

made the defence of that one country—Russia—more important than revolutionary aspirations at home. What had been individual revolutionary parties became instruments of Russian foreign policy; year by year the leaders or followers who did not acquiesce in this change were expelled. At first the "Party line" was to attack most venomously the Socialists and Liberals in democratic countries, describing them as "social-fascists" and even, as in a Berlin tram-strike, co-operating with the Nazis against them. The disastrous consequences of this policy to Russia became clear soon after 1933; and it was suddenly reversed in 1935, after the "Stalin-Laval pact." To this, an abortive alliance between Russia and France, was attached a formal approval of French rearmament: the French Communist party was required almost overnight to abandon its anti-militarism and anti-Imperialism. Soon this was translated into a universal policy of close co-operation with Socialists and Liberals, in what were called "Popular Fronts" against Fascism. Considerable political successes were secured, especially in France, Spain and China. But the most permanent significance of the changes was that there were now in every Parliamentary country two Parties which were not indigenous groups, answerable to their fellow-countrymen and shaping their policies by what they believed to be the country's needs, but representatives of an outside power. One set defended the interests of the Soviet Union; the other that of the Hitler-Mussolini alliance which now called itself the Axis. That the two could co-operate, however, seemed to everyone impossible.

§ 10

The Spanish Tragedy.

In April, 1931, the Spanish monarchy collapsed and Spain became a republic. The royal family retired unmolested, and there was very little armed conflict or violence.

Spain had been preparing for a liberal revolution for the better part of a century. So far we have told little of her experiences after the downfall of Napoleon. It is a story of decadence and humiliation, of nation-wide ignorance, miseducation and incompetence under the domination of the Roman Catholic Church. So far it is the completest instance of imperialist decay and collapse. We have already told of General Bolivar, of the loss

of the vast Spanish colonies in America, and how for once Britain and the United States came into intelligent co-operation for the protection of democracy in the New World. (Chapter 36, § 6.) That great British statesman Canning had called the new-world republics into being, he said, "to redress the balance of the old." Cuba only remained under Spanish rule. That same section tells of the counter-revolution in Europe for nearly forty years.

All over Europe the struggle for liberal thought and human freedom was an uphill struggle, less desperate perhaps in Great Britain than anywhere else in the world except America. In Spain the hand of oppression was at its heaviest and clumsiest; but the liberation of South America kept alive the spirit of revolt. Spain must have been very like hell for an intelligent patriot during that long interlude of aristocratic and pious decadence. Phases of indignant and not very intelligent revolt alternated with periods of suffocation and robbery. A great foolery of dynastic conflict between Bourbons of various complexions, Carlists and so forth, absolutist generals posing as "strong men," an intrusive elected King Amadeo from Savoy, and so forth, went on. Cuba was in a state of insurrection from 1869 onward. Sometimes there were insincere concessions to the Cubans, and sometimes "strong men" went out to crush the trouble.

In 1897 the United States began to concern itself with the brutalities of a particularly stern repressionist, General Weyler, and to speak very plainly to the Spanish government. The latter became propitiatory, but suddenly war was precipitated by the unexplained blowing-up of a United States battleship, the "Maine," in the port of Havana. The United States demanded the immediate evacuation of Cuba by the Spanish, and Spain declared war (1898). The eastern Spanish fleet was destroyed by Admiral Dewey in Manila Bay, the West Indian Spanish fleet at Santiago de Cuba, Cuba surrendered to the Americans, and the war was at an end. The Spanish government, faithful child of the Church, appealed in vain to the Pope and various reactionary monarchies to intervene, and in the subsequent treaty Spain surrendered Cuba, Porto Rico, the Philippine Isles, the Sulu Isles and indeed everything she had left in the way of an overseas empire, except Morocco.

There were popular revolts in Barcelona and Saragossa, and they were dealt with by General Weyler. But the movement for a Spanish liberal renaissance was growing in power, and a number of Spanish writers and thinkers were giving themselves to the problem of organizing a new Spain. Alfonso XIII became King

in 1902. He married the English princess Victoria Eugénie, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria and the niece of King Edward VII, who was converted to Catholicism for that purpose and had bestowed upon her the "golden rose," as a mark of special favour, by the Pope. A clerical monarchy sustained by military men must naturally have a war going on somewhere, and Morocco was now almost the only field open to them, and to the concessionnaires with whom they are so apt to associate.

Morocco was using up a multitude of young soldiers who never came back, and with a demand for more taxes and more conscripts the popular patience gave way. There was a revolt in Barcelona, and the people, with a very clear appreciation of the source of their troubles, burnt convents and churches. The congregations, they knew, paid no taxes, the churches were the symbols of a crushing suppression of thought, and it was natural that they should be taken to symbolize the national decadence.

The Barcelona revolt was spontaneous and ill-organized, and it was suppressed after three days' fighting. After it was all over, a very distinguished Spanish educationist, Ferrer, who had founded "lay schools" in Catalonia, but who had had no share in the insurrection, was arrested and shot (1909). At home the reactionaries could fight, but in Morocco the case was different. A few days before the murder of Ferrer, the Riff tribesmen had inflicted a heavy defeat on Marshal Marina. Before and after the war of 1914-1918, the Spanish people continued to bleed into Morocco, until in 1921 they encountered a crowning disaster at the hands of Abd-el-Krim. An army of 19,000 was defeated and slaughtered; only 9,000 escaped into French territory.

But enough has been told to explain why the Republican movement gathered force, why it won a great majority in the reassembled Cortes, which had not been called for eight years, and how King Alfonso felt the coming revolution, and how at a sound of shouting in the streets he packed up and fled, leaving his British princess to follow in a day or so, quite unmolested, with her golden rose and her family (1931). A republican régime succeeded under President Zamorra, with Azaña as Prime Minister. They found themselves faced by a gigantic task of social sanitation.

The country had been bled white by the Church and the grandees; it was two hundred years behind the times. Thousands of elementary schools were needed, there had to be a complete education reconstruction, the vast neglected estates of the grandees and of the Church had to be distributed among the peasants, and industry rescued from the clutches of monopolistic

concessionaires. That alone was a stupendous undertaking. But the new government had also to make terms with Catalonian and Basque separatism and with the crude impatience of the illiterates they were liberating. Zamorra betrayed a reactionary disposition and there were monarchist revolts, which exacerbated the antagonism of right and left. Azaña embodied left liberal opinion. In 1934 he was under arrest. In 1936 he was President in the place of Zamorra. But now the leftward swing was getting more violent. It was impossible to keep the town crowds off the convents and churches. The dislike of the peasants for the parish priests was also vivid enough to be disconcerting. The new government found it impossible to deliver a millennium forthwith. It was attacked for not going fast enough and far enough. It had to face irrational strikes and in particular, Anarchist Syndicalism, a sort of impracticable Rousseauism with a taste for violent methods. (You will find an excellent account of its ruthless exaltation in Ramon Sender's *Seven Red Sundays*, a quite fundamental book.) Nevertheless this government held on stoutly, and if it had not been assailed by the gathering forces of reaction it might have pulled Spain into line and effective co-operation with the Atlantic democracies.

A military adventurer named Franco had attempted a republican pronunciamiento under the monarchy (1930). He had been pardoned and entrusted with a command in Morocco. There also he found opportunity where an honest man would have found service. He revolted against the struggling government in Madrid (1936). He invaded Spain with Moorish troops, proposing to restore order, Christianity, the rights of property and anything else that seemed likely to appeal to the forces of reaction. He was openly supported by the totalitarian governments of Germany and Italy, which saw in Spain the possibilities of an effective outwork in the coming struggle against the quasi-liberal Atlantic powers. He also received the blessings of the Vatican and, what is now an undeniable fact despite brass-faced denials in Parliament, the effective sympathy of the reactionary elements in the British and French governments. From the outset they did their utmost to impede the flow of help and munitions to the lawful Spanish government, and Franco was recognized by all the gentlefolk as a "Christian gentleman." He made a headlong rush for Madrid, he was checked and held there, and Spain became, as it were, a demonstration table of the three main groups of force that distracted mankind then.

Taking them in their historical order; there was first the great complex of traditions, interests, prestige and privilege dating

from the days before the Protestant Reformation, the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution. This, with its priestcraft, monarchy, armed force, rich and poor, we may call the Ancient Order. We have told in this history how the spirit of freedom in man had struggled to escape from the incubus of the past and how time after time the powers of reaction have sneaked back subtly and persistently to their former controls. And next in order in our survey, is the second element, Militarism, the adventurer conqueror, the soldier gangster, who as a mercenary soldier, a nomad from without or a blatant patriot from within, has first of all organized a temporarily irresistible fighting force and then taken possession of the social system. He brings no constructive ideas with him; he insists upon nothing but servility and obedience, and sooner or later, the old order achieves a resurrection through him. This is the rhythm of history. He is only good in his uniform; he must buy the satisfaction of life at a price. The priests and concessionnaires will serve him; aristocratic womanhood is all too ready to soften his manners. The Catholic Church, as ever, renders unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. So, at the price of a few individual humiliations, the old régime reconciles itself to the new bravoes, and the dreaded reconstruction of the world and the emancipation of the common man is averted for another generation.

The third group of forces in human affairs is even more complicated than the other two. In this *Outline* we have traced its development from the dawn of the idea in Greece, in Palestine, in India, China, and elsewhere that there was a *possible better life for men*. That indeed, linked to the progressive material enlargement of the human community, is the essential story of this entire book. This *Outline* was not planned so; it came out like that. But so far the aspiration for a greater brotherhood has never manifested itself except locally, intermittently and incoherently. Now upon the vivid Spanish stage these scattered and unorganized drives towards a greater life for men, were drawn together, to realize at once their common spirit and their lamentable need for a common formula for their desires. Volunteers to aid the Spanish Left poured in from every quarter of the earth, to discover themselves one in spirit and hopelessly diverse in method. Even in the face of a steadfast attack they would not consolidate. They fought among themselves behind the front. After the most heroic efforts they shared at last a common defeat.

So we distinguish the three main divisions in the human struggle to-day, as they revealed themselves in Spain. Not one

of these divisions displays any really powerful unanimity of purpose. They are still divisions of instinct and prepossession rather than divisions of reasoned will. Everywhere there are possibilities of great interchanges of strength. Everywhere the issues remain obscured and the outcome indecisive.

And yet the human thrust towards that better order of freedom and brotherhood recurs with an undying obstinacy. It is blind, but there may come a time when it will be only purblind, a time when it will see and comprehend fully the common purpose of its impulse. To trace the history of mankind for the past ten thousand years, as we have done, makes us realize that, with an almost astronomical inevitability, we are moving *towards* a world unification based on a fundamental social revolution. Yet because of the almost universal indefiniteness of human thought to-day, that revolution seems likely still to cost our species an incalculable further depletion in waste and suffering. There may be a limit to human vitality. Conceivably that revolution may never accomplish itself, and our species may stagger half-way to its goal and fall and fail. There is no reason in history to suppose that man is exempt from the universal law that a failure of adaptation spells extinction. Are we adapting? Are we adapting fast enough in the face of our present disorders?

I have devoted this much space to a general discussion of the primary factors in the present situation, as the Spanish conflict laid them bare. The detailed history of that three years' struggle would be an epic of confused heroism beyond the compass of this *Outline*. Franco fought his way to the outskirts of Madrid and gained a footing in the new university quarter before the end of 1936, but there he was held until the end of the conflict in 1939. During this period the reactionary French and British Foreign Offices kept up a parade of legality and non-intervention that was of very great help to Franco. Franco was openly supported by Germany and Italy, and the legal government almost as openly by Russia. Spain became an arena in which those great powers with the utmost ruthlessness tried out new tactics and new machines. German and Italian troops fought openly side by side with the Sultan of Morocco's Moors, in the name of Spanish "Nationalism." Guernica, the sacred city of the Basques, was obliterated with its entire population by German bombers in 1937, so anticipating the great massacre of Rotterdam in 1940. The Basque people, who are sincere Roman Catholics, made a desperate, pathetic and quite useless appeal to the Vatican. The Republican government struggled on until April 1939. Then Franco entered Madrid in triumph.

§ 11

The Rise of Nazism.

The state of mind of a young German in the years following the war is presented in a book, *Little Man What Now?* by Hans Fallada, one of those books in which the novelist outdoes the historian in his presentation of an atmosphere in which, and because of which, things happen. His "Little Man" is out of work, humiliated, exasperated, driven inevitably towards revolt. He loves, and his fatherhood is shameful and the outlook for any child he begets is undernourishment and servitude. There is no outlet for him, no world across the seas now in which a man can start life again. What has brought all this about? There is no one to tell him of the arrogant folly of 1914, and all he reads and hears is saturated with the suggestion that the retribution of Versailles was most unfair. And he would not be human if he did not accept the pleasing suggestion that the German armies were not defeated in 1918, as they certainly were; they were betrayed. They were betrayed by the insidious British propaganda and by treachery at home. And now all this poverty is due to the iniquitous blockade, to the monstrous burthen of indemnities, to the machinations of cosmopolitan and mainly Jewish finance and to the greed of the Jews. Many of the employers to whom he goes so hopelessly, he finds are Jews—or they seem to be Jews. Jews! hide in poverty and blossom in prosperity. Some may have bloomed a little too brightly in the years after the war. The "Little Man" who was a child in 1918, who heard of nothing but glorious victories until the collapse and starvation, peers into restaurants, studies shop windows. Shall he go Bolshevik? But the Social Democrats and the Communists were in the conspiracy that let down the home front! The Social Democrats make all sorts of concessions to the French and British, but they get nothing in return—*nothing that lets me out.* That was the state of mind of a whole new generation of Germans, of millions of pent-up, discomfited young men. It accumulated explosive force through the days of monetary collapse which precipitated all the younger bourgeoisie into the festering stratum of distress. The particular form the explosion took was a matter of individual accident. It took the form of the most disastrous war convulsion that mankind has hitherto experienced.

The particular brand that fired this overcharged human magazine was named Adolf Hitler, an excitable, garrulous creature

with a vein of certifiable insanity in his composition. It was sometimes alleged that his name was originally Schücklgruber, but this is a libel upon him. He was the son of a certain Alois Schücklgruber, who was the illegitimate son of a woman called Schücklgruber, but this Alois had been brought up in the house of his putative father, Hietler, a miller's hand, and subsequently at the age of forty, took his name and became Schücklgruber-Hitler. Later the Schücklgruber dropped out, presumably for snobbish reasons. Alois was a person of some energy and ambition: he had three wives and a certain confusion of legitimate and illegitimate children, but he struggled up to the genteel position and title of Herr Oberofficial Hitler in the Customs Service. He insisted sternly upon the Herr Oberofficial. He died suddenly while his son was still a schoolboy, and he left his widow very ill provided for.

These facts, and most of Adolf's early career, have been disinterred very carefully and impartially by Dr. Rudolf Olden (*Hitler the Pawn*). Most of the statements about his education, ambitions, military achievements and so forth, given in *Mein Kampf*, or made to privileged interviewers, are either absolute lies or bold distortions of fact. As a schoolboy Hitler was a complete failure, he was unable to qualify to enter the Art School of the Vienna Academy. Something obscure happened in his mind at the onset of adolescence, and he developed a well-known form of insanity characterized among other things by an obscene hatred of the stranger male. In the Southern United States it is chiefly found in relation to negroes and leads very frequently to homicide by individuals or lynching parties; in the case of Hitler the insane jealousy centred upon Jews. An obsession of this sort dehumanizes a man, canalizes his activities and becomes a source of morbid energy. He had been rejected by the Army before 1914, but he volunteered at the outbreak of war and became an orderly. He never rose above the rank of a corporal. He possessed an Iron Cross of the First Class, but his accounts of how he came by it varied widely. The Reichswehr dossier of his war record had been destroyed.

Through the dingy years before the war, this unstable creature had gone about dreaming and muttering to himself; he seems never to have earned a living by his industry, and to have sunk to rage and the common doss-house; he was rejected as unfit for the Austrian Army, but he volunteered in 1914; he became something of a ranter among his comrades at the front, and afterwards at Munich his growing flood of words was manifest. Bavaria, immediately after 1918, was in a ferment. There were two Soviet

Republics and then a military reaction. The Bavarian General Staff organized political discussions to educate the people against communism and pacifism. At one of these meetings in an Army barracks Hitler was moved to deliver with great effectiveness and violence a tirade against the Jews. As a consequence he was appointed an "education officer." He ceased to be a mere irresponsible spouter.

He took up his new task with enthusiasm. He pervaded the barracks and cafés of Munich with his torrential eloquence. He formed in succession the German Workers' Party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, which passed on into the National Socialist Party. Its blend of socialism, patriotism, Jew-baiting, terrorist activities and stupendous promises was all the Little Man felt he needed.

The Army had hatched a bigger egg than it had intended. In 1923 the National Socialist Party was growing to formidable proportions, and Hitler had formed an alliance with General Ludendorff, who was still keeping alive the idea of a war of revenge. There was a Putsch, an ill-conceived attempt to seize power in Munich and march on Berlin. It failed ignominiously; the National Socialists seized the Town Hall, squabbled, and marched on the military headquarters. Whereupon the police fired. Hitler threw himself flat, sprained his arm and ran. Göring, his close associate, was wounded and fled also. Vain, gallant old Ludendorff marched straight forward through the sharpshooters and was respectfully taken prisoner.

All that would be a trivial story and Hitler might well have vanished from history there and then, if it were not for all that gathering mass of young men in the background. Not merely in the background. They came to shout in the court on his behalf, they were shouting and marching all over Germany now, and Hitler went to prison in Landsberg on the Lech for six months and wrote *Mein Kampf*, a confused, illiterate, schoolboy production, a book as common as the swill of beer wiped from a café table, but one which was to be made compulsory reading throughout the German world.

From Hitler's imprisonment in 1924 to his political recrudescence in 1929, there intervenes the Stresemann period of German history. Gustav Stresemann began as a passionate German patriot; his earliest activities were devoted to the agitation for a German navy that would be an effective menace against Britain, if she should intervene in the war against France and Russia that was being planned before 1914. Stresemann carried his intense patriotism through the war, and until he began to realize

the real opportunities and dangers of the German situation after 1918. Then and largely through the able diplomacy of the British Ambassador, Lord D'Abernon, he adopted a line of toleration and compromise. He managed to secure progressive alleviations of the debt payments imposed on his country, and set himself to freeing the German soil from foreign occupation. His mind broadened with experience, and he became a close personal friend of Monsieur Briand and, so far as one can judge, a genuine advocate with him of European federation. The occupied territory was definitely to be freed of the last foreign troops in 1931. He did not live to see that day; he died in 1929. So that he scarcely felt the beginnings of the economic world storm which was gathering about him. Nor did he realize the portentousness of those restless gangs of young men who seethed in all the cities of the land. His mind was too set in the ideas of the old diplomacy.

We have told already in the preceding two sections of this chapter of the post-war monetary collapse that culminated in 1923 how for a time there was an unstable rehabilitation of monetary methods, and how at last in 1930-31 the whole system crashed in a common world-wide financial disaster. With this came Hitler's second opportunity. His most immediate material was the various Youth Movements which, with considerable variations of spirit and objective, had flourished in Germany as long as the parallel Boy Scout movement in the British Empire. To organize an armed and uniformed force out of this material, he needed monetary support, and this he got from the financiers interested in the heavy industries, which needed rearmament in order to flourish, and who were therefore bitterly opposed to the Stresemann policy of pacification. He presented himself to these magnates chiefly as a competent strike-breaker and as a useful instrument in turning the unrest of the masses away from social revolution towards a Pan-German crusade. He secured the support of Hugenberg, the managing director of the great firm of Krupps, and creator and leader of the "German Nationalist Party." Hugenberg had bought up a vast network of newspapers, cinemas and the like; he was a little, grey-headed, overbearing dogmatist, and he thought he had bought Hitler. But there he was mistaken. Röhm, too, thought he had secured Hitler, to give him and his S.A. the control of the reviving and expanding Army.

Hitler and his close associates, with the industrialists behind them, had now the amplest resources available for an intense campaign to restore the aggressive spirit in Germany, and they flung themselves into it with immense energy. All over the

country violence was organized, against the Jews, against the intellectuals, against the Communists. These last were threatened with extermination. It was a close imitation of the campaign of brutality and terror upon which Fascism rose to power in Italy, but it was more systematic, extensive and brutal. In 1930 the National Socialist Party had twelve members in the Reichstag, shrunken from an original fourteen (1924). In the September election of 1930, it reappeared with one hundred and seven, representing six and a half million voters. And so Hitler clambered to the thirteen million who voted for him as President in 1932 against the nineteen million cast for old Marshal Hindenburg.

The political comings and goings that ensued are too complex for us to deal with in detail. In the January of 1933, President Hindenburg, who was now over eighty-five and in a state of extreme senile decay, went back upon his repeated declarations—"I give my word of honour as a Prussian general"—that he would do nothing of the sort, and made Hitler Imperial Chancellor. Probably the old man forgot.

But Hitler was still very much in the hands of the Army and the industrialists, and still very far from actual dictatorship. His group of intimates decided upon a coup. They set the Reichstag on fire on February 27th, declared it was part of a nation-wide Communist conspiracy, and let loose a wild storm of anti-Communist and anti-Jewish violence. Trade Unions and Labour Banks were abolished. Eighty-one Communist members of the re-elected Reichstag were either put in prison or compelled to hide or go abroad.



Adolf Hitler

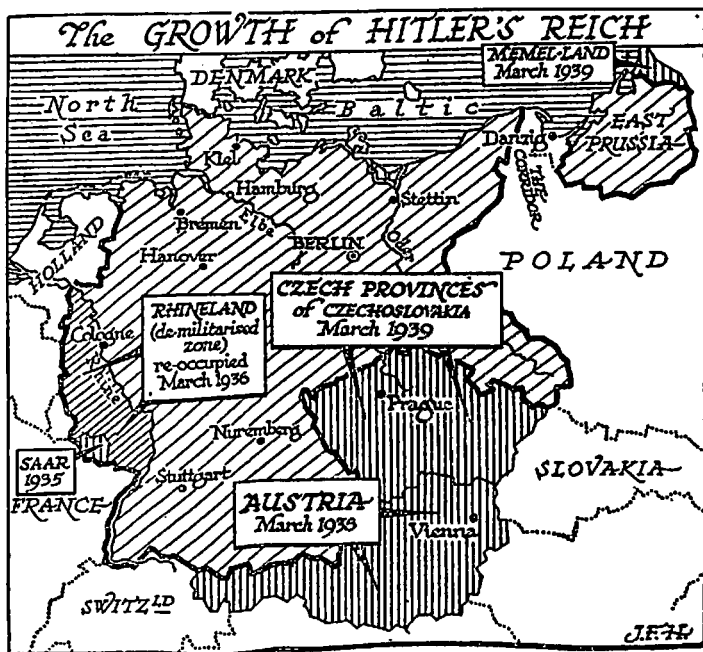
Their abolition left Hitler in an effective majority in the Reichstag. There ensued a curious episode. The terroristic weapon of the National Socialist Party was the S.A., the Storm Detachment, the illegal Storm Troops, organized by Röhm in the days of Germany's general disarmament. Now that the country was boldly rearming in defiance of its treaty obligations, the S.A. became, from the point of view of the expanding regular army (the Reichswehr), unnecessary and troublesome. And Hitler

decided to sacrifice it. Röhm, Gregor Strasser and a number of men who had been his closest and most loyal associates in his early days, General von Schleicher and his wife and a multitude of minor S.A. leaders, were murdered in the "blood bath" of the thirtieth of June (1934). Thereafter Hitler became not so much the leader as the ostensible divinity of the German people. And thereafter under the leadership of this demented, wordy being, Germany turned itself more and more definitely towards war.

§ 12

The World Slides to War.

The world slid into the war which Hitler planned with scarcely an effort to prevent it. The only serious endeavours were made



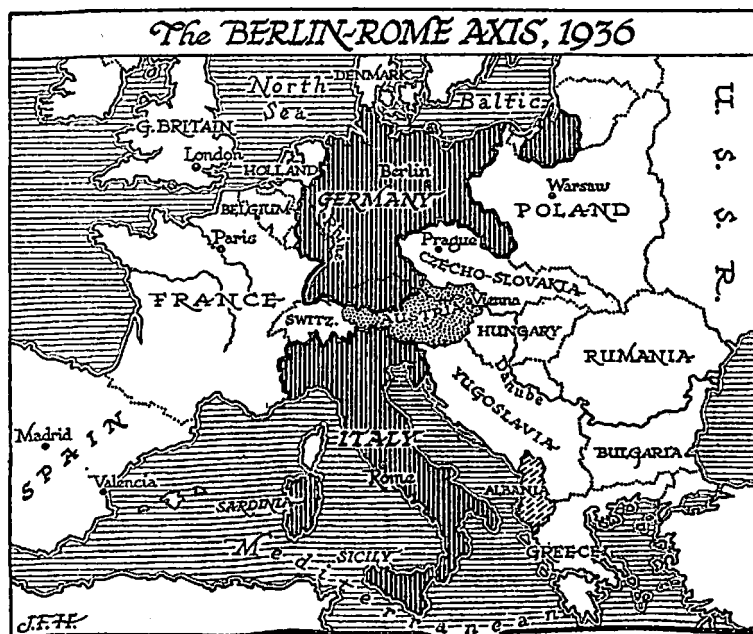
by the Soviet Union, which regarded itself as directly threatened by the Nazis. It joined the League of Nations in 1934, reversing Lenin's policy, and in the following two years, as has been said,

saw to it that the Communist parties about the world adopted a "united front" policy to strengthen anti-Fascism in other countries. As the catastrophe approached, Litvinov more than once made suggestions for concerted resistance to the Axis advance, which the British, American and French governments always evaded.

The reasons for the inertia of the rest of the world were two. In the United States the reason was wishful-thinking. The States had dealt the heaviest blow to world-peace that they could by withdrawing from the League at its inception: since then it had become almost an article of national faith that America would avoid being involved in the next war by simply declining to take any part in foreign affairs. The President was almost the only American statesman of influence who saw in the growth of Nazism a thing which might threaten the States, but his pronouncements on this (such as his "quarantine" speech) were neither frequent nor vigorous; and they were very coldly received. Even as late as July, 1939, when he proposed to amend the Neutrality Act, the Senate forbade it. The governments of Britain and France, however, could not pretend to themselves that the rise of Nazism was no affair of theirs. Yet over a number of years they took actions which built up the strength of the power which was going to ruin them. Their reasons must even now be partly conjectural. It is not sufficient to say that they acted so because they were rich, and old and frightened: in Britain in particular the policy was consistently carried through (after MacDonald and Baldwin had retired) by a group of four men, Neville Chamberlain, Lord Halifax, Sir John Simon, and Sir Samuel Hoare who were ageing, it is true, but disastrously vigorous, opinionated, and honest. What moved such men seems to have been an entire misconception of what they were facing, arising from a sort of inverted theory of the class war. They perceived that the Nazis and Fascisti when they were victorious stamped out first of all Communist organizations, all trade unions and socialist parties; that they put down "indiscipline" and various unhealthy modern tendencies in art and morals; that they trained young men admirably in vigorous military exercises; that they were supported by the subscriptions of energetic business men. The conservatives in Britain and France, on all these points, seemed to feel a fellow-feeling with the Nazis and Fascisti even though they deplored their crudities and brutalities (which they were assured were much exaggerated). They assumed the existence of a similar sympathy on the other side. They were sure that the Soviet Union and the Union only

was the enemy of the Axis, and that they themselves could quite easily come to a business-like arrangement with Hitler and his colleagues. They did not, in short, know anything about the nature of gangsterism, and had no idea that they were selected as the first and fattest victims.

No other theory seems to explain the complacency with which they watched and even assisted the series of events which first denuded them of all their potential allies and then led them into a disastrous war. At this distance, the sequence of occurrences seems too clear for any but self-deluded men to have missed. At first the war was organized separately in the East and West: the policies of Germany and Japan were only co-ordinated in principle in November, 1936, and complete co-operation only dated from



late 1937. Seeing that her invasion of Manchuria led to only verbal protests, Japan in 1933 left the League and invaded China proper, occupying the northern province of Jehol in face of very slight resistance. Chiang Kai-Shek was still mostly occupied with subduing the Communists; he had so much success that in 1934 they fled from their strongholds in Central China, and

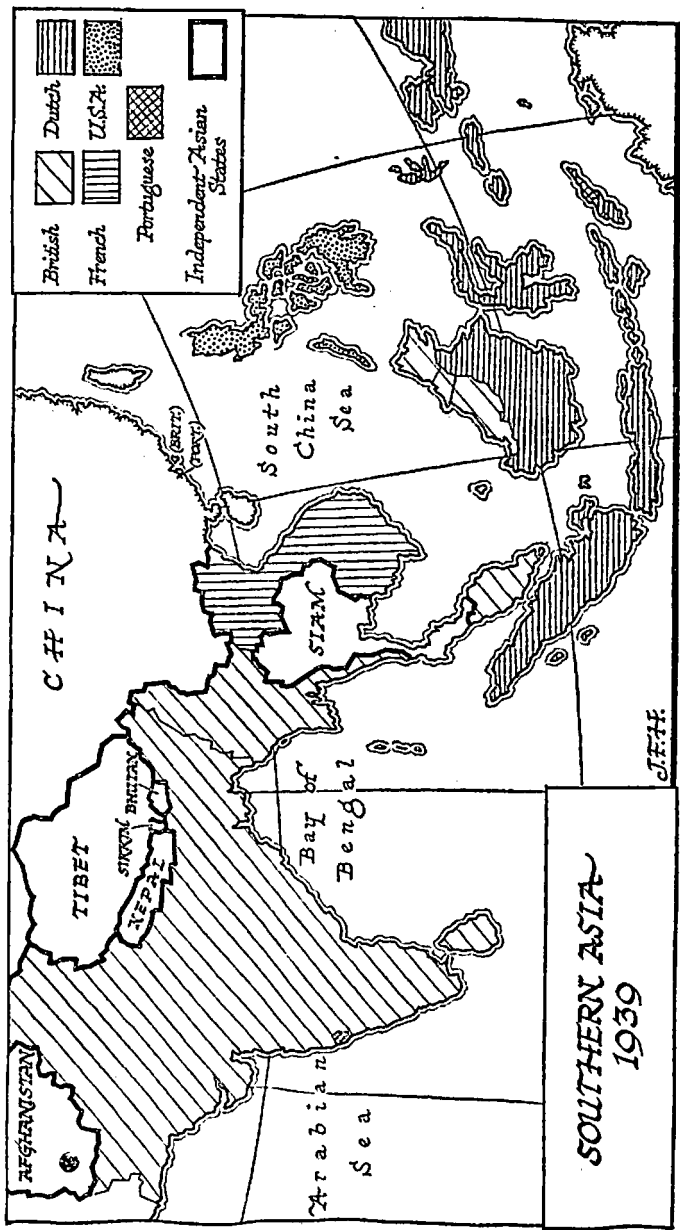
after a surprising forced march of some thousands of miles reappeared in the western province of Kan-su, where it was more difficult to touch them. By then, however, the new Russian policy had reached China, and its results appeared in a peculiarly Chinese incident. Chiang Kai-Shek was kidnapped in 1936 by the son of the war-lord who had been expelled from Manchuria by the Japanese, and was carried by him to the headquarters of the Communist General Mao Tse-tung. Instead of executing him, Mao and his colleagues reasoned with him about the Japanese danger; his wife was fetched to join in the discussions. After some days of discussion and meditation both sides declared they had found enlightenment, and pledged themselves unitedly to resist the invasion. It was only just in time, for next year the Japanese launched a full-scale invasion of China, capturing Peking and bombing and burning Chinese cities. Fighting on unequal terms, the Chinese were forced back and in 1938 Hankow, Nanking, Shanghai and Canton were all in Japanese hands. But the new alliance (though both sides were justifiably suspicious of each other) held firm; Chiang Kai-Shek retired to Chungking in the far interior and the Japanese found that they owned only the railways, waterways, and large cities. All round them the country was hostile and infested with guerrillas. What should have been a firm taking-off ground for further advances had proved to be a morass: the "China incident" (as the Japanese called it) seemed to be proving not a source of strength but a trap. One part of the war-plan had gone wrong.

But there were no such errors in the West. The year 1933, when Hitler took power, saw the dissolution of the last Disarmament Conference, the break-up (through American action) of a world conference to stabilize exchanges, and the resignation of Germany from the League of Nations.

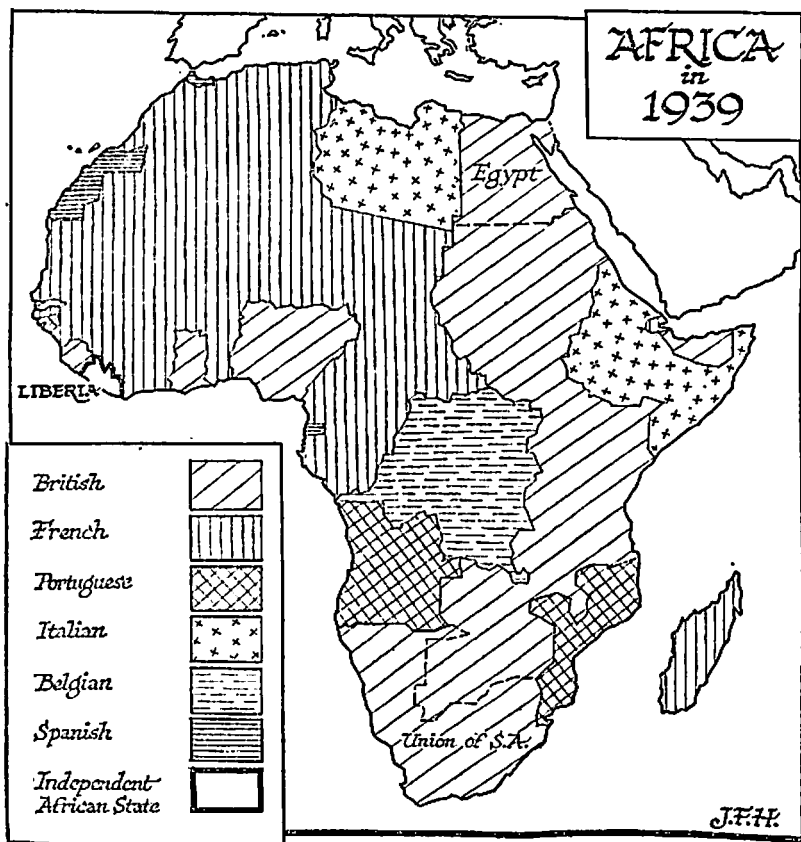
It was as if a line had been drawn underneath one page of history. Thereafter, in 1935, Hitler announced that the Versailles Treaty had ceased to exist, reintroduced conscription, and recommenced open rearmament in defiance of it. The British government



Benito Mussolini



protested, and then almost at once signed a naval pact regulating the size of the new German navy. The next move was Mussolini's. In October of that year his armies invaded the territory of a fellow-member of the League, Abyssinia. The grievances alleged were trivial border disputes; the real grievance was that in 1896 the Abyssinians had defeated an Italian invading army at Adowa. The direct breach of the peace shocked



the world and galvanized the League of Nations: forty-two states agreed in condemning Italy and in applying "sanctions" under the presumed leadership of Britain and France. A once-famous speech by the Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, on September 11th, had pledged Britain to stand by the League Covenant in the spirit and the letter, but in fact he came to an agreement with the French premier, Pierre Laval, to do no such thing. "Sanctions" were not applied to the materials needed by the Italian armies (oil, steel and coal) and poison gas was used

through the Suez Canal in shiploads. By May, 1936, the Italians were in Addis Ababa: the League of Nations, as a protective force, was destroyed. Hitler had meanwhile sent his troops into the Rhineland, from which they were by treaty excluded. The Franco rebellion in Spain, backed by Italy and Germany, also began in 1936; its history has already been given.

In March, 1938, the Nazi troops occupied Austria, jailed Schuschnigg, the Catholic dictator who had succeeded Dollfuss, and started the usual massacres and imprisonments of Jews and anti-Fascists.

In September, 1938, Hitler announced that the "oppression" of Germans in Czechoslovakia was intolerable; war appeared to be near, and France (though not Britain) was tied to Czechoslovakia by treaty. Chamberlain flew to Munich, and a quadruplicate conference of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy compelled Czechoslovakia to cede her frontier districts and with them her ability to defend herself. Chamberlain, returning from Munich, announced: "I believe this is peace for our time." All of these aggressions, it should be mentioned, were punctuated by statements from Hitler of his peaceful intentions, and unwillingness to make any further claims. At the same time, usually, the Russians would make proposals for consultations to stop the Nazi advance, which would be ignored.

In March, 1939, the Nazis occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia and installed their usual régime; Hitler also seized Memel from the small state of Lithuania.

In April, 1939, Italy invaded and conquered Albania. Hitler cancelled his non-aggression pact with Poland.

By this time even the Chamberlain government had realized what was approaching with great strides towards it. The Versailles Treaty was gone, the League of Nations had been destroyed, and there was only one possible ally of any strength left, Russia. A mission was at last sent to Moscow to negotiate a treaty. It was too late: a change of policy was occurring there, symbolized by the substitution of the "realist" Mr. Molotov for the old Bolshevik Litvinov as Foreign Minister.

The German plans for war, as even amateur strategists knew, were held up by the fear of having to fight on two fronts. It was the traditional anxiety of German generals: with Russian armies on the east and French on the west, and with Britain holding the seas, Germany was a nut in a nut-cracker. So long as this threat existed, Hitler could not start on his "one-by-one" programme. When it was removed, war could begin. He opened negotiations to remove it. With a blindness which seems even less explicable

than Chamberlain's, Stalin and Molotov seem to have regarded the Allied and the German missions to Moscow as no more than rival suitors for their favour, and to have decided that the Nazis were to be preferred. On August 23rd, 1939, the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed. On September 1st as a direct sequel, German troops invaded Poland.

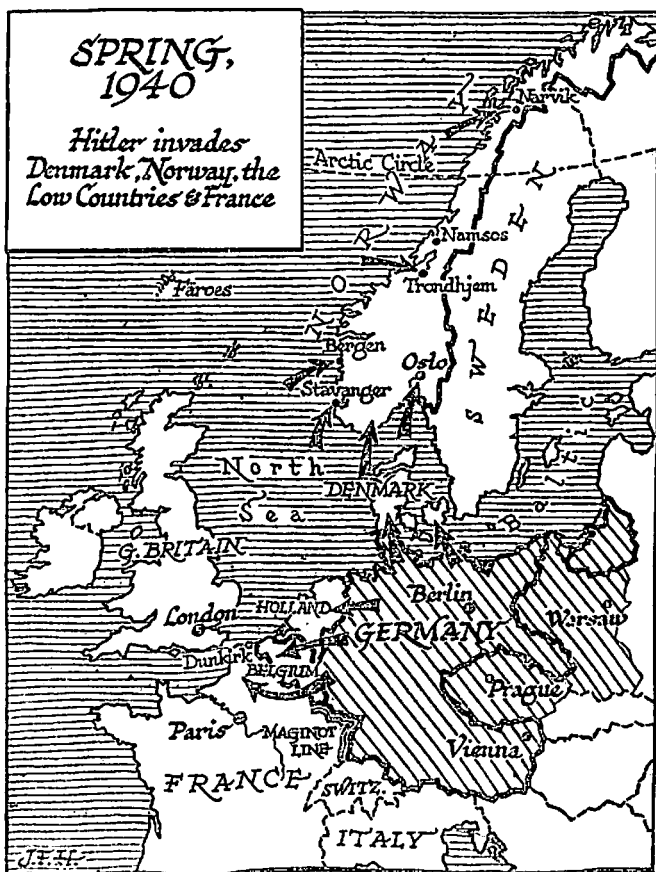
§ 13

The Second World War.

No government, except the German government, had any idea of what was going to happen in September, 1939. That Poland would be defeated many people expected; nobody expected that it would be destroyed in three weeks. Initially, as so often, the Nazis had the advantage of surprise, for the Polish army was not even completely mobilized. But the first defeats were followed by graver disasters; in guns, tanks and aircraft the Poles were hopelessly outclassed. Where there was some protection available, as in Warsaw or in the Hela Peninsula outside Danzig, they fought desperately; but their main armies were massacred. Up till September 17th there were some hopes, possibly illusory, that they could hold a line along the San, Bug, and Narew rivers; but on that day the use of the Nazi-Soviet alliance was shown. The Russians invaded Poland in the East and the war was effectively over. The two allies met at Bialystock and, on September 29th, arranged a Fourth Partition of Poland; the last Polish troops surrendered on October 1st at Hela. Other effects of the alliance were seen in the next four weeks when the Baltic Republics of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were compelled to sign pacts giving the Russians military bases in their countries, the Nazis obligingly evacuating all Germans from those areas.

During this disaster the Western Allies had done practically nothing. General Gamelin, the French Commander-in-Chief had made a timid sortie from the Maginot Line, but returned as soon as he met the Siegfried line. Their inertia was such that Hitler in October hopefully made a peace offer on the basis of the Allies accepting the conquest of Poland. It was refused; but for more tangible defiances the Allied peoples had to content themselves with such incidents as the dramatic cornering of the German

battleship-raider *Graf Spee* by three small British ships in December, and the organization of an economic blockade. Their rulers, indeed, had still so little knowledge of their opponent's power that their eyes were elsewhere, on a part of the world where Soviet plans had gone astray. Finland had been presented with demands similar to those made on the Baltic States but, being a solid democratic state instead of a weak dictatorship, had civilly refused them. On the last day of November, in defiance of treaties as well as of the League of Nations Covenant, the Russians invaded the small republic, and bombed its capital, Helsinki. The odds were fantastic—50 or 60 to 1 in population, and something similar in arms and equipment—but to the universal



astonishment heavy Russian attacks were beaten off. With no effective help but some surreptitious aid from Sweden the Finns held the invaders back for over three months; so great was the indignation at the Soviet invasion that the British and French governments prepared an expedition to aid them—and an entanglement in a second war was prevented only by the barring of the way by Norway and Sweden.

On March 12th, 1940, the Finnish war ended in the inevitable Russian victory; the Allies fell back into their old inertia, marked on April 5th by a complacent statement by Chamberlain: "Hitler has missed the bus." Four days after that pronouncement the Germans seized the whole of Denmark and the greater part of Norway—the first of these pacific states making no resistance the other a disorganized and unsuccessful one. Chamberlain could not believe it: told that the Germans had taken Narvik in the far north he informed the Commons it could not be true—the place must be "Larvik" in the far south. British troops were hastily landed at the small ports of Namsos and Andalsnes to aid the struggling Norwegians. But they had no adequate air protection, no tanks, no big guns and no plan comparable to the Germans'; they and the French who joined them seemed little more formidable than the Poles. Only the Navy's actions at Narvik seemed competent, and these could not save the campaign. By the end of the month Norway was conquered.

This was too much for the British House of Commons (the French reaction was weaker). Explosive debates, in which one of his own nominal followers said to him: "In the name of God, go!" convinced Chamberlain, after a hostile vote of 200 to 281, that he must resign; a coalition headed by Winston Churchill, and including the Labour Party, took office instead. It was only just in time: that very day (May 10th) the Germans broke a fresh set of treaties by invading Belgium and Holland. Now the Western world saw "German might" at last in full action. "Panzer" divisions, a combination of tanks and infantry, forced their way through ordinary lines—the tanks breaking down weak places, the infantry behind them wiping up resistance. Bombers, including new things called dive-bombers, were used as weapons to break up enemy formations—both they and tanks being radio-guided. (The telephone-lines of 1918, so easily cut, were only a memory.) Attacks were planned to the last detail: Eben Emael, the great fort which was the centre pin of Belgian defence, lasted just one day. But the attacks were not on soldiers only, for there was "total war." The tanks and screaming dive-bombers drove packs of terrified civilians before them; the allied forces, trying

to march to aid the Belgians found themselves entangled in a mass of panic-struck refugees stampeding to the west. Parachutists descended behind the lines and seized bridges: in Holland German spies, often old residents, set up machine-gun posts. To add to the terror, the defenceless city of Rotterdam, was raided by the Luftwaffe and many hundred people killed: the crime was deliberate, for the world had got to learn a lesson.

Holland was conquered in five days; then while the allied troops which had wheeled north to aid Belgium were slowly retreating to the coast, the Germans broke through an ill-defended sector in the Ardennes, near to the ominous town of Sedan. By May 15th the French 9th Army was a wreck and the panzers were pouring through a 50-mile gap well north of the useless Maginot line. Four days later they had reached the sea; the Belgian and British armies, and some French, were encircled in Flanders. The Belgian King surrendered; the British army and its French fellows were extracted from Dunkirk between May 28th and June 2nd by a suddenly-assembled fleet of rather more than 600 private boats and 200 naval vessels. By then, however, the French armies were beginning to collapse; the panzers were breaking through so fast that sometimes their tanks were 50 miles ahead of their infantry. Along the white roads, between "the lilacs and the roses," in the brilliant summer sun poured terrified crowds, part civilian, part in uniform, fleeing they did not know where, dragging incongruous pieces of their household goods, dive-bombed and machine-gunned if they ceased to stampede. A civilization seemed to be ending; no similar sights had been seen since the barbarians destroyed the Roman Empire. On June 17th, ignoring a British offer of a complete Anglo-French Union, a new French government under the ancient Marshal Pétain announced it would give up the struggle.

Better armaments and generalship, the unwillingness of the French upper class to resist, and Communist propaganda among the workers had secured the Nazi victory. Now their allies took their pickings: Mussolini bravely declared war on the defeated Allies, the Soviet Union took Bessarabia from Roumania (previously covered by an Anglo-French guarantee) and annexed Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. There was a brief pause.

The battle which was to come ranks with Marathon and Salamis among those which changed history and saved a civilization. Had Britain not resisted, or had it been conquered, it is not difficult to estimate what would have followed. The Nazi plan is now fairly clear, and it is clear, too, how nearly it succeeded.