Ever since that time, whenever nations found themselves in trouble they have done very much the same

thing, drafting the youth into an army and telling old men to preach virtues of patriotism.

When German youth marched into battle in 1914, the old men—professors and publicists, politicians and pastors—had been already preaching for some time. As the war unfolded, the words of these men increased in volume and tempo, providing all the right reasons why killing other youth from the neighboring countries constituted a worthy and noble endeavor. A prominent member of the Protestant clergy in the early part of the war spoke of the war as “the magnificent preserver and rejuvenator” of the German people because it would bring an “end to deceit, hypocrisy, self-aggrandizement, and immorality,” replacing all these nasty evils with “a revival of trust, honesty, decency and obedience.”

Publicists geared much of this exhortation to home consumption, and with reason. Those at home, in every warring nation, found themselves facing severe shortages and were forced to cut back or do without many of the things which had heretofore been a routine part of civilian life. Often, this involved drastic changes in life’s fundamentals, affecting every facet of life. In ways which had heretofore never been true, the war effort involved genuine sacrifice on the part of millions of civilians. Within Germany, this message of perseverance gained a special prominence. Neither France, nor Britain nor the United States endured the levels of privation and distress as did Germany. As the war progressed, German civilians came face-to-face with the immensity of a war that impinged on nearly every phase of daily living. After 1916, the government’s appeals for steadfastness rang forth with ever greater intensity and by early 1918, those appeals gained a special resonance. Germany, indeed, found itself on the threshold of victory. In March 1918, the German army launched a massive invasion which even neutral observers believed could win the war for Germany. Six months later, however, came a stunning defeat that made all of the sacrifices for naught. This volume attempts to trace the contours of the war on the battlefronts in the context of how it affected and was affected by the home front.

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At the epicenter of what contemporaries at that time called the Great European War, or Great War, lay Germany. In every account

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of the conflict, German military activity looms large in the narrative. The focus of such accounts, however, often depends on the writer's own country. A History of the First World War by a British author perforce dwells at some length on the bloody encounters at Gallipoli, the Somme, Passchendaele and the like. American versions not infrequently race through the early war years so as to devote considerable attention to the final battles in 1918 where American forces played a role. Russian chroniclers have often viewed western front battles as something of a subsidiary front to the massive conflict that raged in the East. In French versions of the war, the conflict revolves around the exploits of Joffre, Pétain and Foch. All these accounts tend to treat the author's country as the subject and Germany as the object, the "enemy" on the other side of the trenches.

This volume is an attempt to examine the war primarily from the German experience and to portray that experience in the lives of average human beings. Although an immense number of books have been written on the First World War, few books in English deal with the First World War from the viewpoint of Germany alone and fewer still focus on the nature of the war as experienced by the average German. This is the purpose of this volume. In the portions which describe the military activities of war, the reader will find more comments from ordinary foot soldiers than generals, more about conditions in the trenches than the strategic movements of some IX Corps or other. Accounts of life on the home front concentrate on the experiences of civilians, on what real persons actually felt and how they coped with wartime conditions.

Every wartime nation encountered pressures and problems that not only disrupted civilian life but also affected the underlying social and political fabric of their country. This impact varied, however. Victorious nations emerged with much intact. In France, Great Britain and the United States, the political systems remained as they had been before the war, their empires secure and even enlarged, their societies still tied to many pre-war conventions. On the continent of Europe, however, this was not the case. Russia began the war with a Tsar and ended with Lenin; Austria, or more properly, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, entered the conflict as a major player, in possession of a vast empire. She exited with only a few square miles of the eastern Alps to call her own. The war gave birth to a host of new, sovereign countries, including Poland,

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Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

In Germany, the war produced a massive and profound cataclysm that echoed for decades. It was as if, in 1914, Germany gingerly opened a door called "War" and someone threw in a bomb that blew up the house. By 1918, the political structure had collapsed, its economy lay in disarray, its society in upheaval. It left a trail that influenced much of the world's history for the next thirty years. What brought this all about has provided the grist for this account.

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Germany's entrance into the Great War has sometimes been compared to a throw of the dice, akin to a riverboat gambler who frivolously squanders away a fortune. In hasty pursuit of immense riches, the gambler ends up with nothing. Such a comparison arises from the fact that for several decades before 1914, a newly created German Empire, the Second Reich, had forged immense wealth and power, becoming one of the most prosperous nations on the globe. Respected and admired throughout the world, its achievements ranked as world-class. Then came the war and Germany emerged from it with the loss of considerable territory and much wealth, its power, prestige and respect shattered. The war transformed a confident thriving nation into a fragile, weak and chaos-ridden state that barely survived.

When the World War began, no one had the slightest idea how long it would last or how much suffering it would bring. In the tension-filled days of July 1914, moments before the First World War began, the German Chancellor confided to a friend that their nation stood at the edge of a "leap into the dark." Neither he nor anyone else quite realized the dimensions of the darkness which soon descended upon all Europe as the conflict ran its lethal and gruesome course. In many respects, the First World War haunts us still. It stands there in history as a calamitous milestone, a frightening tragedy of proportions so immense that in spite of all that has followed, we find it hard to grasp the awesome character of it all. It became an endless succession of deadly trench battles, seemingly without meaning or purpose, continuing until almost an entire generation of youth had perished. It ranks as the first modern war in which civilian populations became conscious objects of

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attack and death. The war introduced airplanes, tanks, flame-throwers, massive artillery pieces and poison gas as weapons of destruction. Inevitably, it became the last war in which ordinary citizens on all sides greeted the coming conflict with joyful enthusiasm, wild celebration and eager anticipation. World War I generated a level of destruction heretofore scarcely known on such a scale and did much to make violence a part of popular culture. What, in the nineteenth century, would have been considered barbaric and inhuman became so commonplace during the War that after it, a veritable cult of brutality and force emerged, acclimating the human psyche to new frontiers of violence. It dealt a severe blow to those who believed in the progress theory of history, that every generation marched upward to a more enlightened and peaceful way of life.

As historian John Keegan has pointed out, the battles of World War I never seemed to end. The clash at Waterloo sealed Napoleon's fate in only three days of combat. The turning of the tide in the American Civil War at Gettysburg lasted about seventy-two hours. Throughout history, in the Seven Years War or Thirty Years War, for example, opposing armies generally engaged one another in occasional, sporadic battles lasting for a day or so. In World War I, on the other hand, battles regularly raged on for months and once halted, others quickly followed, to last for yet more months. In World War I the killing never entirely stopped, continuing day and night, summer and winter, year after year until the deaths eclipsed all previous conflicts in modern history. Napoleon's conquest of Europe in the early nineteenth century resulted in the deaths of about two million persons. The bloodiest conflict of the nineteenth century, the American Civil War, caused about a half million deaths. In the First World War, ten million soldiers fell on the battlefield, nearly all of them young men in the prime of their youth. More soldiers died every ten days during the First World War than total American casualties in the ten-year Vietnam War. Both Great Britain and France sustained twice as many casualties in the First World War as in the Second. This bloodbath which began in 1914 completely shattered all those confident expectations that the twentieth century would become a century of unparalleled peace and progress. Instead, it became, in the words of a French historian, a "Century of Total War." The First World War began it all.

Never before had the link between the battlefield and the home front been so strong and deep-seated. Thanks to advances in

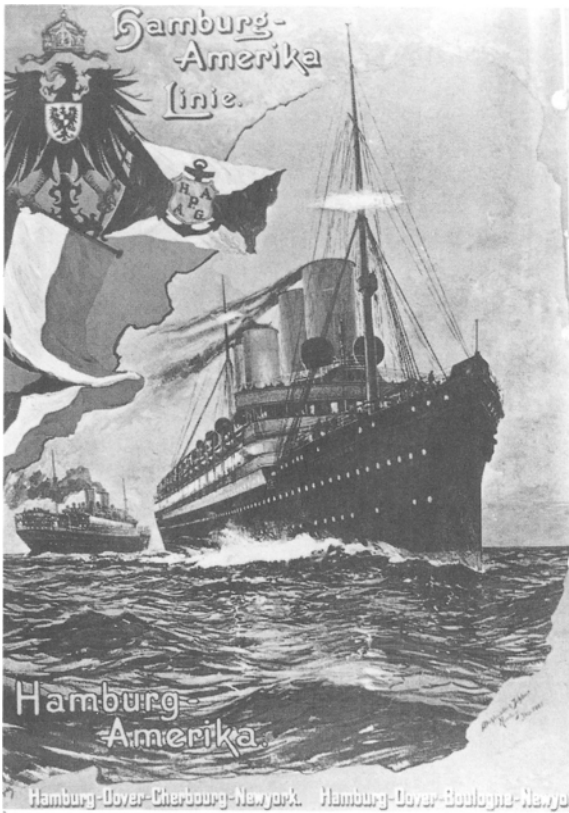
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telegraphy, news of every battle found itself on the front pages of the world's newspapers within a day of being fought, often accompanied with photographs. The temptation is to assume that civilians acted as spectators to an awful drama, rooting for the home team. It was far more than this. In every country, and particularly Germany, events on the home front played a major role in shaping the character of the war, even influencing military strategy. Soldiers' morale was often determined as much by events at home as by the latest conquest on the battlefield. Without a willingness of ordinary persons to do without everyday comforts, the war effort could flounder and fail. It has been the attempt of this volume to trace the vicissitudes of the German home front in the context of the course of war on the battlefield, to link the two together and show the impact of each upon the other. Through it all, the constant message to the troops and their kin at home remained: Stand firm, hold on, keep the faith. Victory must be ours.

CHAPTER 1

In the Days of the Kaiser

ON A WARM SPRING AFTERNOON in late May 1914, an enormous steamship slowly made its way past the Statue of Liberty and into New York harbor. As it sailed into the lower Hudson, enthusiastic spectators watched its progress from sites along Staten Island and the Battery and when the huge black ocean liner approached the pier, harbor tugboats and steamships greeted the arrival with robust blasts from their foghorns and bells. "A shrieking chorus of whistles on land and water," noted a journalist, "gave her a deafening welcome." The greeting marked the arrival in New York of the world's newest and largest luxury liner, the *Vaterland*, flagship of the German shipping firm Hamburg America Lines. In this Gilded Age of ostentatious flamboyance where European train stations resembled cathedrals and stone gargoyles graced facades of department stores, the mighty liner exuded an opulent extravagance hard to equal, from its marble bathrooms with built-in flower holders and corridors with deep plush carpets to the fireplaces in First Class staterooms and fluted columns lining the heated indoor swimming pool. The steamship's immense size evoked a feeling that the hostile oceans had finally met their match, a ship that could sail through the North Atlantic's blustery seas and turbulent winds with scarcely a shaking glass or sliding fork. Inside, on board, solicitous uniformed cabin boys, waiters and bursars jumped at every finger-snap. Ocean travel had become as pleasant and effortless as vacationing at a resort hotel.



Travel poster of the Hamburg America Lines.

Arriving at Sandy Hook in the evening of May 20, the *Vaterland* paused to allow Public Health Officials to check passengers for communicable disease. As it sailed from quarantine the next morning, its decks ablaze with gold and white bunting, the ship's band blared out the Star Spangled Banner. Twenty-five tugs nudged this immense vessel, towering nine decks above waterline, slowly to pier side. Weighing 54,000 tons, the *Vaterland* ranked as the heaviest steamship afloat. Huge steam engines that generated an unprecedented 95,000 horsepower drove its massive propellers, each propeller nineteen feet in diameter. Steam turbines, a thousand tons each, had been constructed by a Saarbrücken firm to specifications which had never before been attempted; they required specially-constructed flatcars to transport them to the Blohm & Voss shipyard in Hamburg where the ocean liner had been built. At 951 feet in length the *Vaterland* could also boast of being the longest steamship in the world, longer than three football fields, capable of transport-

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ing more passengers than any ship afloat, nearly four thousand paying customers. By contrast, the mighty *Titanic* had carried a maximum of less than three thousand. In spite of its ponderous weight and size, the *Vaterland* had sped across the Atlantic in 5 days, 17 hours; no record but nonetheless breaking the six-day barrier.¹

Although travelers had booked solid the *Vaterland's* return voyage to Europe, on this maiden voyage its staterooms and passenger compartments travelled half empty. One passenger attributed this to a squeamish sentiment about any vessel's maiden voyage in the wake of the *Titanic* disaster two years earlier. To prevent the fate which befell the *Titanic*, every safety measure possible had been incorporated into the design. Two separate lower hulls protected the underwater surface. The *Vaterland* contained lifeboats capable of holding six thousand persons, exceeding the ship's passenger capacity of 3,909 and its 1,245 personnel combined. Three separate wireless systems maintained constant contact with land and an advanced gyroscopic compass, far superior to older magnetic compasses, allowed more accurate navigation. Water sprinklers had been constructed in ceilings and fire-resistant glass doors capable of withstanding temperatures of 1,000 degrees separated public rooms from corridors.

It also ranked as an ocean liner of exceptional luxury, a veritable floating palace. In step with the latest technology, Frahm anti-rolling devices kept the ship on even keel and special insulation virtually eliminated engine vibrations, allowing passengers relaxed comfort as they danced in spacious ballrooms or exercised in the Roman-style marble swimming pool or dined at the Ritz-Carlton Restaurant. Unique among modern ships, the funnels did not pass through midship but were bifurcated below passenger decks joining at the top, thus allowing large spacious public rooms in midship. An ornate Mewés-designed skylight graced the Wintergarten Social Room which featured rich Persian carpeting, heavily upholstered divans and square window casings identical to a luxurious hotel. The ship's kitchen staff of a hundred cooks and bakers had at their disposal an array of electric equipment, including electric potato peelers and dishwashers. Four hundred stewards eagerly provided every service. Elevators whisked passengers to its many floors and 15,000 electric lights provided illumination for the staterooms and public rooms, among them the huge first-class dining room that seated eight hundred guests.²

FRENCH LINE
Largest S.S. Co. in the World
443 Ships 1,417,710 TONS

NORTH GERMAN LLOYD
Largest S.S. Co. in the World
443 Ships 1,417,710 TONS

CUNARD
"AQUITANIA"
Largest S.S. Co. in the World
443 Ships 1,417,710 TONS

HAMBURG AMERICAN
Largest S.S. Co. in the World
443 Ships 1,417,710 TONS

WORLD'S LARGEST SHIP
"VATERLAND"
ARRIVES TO-DAY

The VATERLAND is a sister ship of the IMPERATOR. A third sister ship is now building.

The VATERLAND is 950 feet long, 100 feet wide, and 58,000 tons.

SAILS FROM NEW YORK
MAY - 25th
JUNE - 16th
JULY - 7th
and regularly thereafter

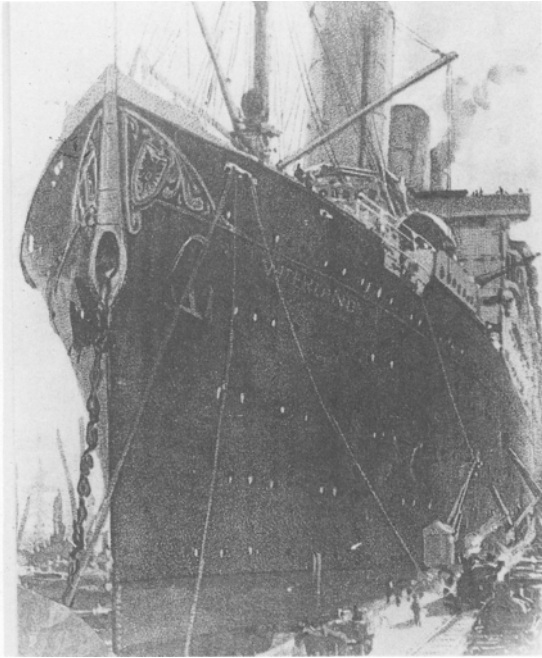
PARIS - LONDON - HAMBURG

The New York Times travel page for May 22, 1914.

To one German traveler the liner seemed as luxurious as the famed Hotel Adlon in Berlin, a sentiment seconded by many Americans who risked the maiden voyage. While still at sea, a group of prominent Americans, including former Senator Nelson Aldrich and New York publisher Adolph Ochs, dispatched a telegram to the head of Hamburg American lines, Albert Ballin, congratulating him on the ship. They described the *Vaterland* as "a veritable palace afloat and its colossal proportions, ample accommodations and superb comforts are only surpassed by the sense of safety and security. The last word in shipbuilding is expressed in German but in every language it spells genius." Amplifying this view, a *New York Times* editorialist called the *Vaterland* "a symbol of peace and industrial prosperity," representing "the genius of the German people."³

It signified, too, a major landmark in the Hamburg American Line's efforts to surpass its arch-rival, Bremen's North German

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An artist's sketch of the Vaterland in dock.

Lloyd Lines. This Bremen shipping company had for decades energetically expanded its fleet, attaining a dominant position in central European-based sea travel. Combining a Teutonic taste for efficiency with a sharp sense of the lure of Bavarian-like *gemütlichkeit* in travel, North German Lloyd liners offered service with a smile—and much music. The company made certain that its second-class stewards could also play a musical instrument, the ship's band playing on deck every morning and at mealtimes. One traveler, who approved of the ship's practice of announcing meals with the sound of a bugle, noted, "Who of us will ever forget the sweet, deep pleasure of being awakened on Sunday morning by the playing of 'Nearer my God, to Thee'?" As early as the 1880s North German Lloyd attracted sufficient business to allow weekly sailings to New York and regular departures for Baltimore, New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires. On May 4, 1897 in the north German seaport of Stettin, the Vulcan Shipworks launched a steamer whose construction involved a risky gamble for the shipmaker. It had been ordered by the North German Lloyd Lines on one condition: the ship must travel at least 21 knots per hour, thus making it as fast as any other on the high seas; if it failed to



Young Albert Ballin at the time he joined the Hamburg America Lines.

achieve this speed, the company would not accept it. In the Kaiser's presence, from whose grandfather the steamship derived its name, the *Kaiser Wilhelm Der Grosse* slid into the water, a 14,000 ton liner which, indeed, did break the world record for transatlantic speed. When it arrived in New York in September 1897 it had crossed the Atlantic in 5 days, 15 hours and 46 minutes, breaking the existing record by a margin of a few minutes. Speed alone, however, did not produce the accolades it soon received. Its great comfort and luxurious ambience made it the first modern ocean liner. Its immense profitability induced the North German Lloyd Lines to add sister ships which made the Bremen company one of the world's leading passenger carriers.⁴

In 1890, North German Lloyd dominated the German shipping world; twenty years later, that role had been snatched away by the Hamburg America Lines. Everyone acknowledged this to be the result of aggressive and enterprising activities of its director, Albert Ballin. This portly, balding, dynamic businessman could be seen every morning, cigar in hand, pince-nez glasses firmly in place,

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entering the elaborate company building along Hamburg's Alsterdamm. A friend of his, Hamburg banker Max Warburg, called him "more artist than bookkeeper," because the shipping magnate incorporated aesthetic refinement in all his ships. Despite his penchant for keeping a close eye on company books and his Prussian-like passion in arranging his schedule by the minute, Ballin spared no expense in ensuring the utmost in comfort and luxury for his travelers.⁵

Many years earlier, Ballin's father had operated an emigration company in Hamburg which arranged for the transport of immigrants, chiefly on British ships. His father died when young Albert turned eighteen years and the young man subsequently took over the company. Seven years after his father's death, in 1886, the Hamburg America Lines bought out the concern, placing Ballin in charge of its passenger operations. At the time, the Hamburg America Lines ranked as a distinctly minor shipping company, far outclassed by a dozen British companies and also by the thriving North German Lloyd Lines of Bremen. But Ballin quickly set about to transform the Hamburg America Company and in the succeeding years, transformed the relatively small, cautious company into the world's largest steamship company. Early on, he undercut the British monopoly on Scandinavian travel by linking service from Göteborg, Sweden to Hamburg and thence New York. He opened ticket agencies in Berlin, Dresden, Vienna and Frankfurt, thus attracting wealthy merchants deep within the continent. He purchased a line which serviced Canada, enlarged port facilities in New York harbor at Hoboken, opened service to Baltimore and New Orleans, and began penetrating markets in Central and South America. In 1891, the first Hamburg America liner departed for Singapore and Yokohama and within a decade Ballin established regular service to Shanghai, Tsingtao, and Hong Kong where the company established regional headquarters. To keep his major passenger vessels busy in the slack winter season, Ballin pioneered a novelty: sea voyages for pure pleasure without destination as a goal. Throughout the 1890s, his flagship the *Augusta Viktoria* transported wealthy Europeans on leisurely tours to the warm climes of Mediterranean ports. These successes led to his promotion as Director of the company.⁶

Trade soon followed the travelers to distant ports. As German industries began to gush forth a rising volume of products for world

markets, Hamburg America Lines stood ready to provide the transport. Ports around the world increasingly displayed the blue-and-white flag of the Hamburg America Company emblazoned with the letters HAPAG and the company's motto, *Mein Feld ist die Welt*, My Field is the World. Ballin's special concern, however, centered on the transport of people. By fortuitous coincidence, the focal point of European emigration was dramatically shifting. Whereas earlier most transatlantic immigrants had come from Ireland, Britain and Western Europe, now millions from central and eastern Europe sought passage to the New World. Ballin joined in league with heads of other German shipping firms to persuade German authorities to require emigrants from the Russian Empire be given transit through Germany only if they agreed to make the voyage on German ships.

All of this activity aroused considerable apprehension in Great Britain, the world's leading maritime nation, where the *Vaterland* represented the latest of a long series of German maritime challenges to British commerce. Throughout the nineteenth century, the British had attained a commanding presence on the world's oceans, linking an Empire which spanned the globe. By century's end, its navy dominated the world's oceans, its cargo and passenger vessels ruled the world's waterways, its shipping companies commanded a lock-hold on world commerce.

These British shipping companies had no intention of abdicating a century of supremacy to these aggressive central European competitors. Shortly after 1900, the Chairman of the Cunard Lines, Lord Inverclyde, resolved to regain British supremacy. Obtaining a subsidy from the British government, he began construction of two immense new liners on a scale never before equaled, ships which would establish standards for both speed and luxury: the *Mauretania* and its sister ship the *Lusitania*. The *Mauretania* construction featured heavy steel plates one-inch thick and a new efficient steam turbine system that generated immense speed. It raced across the ocean so fast, at nearly 26 knots an hour, that it recaptured the prize for speediest vessel, an honor which she would hold into the 1920s. At 31,000 tons, she ranked as the heaviest ocean-going vessel in the world at that time and, at 790 feet, also the longest. Sophisticated travelers recognized her as the most comfortable and luxurious ship afloat, a reputation she never lost. Travelers accustomed to the amenities of first-class hotels felt at home on this liner which

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featured an elaborate staircase leading to the Grand Salon, paneled in mahogany and containing rich carpeting and marble lilac pillars; wood panelling and marble could be found almost everywhere throughout the vessel, even in the bathrooms. The *Mauretania* was the first steamship to install electric elevators; plush soft-green carpeting filled its spacious staircases and in the dining room, passengers consumed elegant meals served on the finest crystal. On its maiden voyage in 1907, it set the world record of 4 days and 10 hours for transatlantic travel.⁷

Almost immediately the British White Star Lines joined the race, beginning construction of its own superliners, launching the *Olympic* in October 1910 which crossed the Atlantic for the first time in 1911. In April 1912 its second liner the *Titanic*, 46,000 tons, sailed from Southampton and met disaster off the coast of Newfoundland in the world's most famous sea tragedy. This ill-fated company would face yet another disaster at sea. *Titanic's* tragedy did not prevent the company from completing its sister ship, the *Britannic*, which sunk during World War I.

Ballin, meanwhile, had no intention of being left in the backwash of this British shipping offensive and in 1911 responded to the *Lusitania* by launching the *Imperator*, a vessel weighing 52,000 tons. It soon became apparent, however, that it possessed an annoying flaw: it was top-heavy. The steamship would list to one side or the other and remain in a listing position, creating the impression that it could possibly capsize. Thus, following its initial run, engineers poured tons of concrete into the hull, truncated the funnels and replaced heavy furniture with a lighter wicker variety. In its lightened form, it possessed a comfort and grandiloquence that became the hallmark of ships built by Albert Ballin. Its profitability induced Ballin to build a sister ship, the *Vaterland*.⁸

Ballin had long since discerned the coming trend in luxury travel. Shortly after the turn of the century, he decided to forsake the race to build the fastest ships in favor of providing the utmost in convenience and comfort. An earlier experience in attempting to build the fastest liner had not proven promising and thus, to lure passengers with something other than record-breaking speed, he opted for pure luxury. To accomplish this, Ballin employed the services of two Frenchmen. One day in London he came across Parisian hotelier Cesar Ritz and famed hotel architect Charles Mewés and engaged them in a conversation about using their

services on a new steamship he was building. Commissioning Mewés to oversee the interior design of the new liner, he asked Ritz to construct a restaurant on the ocean liner which would operate independently from the ship's kitchen; the food, the menu, the cooks would come from the Ritz staff. Thus the ship, a predecessor of the *Imperator*, became the first steamer to feature an à-la-carte restaurant in which French chiefs prepared and served meals from their own kitchens, the food cooked by those who followed the orders of the high-priest of French cuisine, August Escoffier. Ballin again called upon the Frenchmen's services for the *Imperator* in 1913 which likewise boasted designs by Mewés and a restaurant by Ritz. The *Vaterland*, sister ship of the *Imperator*, featured all the refinements of the *Imperator*, including a more elaborate Ritz-Carlton restaurant. Ballin never relented in trying to improve his ships. Whenever he traveled on one them he carried a note pad, jotting down everything that displeased him: towels needed to be larger, Westphalian ham should be served with the 11 a.m. bouillon, the pillows should be lighter, furniture rearranged to allow for more luggage space. Before the voyage had ended, his secretary would gather up the notes, put them into memoranda and dispatch them to appropriate departments, all marked *Obligatorisches*, obligatory.⁹

British ship owners, too, paid immense attention to the details of comfort because such amenities increased passenger bookings. On this hinged much of the profit in what can only be described as a high-risk businesses. Shipping companies could reap immense rewards in good times but could also plunge into red ink in bad times because travel tends to be among the first casualty in any recession. Moreover, every shipping company operated with incredibly expensive equipment and immense operating costs which further threatened profitability. A slight recession in 1907, for example, plunged the North German Lloyd company into two years of losses. Nonetheless, the possibility of huge profits arose from the fact that transatlantic travel virtually exploded in the years after the turn of the century.¹⁰

Emigrants to the New World played a role in this. Whereas fewer than 400,000 arrived yearly before the turn of the century, in 1905 and several years thereafter, immigrants arrived on American shores at a rate of a million a year, statistically 3,000 *daily*, most of them arriving in New York. All carriers now abandoned the practice of sending cattle back to Europe in the cavernous "dormitories"

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which steerage passengers had used and the *Vaterland* provided immigrants with separate social and smoking rooms. Large cabins replaced dormitories for sleeping and at mealtimes immigrants ate at tables seating thirty-five persons, complete with their own steward.¹¹

Profitability, however, rested with catering to more affluent travelers whose numbers also dramatically increased. Before the 1880s, only those who needed to travel did so because of the unpleasantness of the voyage. With the advent of sturdy and comfortable steel luxury liners, ocean travel took on a whole new meaning and many flocked to Europe for the sheer diversion of it all. Around 1900, about 200,000 Americans traveled to Europe. In 1906, a record 361,000 made the voyage, this number rising to nearly 500,000 by 1914. For company accountants, catering to the wealthy meant profits. Inevitably, luxury liners began allotting more space for first and middle-level compartments and reduced steerage accommodations. The *Titanic* led the way by providing more space for first class travelers than for steerage, 1,052 in first class, 510 in second class and 1,022 in steerage. The *Vaterland* carried 3,909 persons of which only 1,772 were steerage. But given the unprecedented increase in immigrant transatlantic travel, no shipping company could afford to ignore steerage trade, deriving small individual profit from large volume. Profitability, however, centered on pampering the affluent traveler.¹²

Thus, ship owners began adding luxury suites to their ships. A powerful impetus for this arose from one of Cunard's competitors, the Inman Lines. In 1889, the Inman Company furnished its new liner, *City of New York*, with a luxury suite consisting of a sitting room, bedroom and private bathroom. For this the company charged \$650, a monstrous price considering that steerage cost about \$30-40. Surprisingly, the suites sold out for nearly every trip and soon other steamship companies installed similar, very expensive luxury suites in their newest liners. The *Mauretania* and its sister ship *Lusitania* contained luxury suites that cost \$2,500, one way, and the most expensive suites on the *Titanic* cost \$4,500. Not to be outdone, the Hamburg America Line incorporated its own version of luxury suites. Both the *Imperator* and the *Vaterland* boasted an "Imperial Suite" for \$5,000 which consisted of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a trunk room, breakfast room, pantry, two servants'

rooms and a private deck. Travelers who regularly used such facilities included Adolphus Busch, the St. Louis brewer.¹³

Attention to detail and the inclusion of every comfort gave Ballin's ship a distinctive flavor, an ambience of luxury amid an aura of utter efficiency in a vessel equipped with the most advanced technological devices. Because of this, the Hamburg America company could pay out a very substantial 10% dividend to its stockholders in 1913. Ballin had found the key to success on the high seas, pampering customers who concluded that the *Vaterland* symbolized "the genius of the German people."

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More than genius gave birth to the *Vaterland*. This ocean liner reflected the emergence of Germany as a major industrial power. Riding the crest of a wave of worldwide technological innovation which had given birth to stunning advances in the production of steel, chemicals, electricity, optics, communications and transportation, German industry had played a significant role in bringing about many of these advances. It was the Age that gave birth to not only massive steamships but the world's first automobiles and airplanes, electric lights and telephones, inexpensive fertilizers and chemical dyes, sewing machines and high speed printing presses and much, much else. For the first time, industrial technology became wedded to pure scientific research, leading to an explosive array of new products. Those who created all this came from every country but in the midst of much of this could be found German scientists and technicians. Almost overnight, as such processes are measured, Germany had become transformed from a sleepy collection of backward rural sovereign principalities into a unified, dynamic industrial powerhouse.

Coal and steel led the way. German industrial might rested on immense reserves of coal in the Ruhr valley and on its steel production. Ever since British inventor Henry Bessemer pioneered in production of an affordable steel, this versatile metal had begun to replace the thousand year-old supremacy of iron. As steel became easier to produce and cheaper to buy, the world's appetite became nearly unquenchable. Possessing a tensile strength and flexibility greater than iron, steel could be molded and shaped with greater precision, coated and plated into nearly limitless permutations,

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drilled and perforated in ways impossible for iron products. Steel had become an ideal metal for mass production, uniquely suited for making everything from delicate needles and scalpels to massive girders and plates of new ocean liners. It made possible not only construction of higher skyscrapers and wider bridges but harder rails for larger trains, as well as metals that could be produced with such precision that assembly-line production became possible.

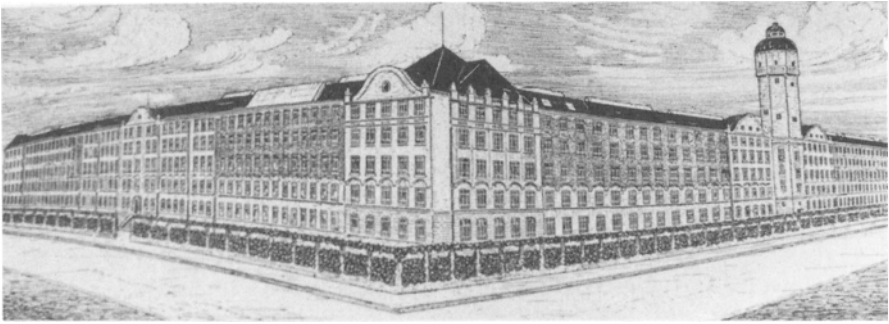
In the race for industrial supremacy, any nation which produced the most steel would be likely to lead the pack. Because of the work of Henry Bessemer and those who followed, including Thomas Gilchrist, England seemed to be in a position to retain that supremacy. For most of the nineteenth century Great Britain ranked as the world's largest producer of steel and pig iron. But as the new century dawned, this supremacy was undermined and within a decade destroyed by two usurpers, Germany and the United States. In 1913, British steel mills turned out 7.8 million tons of steel but Germany was producing nearly three times that, 18,935,000 tons. Only the United States produced more, 32 million tons.¹⁴

Ruhr coal made this possible for Germany. Anthracite coal of highest quality lay in vast seams along the Ruhr river some fifty miles north of Cologne. In and around Essen, Dortmund, Bochum, Duisburg and neighboring cities, coal mines employed thousands of miners, making the Ruhr the premier industrial heartland of the continent. German coal production, not all of which came from the Ruhr, nearly reached levels mined in Britain, once the undisputed coal king of the world. Whereas British coal mine owners generally sold their coal to British steel manufacturers, most German coal mine owners built their own steel mills, a circumstance considerably aided by nature. The Ruhr lay so close to the Rhine river that it proved easy to import Swedish iron ore by boat to the very doorsteps of the coal mines. Every day, endless iron ore barges made their way up the Rhine from Antwerp to the docking platforms in the heart of coal country or by other means from Baltic ports. Soon, mighty blast furnaces lit up the nighttime skies all along the Ruhr.

From steel came a cascading avalanche of new products. It led to the construction not only of immense ocean-going vessels but also the high-speed lathes and tooling devices, superstructures for electrical transmission and an endless variety of machines that manufactured nearly everything. As always with technological innovation, a mushrooming effect generated endless offshoots, every invention producing ramifications that extended into heretofore unimagined uses. This applied not only to steel but also to another product in which Germany excelled: chemicals. German chemists developed superior dyes for clothing, fertilizers that revolutionized food production and a host of industrial chemicals that transformed everything from photography to postage stamp production and found their way into biologists' laboratories where specimens could be dyed. Out of this arose important cures for many diseases.¹⁵

Germany, unburdened the aging antiquated industrial plants, rapidly industrialized with the latest technology, soon challenging the world's leader, Great Britain. So vast a profusion of German products flowed from its efficient plants and factories that a French businessman who traveled throughout Germany went away with the impression that Germany was experiencing "a continuous crisis of over-production." Only a generation earlier, Germany's major export had been impoverished Germans; what few export products

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The Siemens Company main plant in Berlin; this huge company exported electrical equipment around the world.

fell into the hands of foreigners universally ranked as “cheap and nasty,” shoddy products, poorly made.¹⁶

No longer. It soon became apparent to business executives in Britain, France or the United States that somewhere in Germany, some company was burning the midnight oil, devising products of superior quality and the means to sell them abroad. By 1913, Siemens generators provided power for trolley systems from St. Petersburg to Capetown, South Africa and AEG supplied the telephone network for Buenos Aires and many other world cities. Chances were good that stores from St. Louis, Missouri to Athens, Greece sold Solingen knives or Adler typewriters, to say nothing of cameras with Zeiss Tessar lenses or AGFA photo chemicals. At New York’s annual Automobile Show in January 1914, discriminating buyers could purchase a top-of-the-line Mercedes Touring Car, 60 hp., for \$6,500, more than ten times the cost of a \$550 Ford Model T. Any headaches that might result could be solved by using a new product introduced by the Bayer company of Leverkusen, called aspirin. By 1913 Germany produced for export more electrical generators and similar equipment than any other country in the world except the U.S.A. and possessed a virtual monopoly on world production of fertilizers and dyes for clothing. It ranked as the world’s second largest producer of steel, second only to the U.S.A. All this contributed to making Germany an economic powerhouse, generating immense wealth.

This burgeoning export business attracted the attention of industrialists from many other countries who travelled to Germany to see for themselves the reasons for such successes. One American

industrialist, Pittsburgh steel magnate Isaac Frank, in summing up the sources of German industrial prominence commented, "When a visit is paid to German manufacturing establishments, the average American loses much of the conceit with which he left home, and begins to realize that Germany is a factor to be reckoned with...man for man and hour for hour, the Germans will produce as much on their very modern machine tools, high speed steel and scientific management as establishments in our own country...I was impressed most profoundly by the systematic, efficient and highly scientific treatment of all matters pertaining to manufacturing." British industrialist Sir Robert Hadfield, assessing German industrial strength, asserted, "It is in the laboratories of Essen, Berlin, and Lichterfelde [location of the Prussian research laboratories] that Germany's trade victories are being made. It is the brains of German Universities and schools...that is making Germany the land mighty in the world's markets." A French associate of Louis Pasteur who visited the laboratory of a chemical company in the Rhineland was surprised to see not only the quality of the research equipment but the large number of researchers. When he remarked on this, his guide told him, "They are young doctors who have left their universities and wish to continue research work. [Here] they conduct the research in whatever direction they choose. We do not mind what goal they select; as long as science progresses, we will always reap the benefit." At the invitation of the *Verein Deutscher Ingenieure*, a group of Americans from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers traveled to Germany in summer 1913 and toured many German plants. They left with the impression that German technological levels ranked as high or higher than any other country in the world. One engineer noted that he found "cleanliness and orderliness everywhere conspicuous." As with many others, this group left Germany deeply impressed with the elaborate apprentice-training programs offered by German companies to boys 14 years and older.¹⁷

German export successes rested, however, on more than technological expertise, quality production and efficient organization. Most German companies hired scores of aggressive, well-trained and relentless salesmen who spanned the globe, many of them German-born who had settled in foreign countries. In pursuit of orders, they never quit and thus invariably became the object of competitor hostile scorn. A French critic noted that German sales-

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men abroad frequently outnumbered their competitors, many of them inspired with a patriotic ardor. He noted, too, that the typical German salesman could not be dismissed simply as an order-taker; he knew the product inside and out, had frequently been trained at the factory, had mastered all the technical details of the product. Moreover, the German businessman seemed to possess an unquenchable persistence and single-mindedness of purpose: to sell the product became his unflinching and ceaseless goal. German salesmen could be observed, casually scouting the crowd at a nightspot favored by the wealthy, picking a likely target to engage in conversation and proceeding to attempt to make a sale. Said a bitter Frenchman, "Nothing can dishearten the German representative, neither the mediocrity of the first orders, of repeated calls and of platitudes." German sales agents often displayed a persistence which left many of their European counterparts aghast.¹⁸

As the century ended, the old image of German goods as being "cheap and nasty" began to disappear. In 1887, the British parliament passed the Merchandise Marks Act by which goods produced in Germany must contain the label "Made in Germany," thinking it would dissuade British citizens from purchasing shoddy products. It soon became known, not as the mark of Cain, but as a symbol of quality. German exports to Britain climbed, leading one British publicist to complain, "Roam the house over and the fateful mark [*Made In Germany*] will greet you everywhere, from the piano in your drawing room to the mug on the kitchen dresser. The drain pipes are German made as is the poker in the fire, the ornament on the mantelpiece, pencils, opera glasses and the picture on the wall of the English village church."¹⁹

A similar message arose from German competitors overseas. British commercial attachés noted with dismay that Brazilians bought "inferior" German needles because they were wrapped in attractive red paper, shunning the "superior" British product wrapped in simple black paper. Citizens in British-controlled Trinidad chafed at the narrow British-made shoes which local stores offered. An enterprising German shoe manufacturer soon discovered this and began a profitable business selling broader shoes. When the British Museum wanted high quality printing for special purposes, it turned to the *Reichsdruckerei* because of a quality superior to anything produced in Britain. Those responsible for contracting for floating cranes to dredge the Panama Canal awarded

\$12⁹⁵ For Our Highest Grade Genuine Jena Special Field Glass.



No. 20*3454 This large illustration, engraved by our artist direct from a photograph, will give you an idea of the appearance of our JENA SPECIAL FIELD GLASS. The lenses of this field glass are ground from the famous Jena special optical glass, made in the Jena glass factory in Germany.

IT IS FROM THIS SPECIAL NEW GLASS, this latest result of the experiments and investigations of the most skilled and scientific glass makers of Europe, that the lenses for our Jena Special Field Glasses are ground. They are ground by the most skilled lens grinders, they are fitted with the utmost care, and they are accurately adjusted. These lenses combine, to a degree never before attained, the highest power with the most marvelous definition and clearness.

WE OFFER THE JENA SPECIAL FIELD GLASS, not merely as the equal of glasses sold by other dealers at several times our price, but we offer it as absolutely the best field glass that can be obtained at any price. We sell this glass under a positive guarantee, and if you do not find it superior to any field glass to which you may compare it, you may return it at our expense and we will refund your money.

BEAR IN MIND that our special \$12.95 price, is for the large size Jena Special Field Glass with lenses 36 lines in diameter. This field glass measures 6 inches high when closed and 7 1/4 inches when extended, weighs 33 ounces, and the magnifying power is seven times. The draw tubes, cross bars, tops and trimmings are all finished in fine black enamel and the covering is the best grade of morocco leather.

Price, complete, with fine case and strap, **\$12.05**

Sear Roebuck catalog of 1908 advertising a German-made product. The "Jena glass factory" was actually the Zeiss works of that city.

the contract to Deutsche Maschinenfabrik A.G. of Duisburg because, alone among the bidders, its cranes possessed a lifting capacity of 250 tons operated electrically by a single operator. This German company offered speedy delivery on the crane, the largest ever produced. The Pennsylvania Railroad, whose fortunes rested with the Pittsburgh steel concerns, purchased Krupp steel rails for use on steep curves that required exceptionally hard and durable steel. Sears, Roebuck Company of Chicago advertised in its 1908 catalog a wide variety of goods imported from Germany including dolls ("absolutely unbreakable"), Weiss harmonicas, Gloria Magic Lanterns from Nuremberg ("the finest magic lanterns in the world"), "Bismarck" razors and field glasses "made in the Jena glass factory in Germany." Faber of Nuremberg became synonymous for lead pencils of quality; Bechstein pianos could be found in middle class homes around the world. Rosenthal of Berlin and Meissen of Dresden became watchwords for the finest in porcelain china. The Märklin brothers of Göppingen produced model railroad equipment of such quality that 30% of its production went into export and the city of Nuremberg achieved worldwide fame for the quality of its toy industries. Whatever the product, from the most

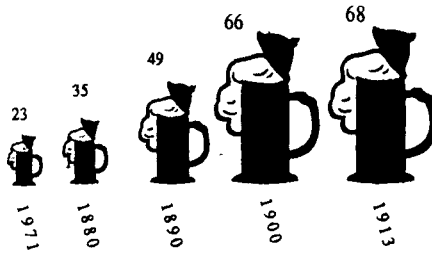
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delicate cameras to the massive cranes and generators, German manufacturers sought to endow their products with quality workmanship and reliability of operation. They knew that prosperity rested in large part on orders placed by foreign customers. A French manufacturer who once needed a machine on short notice, inquired of several French concerns who promised delivery only after several months; he soon discovered three German firms who not only promised the machine in four weeks but at 20% below the French price.²⁰

In 1913 Reichsbank President Karl Helfferich published a book entitled *Deutschlands Wohlstand 1888-1913*, Germany's Prosperity 1888-1913. It documented a remarkable development which had become apparent to even the most casual observer: in the past twenty five years, Germany had become a wealthy nation. Indications of this wealth could be found everywhere: factory smokestacks that lit up the nighttime skies, docks that groaned with German exports bound for the world, legions of children in well-dressed uniforms who flocked to the railroad stations at vacation time bound for the shore or the mountains, fashionable department stores and shops that carried the latest goods for discerning customers, mountains of fresh fruits and vegetables at wholesale markets in Berlin in the middle of the winter, the constant stream of tourists who jumped aboard the horse-drawn *Berlin Rundfahrt* sightseeing coaches to see the World City that boasted of being the cleanest city on the globe.

"Luxury is everywhere," commented a visitor in 1913, a German-American who had emigrated in the 1880s, adding with dismay, "the cuisine and table appointments in wealthy German homes would have made Germans of the last generation gasp with amazement and disapproval." Eating well, and often, had become a national obsession and for many this meant consuming two breakfasts, a luncheon around noon, tea at four in the afternoon, dinner at around 7 p.m. and a supper around 11 p.m. That is, six times a day at the meal table. More than one foreign observer noted that growing waistlines often grew in direct proportion to the rising prosperity, the most spacious girth belonging to those associated with the burgeoning industries. To the American AP correspondent in Europe, these Germans exhibited all the characteristics of the *nouveau-riche*, having acquired wealth more quickly than they could assimilate it. They "dressed in bad taste, talked too much and

**Beer Consumed in Germany
in million hectoliters**



Although a considerable population growth accounted for higher consumption, the increase also reflected more disposable income among all groups of society.

too loud," and seemed to be driven by one impulse: greed. They had the wealth and they flaunted it.²¹

Rising prosperity may not have been equally shared but it nonetheless became more widely based. As the rich grew richer, so too, did millions of others. Workers and middle class alike experienced a steadily rising income. In Prussia in 1896, 1.1 million received incomes of more than three thousand marks; By 1913 it had risen to 2.5 million persons. Those earning a substantial 30,000 marks yearly rose in this period from 10,900 persons to 25,000 persons. Per capita income for the entire country rose a hefty 44% between 1900 and 1913, averaging 504 marks in 1900 and 726 marks in 1913, and by one computation, real income for workers rose 31% between 1890 and 1913. Workers nonetheless remained at the lower end of the wage spectrum. But even there, some evidence existed of rising expectations as well as rising incomes. A vast increase in consumption of such semi-luxury items as tobacco, beer, candies, bicycles and other such purchases suggests a far large clientele than the wealthy. Many a worker who belonged to the popular bicycle-riding club *Solidarität* paid close attention to acquiring the best and latest clothing gear. German workers by the millions also took part in one of the most impressive symbols of rising prosperity: eating meat regularly. In Berlin, meat consumption among workers nearly equaled that of the middle class, both groups devouring about 2½ pounds weekly. Poverty existed, to be sure. But if statistics are to be believed, their numbers declined. A modern German historian

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Suburban living. A home constructed in 1901 in Dahlem, a Berlin suburb. Dahlem became a popular residence for businessmen and professionals.

has concluded that, in comparison with the many thousands who lived with poverty, the "German worker was not poor."²²

For many, however, the pocketbook alone did not dictate one's view of life. To those in the middle classes, the country not only exuded growing wealth but embodied the values they held most dear: orderliness and efficiency, discipline, thrift, hard work and stability. For the most part, the courts upheld laws they considered moral and just, lawmakers enacted legislation congenial to their point of view and the Kaiser zealously enforced these laws. For many in the middle classes, the values and institutions which dominated their lives, their schools, families and careers seemed to rest secure. Moreover, Germany shared with other European countries a *Zeitgeist* rooted in Enlightenment concepts that extolled the supremacy of reason, a faith in Progress and a belief that Natural Law fostered institutions for the betterment of all mankind. For many Germans, it seemed a good time to be alive.

"Wasn't life pleasant in the Germany of those days?" musician Bruno Walter once asked when reflecting on Germany before World



Brandenburg Gate at the turn of the century. The Reichstag cupola is visible at upper left.

War I. Despite some reservations, he answered the question in the affirmative. "Social thinking and social welfare were thriving, culture was flourishing, economic conditions seemed sound," he concluded. Others shared his view. Writer Stefan Zweig labelled the era a "Golden Age of Security" where one could enjoy the present without worry about the future, a world filled with optimism and progress. Munich historian Karl Alexander von Müller later commented that only those who had lived in the era could ever comprehend "the tranquility and stability" of that age, a time filled with "inner confidence." The times embodied, in the view of banker Carl Fürstenberg, one of "unbroken sunshine and untroubled ascent." A Harvard professor who specialized in German culture rhapsodized that "even the most casual observer cannot fail to be impressed with the picture of healthfulness, power, orderliness and enlightened citizenship which meets the eye of the traveller at every hand" in Germany.²³

In 1900, *Berliner Illustrirte* polled its largely middle class readers, asking them, among other things "What has been the most fortunate

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Although the period before 1914 marked the Golden Age of the Beer Palace, Germans continued to flock to leafy, outdoor beer gardens such as this one.

[*glücklichste*] period of the last hundred years?" A decisive majority placed it in the period in which they were then living, that is, from 1871 to 1900. If it is true that most persons cling to the nostalgia of some earlier age as the better than their own, this response is surprising. The "Good Old Days" of the Kaiser, so often mentioned in later years, would appear to be nearly as lustrous to many who lived through them, at least to many in the German middle classes. "Living was inexpensive, the country serene and people light-hearted" concluded Tübingen professor Rudolf Binding. Berlin historian Friedrich Meinecke judged cultural life since 1890 to be on the "upswing."²⁴

He may well have been right. From books to biology, from music to medicine, German efforts achieved world recognition. Germany not only possessed Europe's lowest illiteracy rate but its citizens read books with such zeal that its publishing industry outpaced all the others. In 1911, 33,000 new titles appeared in German bookstores, three times that of France or England or the United States. With much fanfare the Kaiser opened, in March 1914, the huge new Prussian Royal Library, a \$5 million edifice which housed 1.5 million books, located on Unter den Linden near the University. It was, reports noted, "designed for centuries to come" with space for five million books. Every city boasted of its symphonic orchestra,



The Kaiser's Berlin residence. It was located about twenty miles away from his Potsdam Palace where he preferred to spend most of his time.

some of which achieved world fame. Germany became a land so renowned for the quality of its musicians that foreign orchestra managers turned to Germany to fill the string sections and even the conductor's platform. German-born conductors presided over Symphony orchestras in Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis and Cincinnati in the years before 1914. The Boston Symphony achieved a coup by signing up famed Berlin Philharmonic conductor Ernst Niekitsch to be guest conductor while at the same time Breslau-born Walter Damrosch took over the New York Symphony and Essen-born Theodore Thomas became conductor of the New York Philharmonic. American concert halls took on a distinctly German accent.²⁵

From German University and science laboratories came a steady stream of new discoveries and breakthroughs, many scientists earning a Nobel Prize for their efforts. Emil von Behring won the award for developing the antitoxin that conquered diphtheria and Robert Koch for his discoveries of the tuberculosis bacillus. Bacteriologist Paul Ehrlich developed a serum, Salvarsan, to treat the dread disease syphilis and Wilhelm Roentgen discovered X-rays. In

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1900, a young physicist, Max Planck, laid the foundations for the Quantum theorem and shortly thereafter, induced Albert Einstein to take up residence in Berlin to pursue his researches there. As German science began to achieve a world-wide reputation for excellence, students at American Ivy League colleges took up a study of the German language in order to do post-graduate studies at German universities.

"What a race," commented a *New York Times* critic after a visit to Berlin. "What energy, what thoroughness...The Germany of today is playing the pacemaker to all Europe."²⁶

CHAPTER 2

Sound the Trumpets

AT MIDNIGHT ON DECEMBER 31, 1899, a fifteen-year-old schoolboy, Arnold Brecht, stood beside a Lübeck church listening to the stately church bells toll the advent of 1900, popularly taken to mark the start of a new century. At that moment the thought came to him that, although he would not live to see the distant closing of the century, this church, which had stood five hundred years, surely would still be there. This church, along with the stately Town Hall conveyed an architectural sense of the permanence and stability that distilled the spirit of the age. Those values so closely held by the middle classes—orderliness and durability, strength and continuity—seemed to be reflected in its buildings.¹

Yet throughout the land, an undertow of anxiety and alarm began to surface. Not everyone, it seemed, viewed this as the Promised Land and every year critics insisted on pouring vinegar into this land of milk and honey. Marxists preached revolution, women's groups demanded more rights, social critics censured the alleged self-centeredness and bankruptcy of middle class morals, youth rebelled against middle class conformity and adherents of Nietzsche were mounting an attack on the nation's moral foundations, Christianity itself.

If, to Arnold Brecht, the Lübeck church represented permanence and stability, many elements of life inside that church mirrored the exact opposite: impermanence and change. Protestants in Lübeck were staying away from the most sacred rite of the church, Holy

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*Social Democrats view of defense expenditures. A campaign poster declaring, **MASS MURDER, THE BLESSINGS OF MILITARISM***

Communion, in ever increasing numbers, plummeting to 15% of the congregation in 1910; more than eight of ten church members did thus not celebrate this symbolic union with God. Religious authorities in Hamburg and Berlin reported even higher numbers of absentees and other signs of a growing Unbelief began to appear. A Bremen pastor shocked his colleagues when he announced that in a class of 410 Confirmations, 370 expressed doubt even about the reality of God. Harvard Professor Kuno Francke, after exploring German religious life in 1907 concluded that "the church has ceased to be a moral leader," adding that Protestant churches seemed akin to a local fire house: largely ignored except for some special emergency.²

Church leaders may not have always agreed on why this arose but they knew where: the cities. Here could be found all the evils that beset the nation: cities had become centers of vice and debauchery whose consequences had become transparent and disastrous. By no coincidence, some clerics held, the teeming cities with their prostitution and immorality, were the very places where interest in religion seemed on the wane. To one church leader, cities had become dangerous to the morals of youth because they created an "erotically overheated atmosphere that dominates the marketplace in countless subtle and overt ways, driving healthy impulses into unhealthy precocious and licentious misuse." Wicked cities, sites of the worship of Mammon and Eros, were a cancer gnawing away at