The Case For France Against Germany

I AM not acquainted with the chauvinistic literature of France, and cannot determine how typical Paul Vergnet may be. But the dominant trait of *his* chauvinism is its *non-aggressive* character.

German chauvinism is aggressive in purpose and usually aggressive in language. Even where its proponents tangle themselves up in "defensive" arguments, the peculiar and damning fact is that their method of defending Germany always implies aggression upon other nations. It isn't sufficient for a German chauvinist to argue that Germany must defend itself against attack, prepare for attack; but that attack upon others is a defensive measure. Vergnet, on the contrary, counsels no aggression, dreams no dreams of conquest, but simply and grimly points out to France the menace across the Rhine, and urges preparation for defense.

His book[1] was published in France in 1913 as a warning to his countrymen. It might therefore be dismissed as the work of a French Colonel Frobenius, were it not for its genuine defensive character, its essentially moderate tone and thoroughly documented method, and the justification of recent events. The comparative unpreparedness of France proved that the nation as a whole did not fully realize the German menace.

It has its faults. Vergnet sees insult and menace in German action where insult and menace are imaginary. It is a case of national neurosis, of that hysteria of fear which was a powerful psychologic cause of the war His treatment of the Morocco crisis is silly—he is astounded, shocked, that Germany should lay claim to Morocco. He does not even attempt to prove this claim invalid: it is in itself criminal and preposterous.

As a whole, however, the book is an exceedingly important analysis. Its material, chiefly citations of representative German opinion, is comprehensive and vital. Vergnet advances and conclusively proves three propositions:

1.—A general propaganda of aggression in Germany, directed particularly at France and England, had gradually won over the mass of the people to its aggressive purposes, even Democrats and Socialists succumbing.

2.—The Pan-German League ("Alldeutscher Verband") and the Pan-German movement generally, have for two decades controlled German politics, threatening the Kaiser with revolution unless he followed out their mandates, which he has usually done in spite of temporary recalcitrance. [A responsible German Socialist, in the *Neue Zeit,* recently stated and proved that the Pan-Germans have been for many years the directive factor in German politics.]

3.—Germans generally see an economic cause and an economic necessity for war, and believe that war is indispensable for their economic development. Vergnet cites a typical utterance from the *General Anzeiger,* an inpendent Frankfort paper (June 8th, 1913):

"Germany's great development demands new outlets. It is only by a war that we shall be able to overcome the opposition of other nations. Our successes in peaceful competition in most spheres of human activity are what will inevitably precipitate war.

"It is a profound error to believe, as we often hear, that nations can live side by side indefinitely in peaceful rivalry. All competition is a necessary struggle in the life of nations."

Were this an isolated utterance, it would be unimportant. But where it is shared by the most influential men and papers of Germany, as Vergnet shows, where it becomes a national obsession justified by history, science, philosophy and economics, its danger to the peace of the world is obvious and menacing, and fully justifies the warning of Vergnet.

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[1] *France in Danger,* by Paul Vergnet. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. $1.00 net.