

*Douglas Reed*

**DISGRACE  
ABOUNDING**

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*author of  
Insanity Fair*

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## DISGRACE ABOUNDING

'In *Insanity Fair* Mr. Douglas Reed wrote what was, perhaps, the most ominous book of our generation. It was a book of bitter prophecy — the prophecy of a man who saw the civilized world crumbling into ruin and who set out to warn men and women of the wrath to come. Autobiography, travel-book and political tract in one, it took the reading public by storm. In *Disgrace Abounding* he takes up the story of the Hitler menace where he left off at the end of *Insanity Fair*, brings us through the Munich crisis, and takes us with him from scene to scene through the disastrous Central Europe of to-day. It is a story that might easily have been merely depressing; but it is a book so valorous in spirit that it is more likely to strengthen than to weaken the hearts of men.'

ROBERT LYND in the NEWS CHRONICLE

*(continued on back of jacket)*





# DISGRACE ABOUNDING

*By the same Author*  
INSANITY FAIR

# DISGRACE ABOUNDING

*by*

DOUGLAS REED

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## P R E F A C E

ALL the fictions in this book are characteristic. None of the characters is fictitious, though some are disguised. A multitude of opinions is expressed. They may be poor things; in any case, they are mine own.

If the book were to have a dedication it would be, in the words of the furniture removal man, to you — from me.

While I was finishing the book, *Insanity Fair*, to which this is a sequel, events began to move so fast, and myself with them, that I never had time to go through the proofs with a microscope for the misprints of others and the mistakes of myself.

The first thirty-odd impressions thus contained a large but dwindling number of slips. That they dwindled was largely due — I hardly stopped running about in the subsequent nine months for long enough meticulously to examine a single chapter — to readers in many countries, who wrote to me, or even called on or telephoned to my publishers, to point them out. To them my most cordial thanks are due.

The same thing may happen, in a lesser degree, in this book. If it does, I tender thanks in advance.

Those spacious and leisurely days are gone when a writer, at any rate a writer in my field, might sit in a quiet house, looking over green English wealds, weigh and apportion his words in long and tranquil meditation, and with measured gesture dip his quill pen into the ink and transfer them to paper.

A writer of my type, in the mid-twentieth century, is always rushing off to catch a train or aeroplane, to keep abreast of the rush of events, and between journeys has quickly to tap his thoughts on paper.

He who runs may read. To write, you have to run still faster.

Possibly some of the things I have written about will begin to happen before the book is out. I shall not alter it if they do. I

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think, by leaving it as it was written, you get a more plastic view of the march of events.

The direct form of address, 'You', is intended in most cases for British readers.

## CHAPTER I

### JOURNEY RESUMED

I WROTE a book, *Insanity Fair*. This book begins where that one left off. I thought of calling this one *The Picnic Papers*. *Insanity Fair*, about Europe; *The Picnic Papers*, about England. It seemed to express the picture I had in my mind. There a lunatic fun-fair, a mad ride through the haunted house; here a crazy picnic of inertia and apathy, ignorance and arrogance. There ruthless dictators, marching armies, bright swords, glittering prizes; clear ideas, something men can understand. Here fear, irresolution, class prejudice, bewilderment, property mania, icy cynicism, fogged ideas — litter blowing about the land that once was green and pleasant, so they say. Storm over Europe. Litter over England.

*The Picnic Papers*, the book will remain for me. But others, good judges, tell me that the title is a bad one, that it does not convey the idea I have in mind; also, though I did not know this, it has been used before. So *The Picnic Papers* becomes, for you, *Disgrace Abounding*. I like that one, too, and think it better. But for me, this book is *The Picnic Papers*.

I wrote *Insanity Fair* as a member of a generation that was led out to fight for an ideal, and now sees that ideal being crucified while old politicians, who were old politicians when that war began which we now know has never been ended, cry 'Crucify it' and their Adam's apples run up and down like the car of a cable railway. But, being realists, they don't say 'Crucify it' nowadays; they say 'Non-intervention', or 'The sacred principle of self-extermination', no, I don't think I've got that one quite right, but you will probably remember the phrase I mean; anyway I am a member of that generation that finds no peace nor any brave new world, and I was sick of describing this daily parade of treachery and humbuggerly in the anonymous shroud of 'Our own correspondent'.

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I wanted, by book or by crook, to clear away some of that litter, and I don't know why I should have thought that I could do that, but I had to try or burst, so I wrote *Insanity Fair*, thinking that I would for this once speak freely and then sit back, close my mind to this Hogarthian pageant of brutality and covetousness and lust, don again the hooded shroud of 'Our own correspondent' and write eloquent summaries of trade statistics, emasculated descriptions of the daily scene in our contemporary Europe.

But book, God help me, leads to book. While the binders were glueing the covers on to *Insanity Fair*, making it ready for its appearance on All Fools' Day 1938, while the bells of St. Stephen's in Vienna were ticking off the last seconds of my forty-third birthday, March 11th, 1938, German armies had already begun to write the sequel in iron caterpillar-tracks that came down from the frontier to Vienna, crashed through the Ringstrasse, and turned off to the right where the road leads to Czechoslovakia, barely an hour away.

That self-same night or later, I knew, they would march on into Czechoslovakia, and England, producing from behind her back yet another wreath with the words 'We deplore the methods used', which means rather less than 'Yours very sincerely' at the end of a letter dismissing an employee of thirty years' standing just before he qualifies for a pension, England would sit back and read with relief letters in the newspapers from an archbishop, two retired ambassadors, an oriental potentate, four peers and five university professors, proving that England had in her magnanimity given Germany yet another Fair Deal, and we must at all costs continue in the path of collaboration with Germany, and God is on the side of the big Italians. Especially, we must continue 'to establish personal contact' with the dictators, this being the modern name for that process by which one party supplies the pants and the other party the kick, the first party repeatedly practising the ancient Christian principle of turning the other cheek.

But I knew, on that night, that Austria meant Czechoslovakia, and that Czechoslovakia meant Hungary, Poland, Rumania; that

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these meant Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia, the whole of Danubia and the Balkans, German invincibility — and, ultimately, you. I quickly wrote a few more chapters for *Insanity Fair* to say this, and six months later a Swiss newspaper, the *Basler Nachrichten*, took up the book, reviewed it, and said, 'It must be a bitter comfort to the author that his prophecies have been so far fulfilled.'

No. Bitter, not a comfort. Comfort there would have been if they had been proved wrong, or if they had found in England wide enough belief to get something done. To be a true prophet of woe is no satisfaction.

So *The Picnic Papers* (that is, *Disgrace Abounding*) became inevitable. I could not go on for ever writing new chapters for *Insanity Fair*. You have expanding bookshelves, but you can hardly have an expanding book. If you could, I would write one as long as a concertina. The little book might go on for ever. Perhaps a loose-leaf book will be the solution of the writer's problem in these galloping times, when he cannot dip his pen into the ink quickly enough, or tap the keys of his typewriter fast enough, or speak into the recording machine rapidly enough, to keep up with the rush of events, the hurtling advance of roaring mechanized armies, the flight of fugitives, the tears of women and the crying of children, the shattering of idols and the betrayal of ideals, the erosion of old and the limning of new frontiers.

Why write at all, for that matter? The old saw, that the typewriter is mightier than high explosive, is demonstrably absurd. But, somehow, I must, as long as the light holds, and that will not be very long. The twilight of our gods, the gods that stood for humanity and justice and the right of men to speak and write for these things, is thickening fast. Soon a right venerable gentleman, applauded by the overwhelming majority of a House elected to protect small nations against greedy great ones, may tell you that 'a national emergency' exists and present you with some noble-sounding Act, 'for the tranquillization of public opinion' or what not, and you may wake up to find that you are gagged and bound, that you may not criticize the latest Fair Deal that has

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been given to Germany, in Spain or lord knows where, that the voice of the people may be raised only in one grand sweet song of admiration for the achievements of the government.

Somebody wrote about *Insanity Fair*, 'There ought to be a law. There ought to be a law preventing foreign correspondents from writing any more now-it-can-be-told memoirs.'

There probably will be. Be of good cheer.

But for the nonce we may write, comic little men who go tailing about after lost causes, and the voice of *Insanity Fair* rings loud in my mind calling for its mate. *The Picnic Papers* (I mean, *Disgrace Abounding*). I hope time at least remains for that happy union to be consummated, and I even see in imagination the features of their first-born, *A Tale of Three Cities*, Vienna, Prague and Budapest, and how they all became German provincial towns, and after that *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* — but you have heard that one before and you don't care for it, you are not bemused, and how right you are.

Before we start on this picnic I think you have a right to know something about your host. I wish I could tell you just who and what he is. I find that many different opinions exist about me. I am, as I read, no Red, an extreme anti-Fascist, a bitter critic of the British Left, a British Tory, a man who will be called prejudiced more by persons belonging to the political Right than the Left, and other things.

I regret this diversity of views about me, because I don't like to think that you don't know where I am. An intelligent man should be born into this world alive either a little Liberal or a little Conservative, and having chosen his watertight compartment, he should stay there. All the good and noble ideas must obviously be in one of those compartments, the red one, or the true blue one, or the brown one, and then you have your label. When you have people gadding about who think they find something good and something bad in all the compartments, the time has come for stern action: hold them down and pin a label on them — Red, for preference.

But in this matter of political hue, I have decided to declare

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war. I have sought out the most repulsive colour I can find and have decided to give its name to anybody who disagrees with my opinions on any subject. The colour is puce. Any individual who disagrees with me is a Puce. Any body of individuals who disagree with me are Puces. I expect in time to found a national movement against Puces, who are the cause of all that is wrong in England. I even expect in time to find anti-Puce States banded together to save the world from Pucery.

So you know just what I am against. What I am, what I am for: these are more difficult things to state. I only knew one other man in my case, and he was the hero of an enthralling human drama that I found in a volume of German statistics, which are far stranger than truth. In the section devoted to the number of German strikes and lock-outs in a certain year (yes, that was before Hitler) I found, in a column headed 'Number of strikers', the numeral '1', and in the next column, headed 'Working days lost', the figure '187', and in the column headed 'Result', the words 'No agreement'.

I scarcely dared believe my eyes when I found '1'. Men had sought for centuries the secret of making gold, the Saragossa Sea, the stone of wisdom, the sunken city, and a cure for baldness, and had failed. I had found something rarer than them all — The One Man Strike. Somewhere in Germany a working man had struck, and struck for more than half the year. Spurning all inducements, braving all threats, picketing the works to keep himself from blacklegging, daily growing thinner and colder and hungrier, he had struck and struck and struck, and at the year's end he was still striking and 'No agreement' had been reached.

A stupendous, a Homeric, an immortal conflict! To my last day I shall regret that Hitler then came to power, abolished strikes, and prevented me from reading the next instalment of that enthralling tale in the next volume of statistics. But I looked back through earlier volumes, for previous years, and, believe it or not, '1' was always there. '1' had struck, for longer or shorter periods, for several years. He was unconquerable. Every year he was there, striking, striking, striking.

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A kindred spirit. The One Man Striker, the incorrigible sales-resister, the professional rebel, the champion of a lost cause.

So now you know, approximately.

Let's get down to that picnic. Unpack your hamper, bring out the potted arrogance, the bottled ignorance, the tinned snobbery, the upper, middle, and lower class sandwiches; make yourselves comfortable on your patent inertia cushions; I hope you have brought the aspirin with you, in case those troublesome pains in your apathy come on; play something on the gramophone that tells of England and Englishmen and the things that England stood for and stands for. Strew the litter about.

Ladies and gentlemen, Puces and anti-Puces, *The Picnic Papers*.  
Or rather, *Disgrace Abounding*.

## CHAPTER 2

### ISLAND LAMENT

MAY 1938. I wandered about London champing with impatience to be back in Central Europe, where the moving finger was writing another act of the tragedy of faith betrayed along the banks of the Danube, railing savagely in my heart at England for this smug self-complacency, that nothing but high explosive seemingly can disturb, on the eve of disaster.

*Insanity Fair.* It was apt, that title that I hit on one sunny day at Montreux two years before. A colleague, one Shakespeare, had the same idea a few hundred years earlier — a mad world, my masters. Somebody else, soon after the War Called Great, put the same idea into American — this cockeyed world.

May 1938, in London. A mad and merry month, my masters. The buds were fighting their springtime battle against the coal-dust-laden air. Everywhere the road-builder was at work; no avenues were being left unturned. Mr. Victor Gollancz had announced a Christian Book Club. As I wandered, seething, along the Edgware Road, a bareheaded woman with lilac hair and a long cigarette holder in her mouth passed in front of me, and by 1940 I expect they will be shaving their heads bald and painting them green with pink spots and chewing betel nut, and very decorative that ought to be, and very good for white prestige, and as long as we can keep it up the black man ought to be proud to carry the white man's burden.

At the Oval or Lord's or somewhere somebody had made hundreds or thousands of runs, I don't know which; he had been at the wicket for days and days, good old Thingummybob, and this put everybody in good humour, so that clerks and shop assistants and stockbrokers smoked their pipes with greater relish in the homeward train to Wimbledon and Brixton and Harrow and felt their hearts warm within them as they hosed the garden. Good old Thingummybob. We shall win the Ashes.

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Ashes, ashes, thought I, what the devil are the Ashes, and who cares about them, anyway? How many Englishmen know where Asch is? — which is much more important now. The wind and the dust swirled round the corners and gave me headaches, which I cured by going to the enormous picture theatres, where every prospect was vile but the air was pure and dust-free, for it had been passed through some machine. This is not a joke: to get a breath of fresh air in our London, where I was born, you have to go to the pictures.

I went to the theatres. I saw that slick and amusing play *George and Margaret*, in which George and Margaret are always just about to appear but never do, and I loved Jane Baxter, her looks, her figure, her acting, her enunciation. I liked the other players, the clean finish of their performances, the way they played to each other. This was a merry evening, an oasis in the desert of London. But Joyce Barbour had played a scurvy trick on me, I felt. Only a few months before, as it seemed to me, just about the time that I began gadding about Europe, I had admired her as she led Mr. Cochran's young ladies on to the stage, and now here she was playing the matronly mother, and as I had not altered in the least between these two occasions I was vaguely perturbed.

The vast changes that a world war and twenty-five years had brought to the English stage amused me. Not long before that war, I think, the word 'bloody' was spoken for the first time on a London stage, I believe in one of Mr. Shaw's plays. Now the word 'bloody' occurred at least once in all plays of this kind, as inevitably as the butler who brought in the letter. The new thing was that the leading young lady had to speak at least once about sleeping with a man, and at this point she either dropped her eyes to the stage or fixed them glassily on a point in the auditorium just above the heads of the people in the last row of the pit. The procedure used apparently depended on the *Feingefühl*, on the nicety of feeling, of the producer. What, I wondered in awe, would we be hearing on the London stage after another generation?

I went to see a play of Noel Coward's and watched the stalls chuckling comfortably at the quartette that sang 'The Stately

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Homes of England'. This was the kind of satire, like that of Evelyn Waugh, that they liked. It did not hurt, and was properly respectful of the Old School Tie. And there on the stage, praise be, I saw Fritz Massary. Paris has its Mistinguett, and now London had its Massary, and I was glad that London would no longer be deprived of that which Berlin and Vienna had so long enjoyed.

For that matter, many of the theatres and picture theatres I went to in England seemed suddenly to have decided not to withhold from the public any longer talent of which Berlin, Vienna, Budapest and Prague had previously had the benefit.

This London. As I wandered around it, in my disgruntled way, in May 1938, I asked myself, 'Where are the Englishmen?'

Gradually I found them. A few of them are sitting in the clubs around Pall Mall, thinking that all is for the best in the best of all possible clubs and God's in his heaven and all's right with the world. Some of the others you will also find in that Central London. They are selling newspapers, serving socks and ties, standing in lackey's uniform outside picture theatres, while inside, near the cash desk, hovers The Boss, a foreign-visaged man with a glistening white shirt-front. Many others are sitting, packed together, in the trains homeward bound for the packed-together houses in Walthamstow, Wembley, Pinner or Putney. The Slaves of The Job. Pipe-between-teeth; umbrella-hooked-over-wrist; evening-newspaper-between-the-hands; atop, the black hat that shows that all Englishmen are ultimately equal, even if they haven't an Old School Tie.

By the way, don't mind if I keep on about the Old School Tie. I see that somebody said he could not understand how or why I could squirm when I see one, but the explanation is simple. I don't squirm for myself, because I have had a break and shaken off the shackles. I squirm for England and the things that this system of privilege and protection and preference has done to England. Why abolish purchase and pocket boroughs if you are going to reintroduce them in another form — the Old School Tie?

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If you don't believe me, about London and England, read what Kurt von Stutterheim of the *Berliner Tageblatt* says about it:

England's foundation . . . is in worse case than France's. In England the early change-over to pasture, together with centuries of emigration of farmers overseas, has led to a thinning-out of the native peasant element, which every sensible Englishman regards with deep anxiety. In the South, particularly, a peasant family in the Continental sense has become a rarity. Instead of working on the family farm, the peasant girl is serving cakes and lemonade in a near-by tea-room, while her brother is occupied on a sports ground or at a filling station.

That is photographically accurate, but to get the whole of the picture you must look at the London scene, as I have shown it.

Central London, largely a cosmopolitan settlement of parasites who live by selling goods and services that London could well dispense with — expensive but inferior food and drink, betting agencies, gambling machines, bottle parties, nude revues, lunatic advertising, and the whole process of selling nothing for something. Outer London, the wilderness where the Slaves of The Job live in houses that repeat themselves in endless monotony, like incurable hiccoughs. Beyond that, England, now given over to the cult of the thistle, the stately home, the ring-fenced park, the prosecution of trespassers, the tea-room, the filling station, the mushroom factory.

When I was last in London I went to a revue, one of the best and wittiest I have ever seen, at the Little Theatre, and there two players, a man and a woman, sang a song about England. The picture on the stage was a living reproduction of Ford Madox Brown's 'The Last of England'. They sat behind a circular opening in a dark drop-cloth, so that they looked like two figures in a miniature. Behind them you saw the rigging of a ship and the sea. They sat looking steadily and sadly before them, at England that they were leaving for ever, and only their lips moved as they sang. They sang well, and with feeling. They sang of English fields, of English friends, of the spring in English woods, of their

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youth in English lanes, of the smoke rising from English chimneys, of red English roofs, of their grief at leaving these things.

Ah, if only I, who have so often looked back at England, had a picture like that in my mind. Then this song could bring me back from the ends of the world, back from the grave itself. But am I, when I die of a bomb or a fever in some corner of a foreign land, to exclaim with my dwindling breath, 'Brondesbury, my Brondesbury', to summon before my glazing eyes a picture of Number 21 Streatley Road? If only England were like that song. If only London were like the Lambeth Walk. England could be like that, if you had men who cared for England, instead of men who only care for their own class. But drive along the coast road from Worthing to Eastbourne. Take a walk down the Lambeth High Street.

When I was last in London my friends reproached me for my views about England. 'You really go too far', they said. 'You take too gloomy a view. After all', they said, 'my country right or wrong, you know, don't you know.'

'Oh, yeah', said I, 'I know what you mean, I know that one. My country clean or dirty. My country slummy or unslummy.'

The English people are sound, I think. But what has been done to England in these last hundred years, and more especially in these last twenty years since the World War is mortal sin.

Yet the arguments of my friends gave me to think. Was it possible, I asked myself, that the jaundice was in my own eye, that Shoreditch and Shoreham and Bethnal Green and Bermondsey were in reality all bright and beautiful places filled with sturdily independent British workpeople? I determined to set out in search of 'This England' of the railway companies' and newspaper advertisements, ploughmen homeward plodding their weary way, sheep sleepily ambling through dappled sunlit lanes, cows lowing in the meadows, venerable piles, dignified debates in ancient halls, a race of men and women 'dauntlessly courageous and doggedly determined', as the good Simon said in putting across a rather bitter-tasting budget.

I drove about Sussex in a car, but these fair scenes eluded me. I saw, or thought I saw, a ravaged countryside, a land where

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every prospect displeases and only beans are bile. Bungalows. Thistles. Ye Olde this and that, with men standing outside them in uniforms apparently meant to recall that green and pleasant England which we all know from the coloured prints but which has now been spoiled and defaced, as I fear, beyond repair.

Villages where the children looked unhealthier than the town children, and believe it or not but I learned in these villages, with cows on all sides, that the children have to be reared on tinned milk because all the fresh milk is bought by the cities, and that is a thing that couldn't happen in any other country I know. Little arty shops.

As for the lads and lasses of this England, I found them where Kurt von Stutterheim found them — working at filling stations and sports grounds, in tea-rooms and picture theatres.

The appearance of my countrypeople often surprised and perplexed me. So many of them had a hungry, caged and care-worn air which I attributed to sex repression until I learned, from diligent perusal of the advertisement columns in the newspapers, that it was due to night starvation. Why, I wondered, did so many of them go about looking as if they feared that they were about to be accosted by someone to whom they hadn't been introduced? Why did they laugh in an embarrassed fashion when you told them a joke, unless it was a smutty one, and then you all roared together in corners. Why did they begin every sentence with a deprecatory cough and 'Er — well . . .'

Still in search of British Institutions, I visited the Mother of Parliaments and spoke, in a committee room, to two or three score Members, of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, of what was coming in Europe, of the things of which I understood a little. Left of me sat a General who was of progressive mind and broad and humane ideas. Over against me sat a Duchess, a woman of enlightenment and feeling. Right of me sat an Admiral, a die-hard of the truest deep-water blue. The others, predominantly Conservatives, were men of similar type. The great majority of them, as I judged from their questions and manner, were well-informed and intelligent people. But I felt despondent as I contemplated

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them. They seemed to be the prisoners of a party machine from which they could not or would not break away even when it dragged England, and therewith Europe, from one disaster to another. Elected by an enthusiastic country to enforce peace against peacebreakers, they were now docilely following the Government in the opposite direction, in the policy of taking steps — long ones — away from the peacebreakers every time they became truculent.

I went to Another Place, to the Museum at the Other End of the Passage, to the House of Lords. It was a great and historic occasion, perhaps the best possible occasion on which to study this British Institution.

A Bill had been introduced to transfer to public ownership the coal that lies beneath England's once fair countryside and to pay compensation to those great landlords beneath whose acres it is found. You all know, or possibly you don't, the part that the discovery and mining of coal has played in making England what it is, in disfiguring the face of England and undermining the stamina of the people in the last hundred years.

On the one hand, it made England prosperous as she was never prosperous before, and if you care to go and look at large areas of the coal country and the slum areas of London to-day you may murmur, 'If this bethe price of prosperity, Lord God we have paid in full', and you will be right. Read any trustworthy account you like of housing conditions and the standards of living in those blackened wildernesses called Special Areas, and you will never feel quite the same again towards the lump of coal you pick up in the tongs and put on your drawing-room fire.

Anyway, this Bill hit the coalowners, some of whom are said never to have seen a coal-mine, because they lease the coal rights to the colliery owners, right in their principles and pockets. London, on this May day when I went to the House of Lords, was in the morning full of peers anxiously asking the way to Westminster. London at all times, if you stay in that little London of the clubs, seems full of titled people, a city of dreadful knights, but on this day there were more than at any time since the coronation. Not

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that I have anything against titled people. They fulfil a useful part in our economic life. What would our advertisers of face cream do without them?

The House of Lords was hushed and dim. At first I only saw rows of white blobs, the faces of England's peers, whose sombre garments merged indistinguishably into the surrounding gloom. They were all there, row on row, Lord Coalmine, Lord Whisky, Lord Blueblood, and Lord Beer; Lord Tobacco, Lord Purebred, Lord Coalmine, Lord Newspaper and Lord Bookstall; Lord Pedigree, Lord Battleaxe, Lord Motorcar, Lord Readymade, Lord Wholesale, Lord Party, and Lord Coalmine; Lord Abraham, Lord Israel and Lord Isaac.

Bald heads in the gloaming; the stately domes of England. A solemn occasion. The Archbishop of Canterbury had in resonant tones pronounced the word Expropriation. Ah, that dread word. I remembered it in Germany, when Brüning wished to foreclose on great estates hopelessly insolvent and indebted to the public exchequer and, in fulfilment of Hindenburg's promise, settle ex-servicemen smallholders on them. Bolshevism, the squires had called it there, and they overthrew Brüning and brought Hitler to power.

You couldn't call it Bolshevism here, because a Conservative Government had brought in the Bill, but Expropriation was enough. A dreadful word.

As I watched, a faint murmur broke the hush and I saw that the lips of one of the blobs were moving. The Primate had painted a pathetic picture of the loss which the funds of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would suffer from this Bill, a thing which I hope my miner friend, Herbert Hoggins of Durham, sufficiently appreciates, and the debate was joined on this point. A noble lord gently intoned his regret that 'the poor clergy who are already not sufficiently well paid in this country are going to lose £120,000 by this Bill', and mentioned in passing that the royalty owners might lose £2,000,000 a year. Another noble lord, apparently an outsider who had gate-crashed, said he had never been a miner or a royalty owner but intervened 'to remind your Lordships of a

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side of this Bill which is in danger of being forgotten — the welfare of the miners themselves'. These cads, he said, were not unwilling that complete justice should be done to the royalty owner but they also wanted justice to be rendered to the coal hewer — you know, that little man down in the bowels of the earth who scratches and drags the lumps of coal out of the earth and has never been to the House of Lords.

Then another noble marquess rose and made a speech which, as a powerful and reasoned defence of the rights of property, was the most convincing thing I ever heard. It was unanswerable.

Nobody would deny, he said, that any man who owned land was entitled to quarry gravel or sand from it 'and there is no reason why coal should be treated differently from gravel or sand'. You dig a small hole in the ground, he said, and get something; you dig a little farther and get something else; you dig still farther and get something else again; 'how on earth can it be suggested that those commodities should be treated in a different way?'

How? On earth?

If the noble marquess had a fault it was, in my opinion, that he showed something of that reluctance boldly to claim the full measure of his rights which unfortunately marks so many Englishmen in our time. He did not go far enough. Australia belongs to him — if he only digs far enough. But why only that which lies below the earth, why not that which is above it? The moon, during its passage across the acres which belong to Lord Coalmine, is his.

His argument is irrefutable. The land and all that is on or under it belongs to you who own it. You try it, you who have a semi-detached house and an eighth of an acre in Brixton; dig down a mile and see what the local authorities say to you.

By the way, have you heard the one about the 'Access to Mountains Bill'? Do you know that there is an 'Access to Mountains Bill'? Men have been trying to make it law in one form or another for 50 years, and always it has been shelved by some manœuvre. In England you have to pass a law to have 'Access to Mountains'. Somewhere in England there are derelict areas, there is a Black

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Country. Not far away are hills, to which the workers, the miners, the unemployed, the destitutes would fain repair on Sundays to get a little air into their clogged lungs. They cannot get there, because everywhere are keep-out notices, trespassers-will-be-prosecuted boards.

So you have an 'Access to Mountains Bill', which does not get to the Statute Book, and the mountains remain inaccessible.

But back to the House of Lords. The noble marquess laboured under such emotional strain, as he upheld his rights, that he twice nearly raised his voice. Telling of an experience almost too horrible to relate, he said he himself was a member of the Assembly of the Church of England, at a meeting of which a proposal was 'actually' (hold on to your seats) made that the Church should refuse to receive any more rents from coal because it was immoral to do so, and that, he said warmly, was not just. 'Either you believe in the sanctity of private property or you do not.' There were, he added, 'disadvantages in the democratic principle and one of these was apparent now'.

So now you know just what is wrong with the democratic principle — not the slums, not under-nutrition, not unemployment, not bad health, but irreverence for the sanctity of private property. Now you know just why you ought to have a dictatorship.

But try to uphold the sanctity of private property if you are a small property-owner, not a big one, and you may have very unpleasant experiences, like that Devonshire poultry farmer who twice asked the local fox-hunters to keep off his land and threatened to shoot the hounds if they did not. His complaint was treated as 'silly, futile and unreasonable', and when the hunt came across his poultry farm again and he shot a hound he was prosecuted, fined £5, and ordered to pay £6 8s. 6d. costs. You may put up 'keep-out' boards against unemployed, but not against fox-hunters. You may forbid English workers to have access to mountains, but you may not forbid English fox-hunters to have access to poultry farms.

'Then another noble lord, who had inherited his coal from a long line of ancestors, defended 'private enterprise' in coal-mining.

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One of the best of all forms of private enterprise, in England, is to inherit a coal-mine.

Somebody may say that in these quotations I have been 'tearing passages from their context'. The answer is, yes I have, and so what?

These men were all so rich, and their languid wrangling about whether they should debatably receive a little less or not seemed so stratospherically distant from the plane on which the millions live and work and have their being that I grew bored with it.

But I was irritated by their windy and paralytic English, that exasperatingly futile English of the after-dinner speaker, the bazaar-opener, the letter-writer-to-*The Times*.

'My Lords, I do not think that anybody who has listened to the debate on this Bill can fail to be impressed. . . .' How, for the sake of grammar, does a human being fail to be impressed?

'My Lords, I ask your Lordships' indulgence for a few moments' (three-quarters of an hour) 'in order to make certain observations . . . I am not certain that the speech which we have just heard from the noble Marquess has not really disposed of any reasons for passing this Bill at all and has not in fact shown that the same results which the Government may have in their minds would have been quite well achieved in another way.'

How many negatives, and how little affirmation!

'My Lords, in venturing to follow the two very powerful speeches to which we have just listened I feel I ought to apologize to the House for taking part in the debate . . .'

'My Lords, this is the first time I have ever spoken in your Lordships' House and I crave that indulgence which is always so readily granted by your Lordships to those who are inexperienced in the art of debate' (nice young fellow, that).

'My Lords, as one of the oldest members of your Lordships' House I hope I may with great respect be allowed to congratulate my noble friend the Duke of Cumberland on his very effective maiden speech.'

'My Lords, before addressing your Lordships for a few minutes' (half an hour) 'on this Bill I should like to join my tribute of con-

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gratulation to those that have been made to the noble Duke who made his maiden speech to-night. I think it must be a matter of congratulation to your Lordships as well as to himself that in his case the principle of heredity is so finely maintained by nature and that there have descended to him the great qualities that from generation to generation have always distinguished his family.'

My aunt! My maiden aunt! My maiden speech! In 1938, with Mussolini in Abyssinia and Spain, Hitler in Austria and almost in Czechoslovakia! Can't you hear the simpering Regency dowagers in the Pump Room at Bath? Why, in the name of prose and prolix, all this begging and craving and venturing and apologizing and indulging and respecting? Why not say something? What is this blight that has come upon us? Why must we call derelict areas Special Areas, war a Possible Emergency, lavatories Cloakrooms? What are you afraid of?

Eventually the debate was adjourned. Before it was resumed 79 miners had been killed in an accident at Markham Colliery.

Continuing my study of British Institutions I went to the Tower of London. Teas. Beefeaters. The Crown Jewels. Sightseers goggling and giggling at a brass-plate where somebody had been beheaded; how long a time has to elapse before an execution becomes funny? In one of the towers some armour and uniforms. I could not capture here the feeling of community with the past, of history in stone, that I have had in ancient buildings in other countries.

I left the Tower of London, and walked across Tower Bridge, and a hundred yards down the road and turned to the left, and there I found a British Institution, at last. Bermondsey. Go and see it. Little narrow streets, little narrow alleys, little narrow courts. Dark and tiny rooms. Lavatories? Bathrooms? Find them if you can. Basement windows about a foot above pavement level, just enough to admit a very little light, and in the dungeons behind these windows men and women and children live, three and four and five in a room. On the outer walls decaying paper crowns, faded fragments of Union Jacks. The Coronation, for once in a generation, brought a little colour and merrymaking to

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Bermondsey, which had no representative, unless it was a member of parliament, in that berobed and becoroneted and bediademed throng. Round the corner you will find a tablet on the wall of the ~~the church, with many names on it, English names and more.~~ They died — for Bermondsey. If you search for it you may find a Slum Clearance Scheme. In the course of the next five years they may contrive to pull down and rebuild a dozen of these streets; there are hundreds of them in Bermondsey.

I have seen their like in Bethnal Green and Shoreditch and Whitechapel and in a dozen other places. Go there some time. Instead of getting off the bus at Piccadilly or the Bank, go on to the end of the run. Take a look at London.

Consider Bethnal Green. I walked through the streets of Bethnal Green with my good friend. We compared impressions. She had never been there before. She knew the poorer districts of other great cities, Moabit and Ottakring and Ferencz Varos and Belleville, and she had, some years earlier, seen the West End of London, and now lamented the changes she found there: the tawdry and trashy little shops that are springing up there, the disappearance of the last remnants of the solid English characteristics that still lingered until a few years ago, the international gang of tricksters, smart guys, professional emigrants, cheap jacks, procurers, share pushers, pimps, confidence men, quack doctors, flashy dentists, cheats big and little, that now prowl round the happy hunting ground between Piccadilly and Oxford Street.

But she had never seen Bethnal Green, and we explored it together. It lies in the heart of the greatest and richest city in the world. It is monstrous.

In that same street we found one butcher's shop, one fishmonger's, one grocer's, one baker's, one greengrocer's next to another, and all packed from floor to ceiling with food. We had never seen so much food, and it was all relatively cheap and of excellent quality — good red meat, good bacon, butter and eggs, good fish, good fruit and vegetables. You cannot see so much food, such good food, such cheap food in the working-class districts of any big city that I know.

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Somebody must buy this food. The sale of food must be immense, or the shops could not afford to carry such stocks, all fresh. Therefore, we argued, the people of Bethnal Green have enough to eat. They must have money for food, whatever else they lack. There were even dozens of catsmeat and dogsmeat stalls, a thing you will see nowhere else, and the inhabitants of Bethnal Green must have food for themselves if a man can make a living by selling the meat they need for their household animals.

So the people were well fed. I had previously had the impression that, by and large, a man who meant to could earn enough money in England to buy enough food for himself and his dependants, and what I saw seemed to confirm this. Then why did the people look so haggard, so harassed, so drawn, so careworn, the children so unkempt and often so unhealthy?

We discussed this, my good friend and I, as we wandered through the side streets that lead off Bethnal Green Road, or for that matter any other High Street in any mean London quarter. We looked at these streets and thought we had found the answer.

The houses and the living conditions. These people have food, but they have nothing else. These miles and miles of dingy boxes that the jerrybuilder, in his blindness, has made of wood and stone. The fetid and smoke-laden air. These people are the prisoners of an era of indiscriminate building, on a low level of intelligence and forethought the like of which no other great city that I have seen can show. Beauty in their homes, beauty in their surroundings, is beyond their dreams, and what is the use of wages that will only buy food?

Even fresh air is beyond them. The city, sprawling ever farther and farther afield, cuts them off from the countryside save on rare bank holiday sorties by charabanc, and even when they get there it is all littered with random building and filling stations and golf clubs and keep-out-of-here notices and don't-go-there notices and big private parks, and at the end they fall out of the charabanc into a pub, from lack of any other place to go, and afterwards they fall out of the pub into the charabanc and go home, having had a jolly day in the country.

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If you study the advertisement columns of *The Times*, from which you can learn a great deal, you will from time to time see a notice that reads something like this:

Bill and Lizzie calling. 5s. will send us to the seaside for a day.

I know of a charwoman in Germany who in the summer of 1938 made her second trip to Norway, not as the guest of Lady Bountiful, but in her own good right, under the auspices of the National Socialist leisure-time organization for workers, Kraft durch Freude.

You still could do something about Bethnal Green, and you could even do it under democratic government, if you could only oust the old men and the old idea that Power and Office are things to be kept circulating among a small group of people, all interconnected through marriage and Old School and University associations.

Not the merits of the man, his experience, his qualifications, his energy, his enterprise count, only that you knew him in this House at Eton or that College at Oxford and his niece, Flanella Prune, married your nephew, young Ian Hopscotch, and he has an embattled stronghold in the hierarchy of the Party which gives him an unanswerable claim to office. So you take this man, who may have started life as a lawyer or whatnot, and one day you make him Foreign Minister, and the next Minister for Air, and the next First Lord of the Admiralty, and after that Minister for Public Health, and apparently no specialized knowledge is needed for these posts, they just pass round, and that is why you have Bethnal Green, which, like Czechoslovakia, is one of those places you know nothing about.

Office for the sake of office, not for the good of the people.

Look at these Lordly Ones, as Peter Howard once wrote, in 1938. Of twenty-two Cabinet Ministers more than half were either lords, sons of lords, or married to lords' daughters. Two-thirds of the Junior Ministers were Lordly Ones. One in ten of them might have become members of the Administration if they were commoners. Be in the peerage or marry into it is the golden rule. England seems to have been made safe for plutocracy.

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Look at England. Is England a good advertisement for this system of the ruling class? The few men that break through to the top only do so by submitting to the golden chains of this class. What does Ramsay MacDonald look like to-day in retrospect? An elderly and bemused ex-Socialist standing between a white shirt and a diadem on the steps of Londonderry House. The same fate befell all those who went his way. But in doing so they destroyed the Labour Party, which might have reinvigorated England. There is no salvation from that party to-day, if I am any judge.

From Bethnal Green to Belgravia seems a long way, but actually a relationship exists between them — that of cause and effect. If you had some great specialist in municipal administration, in housing and health, as Minister for these things, Bethnal Green could never have happened. Bethnal Green has come about because in England family, class and party, rank and influence are the qualifications for office, not specialized knowledge or experience or energy, and the ultimate aim of this system is to keep the sweets of office rotating among a small inter-linked class. You may have, somewhere in England, a civic genius, a man who could build you cities to compare with those of Greece and Rome, who could give your workpeople sunshine and light and air and health and beauty. What means has he of reaching a post where he can do these things? If he has not an Old School Tie it is still remotely possible that he may induce some local Conservative Association, if they think him docile enough, to put him up as candidate at an election. Arrived in Parliament, he disappears among the crowd of back benchers, threatened with boycott if they vote against the Government on any issue.

So you have Bethnal Green, on which I rancorously turned my back that May day, when I had seen enough. I came back through the city and the newspaper placards told me, in great flaring letters, 'Czechs Mobilizing'. I forgot Bethnal Green and thought of Prague and Eger, of German armies thundering into and over Vienna. Now British bombers, heavy, cumbersome craft, laboured over the City. Men standing at a corner looked up at them. One said, 'What price war to-morrow?' and the others

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laughed. Typists were putting their heads out of windows and looking anxiously skyward. It was Friday, May 20th. I was due in a few days to go back to Central Europe. 'Will it come before I get back?' I asked myself. For the first time I felt in London, even in London, that leaden feeling of apprehension that had held me in the last months before the annexation of Austria, that had borne upon me with redoubled weight when I saw that lightning mechanized invasion.

The next day, as the first of my farewells to England, I went to see the Naval and Military Tournament at Olympia. I wanted to see how much that show had changed in twenty years, what sort of an impression England's armed forces made now that Germany, rearmed, was the mightiest military nation the world had ever seen.

It had not changed much. There was the unidentifiable Somebody in the Royal Box, taking the salute after each item. There were the sailors and stokers from Portsmouth and Chatham hurling themselves and their field-guns over bottomless chasms and back again. There was the officer of the day announcing each item through the microphone, and there, I swear, was the same joke about the Dear Old Lady who, being shown the gun used in this hair-raising performance, said, 'I knew there was a catch in it; it's hollow'. Ah, those Dear Old Ladies, those Elderly Parties, those Frenchmen who mispronounce their English and on their return from a shooting party announce, 'I have two braces to my bags', or something screamingly funny of the same kind, those plumbers' mates, those ill-bred self-made men! What a gallery of comic figures. Thank God for our sense of humour.

Then came the Scots Greys, cantering tinnily round to the music of American jazz, the Royal Inniskilling Dragoons waltzing and curvetting and prancing to 'The Lambeth Walk'. Have the English no sense of the congruous?, I asked myself. If they respect tradition so much, in uniform, why not in the musical accompaniment?

But for that matter, why those uniforms of fifty or more years ago? Why do soldiers cling so grimly to the past, but only to the

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recent past? Even the Germans, who cherish their military traditions just as much as you do, and perhaps more, have made no attempt to restore pre-war uniforms. They have fully accepted the implications of progress, of mechanization. Their soldiers look just as well in the modern uniforms. Why send the Scots Greys out looking like Lady Butler? If you love the past and its uniforms so much, then do the thing properly. Send them out in powdered wigs and three-cornered hats. Or in armour and battle axes. Or dress them in skins, paint them with woad, and give them clubs. But why these Crimean or Afghan or South African uniforms, or whatever they are?

Tin soldiers, trotting round the tan arena. Even the public that day felt the lack of reality; only two months before, roaring petrol-driven hordes had crashed into Vienna, outside the placards were telling how the Czechoslovaks were manning their frontier defences. Languid applause followed the red coats as they jingled out of the arena.

Then the big doors were flung open wide and with a zipp and a roar the motor-cyclists raced in. Goggles. Crash helmets. Screaming exhausts. Flying dust. The audience sat up as if it had had a dose of strychnine. Here was the spirit of our contemporary times, the man on the machine. This was real, this they understood. Speed, noise, the smell of petrol, dust-clouds. This was 1938. The electric feeling which quickened pulses impart to the air, filled the great hall. A volley of cheering followed the riders as they sped out and the doors closed behind them.

A faint noise as of seagulls, swelling as the big doors opened again to a music that grew and grew until it filled every nook and cranny of the hall and the massed bands of the Scottish regiments marched in. Here were uniforms that had history woven into their tartans, music that told of battle and siege and victory and death and Scottish hills and valleys, men who looked straight bred and marched with a step and a swing that held and fascinated the eye.

How have the Scots contrived to keep their costume and their music and their traditions and their feeling of nationhood intact, while the English have lost all these things?

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I can find no answer to the question, but as I came away I regretted that it should be so. Why does our England give her children none of these things? I did not know. But I set to packing my bags, and on a sunny morning started out once more for the places I knew and understood — the lands along the Danube, where the Czechoslovaks, and behind them the Hungarians, the Rumanians, the Yugoslavs all stood with their faces turned anxiously or expectantly towards Germany, implacable, resolute, mighty, urgent.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

I PACKED my grips, and tipped the Irish maid, and what ages of challenge lay in those dark eyes of hers, and left the bed-sitting-and-breakfast-room, opposite the pretentious multi-storied Jew-and-emigrant-hive, that I had rented during my stay in London.

I went down the narrow stairs. I loaded myself and my bags into a taxi and in the early morning hours found myself for the umpteenth time, ah, how many times since back-to-the-front in the war, bowling through Hyde Park Europewards — and don't write and tell me that England is in Europe, because it isn't.

Somewhere in Westminster my bags were weighed, my tickets checked. A woman was there, crying, while her married sister, married in England, tried to cheer her. The tears of women, the theme song of our time. She was a Jewess and was going back to Prague and she didn't want to, and she envied her sister who was comfortably married in England, farther away from the bombs.

Then, in the airport bus, we drove and drove, for hours as it seemed. London was a dead city of shuttered and blinded shops, as if people with closed eyes lined the route; once again, by some chance, I was leaving England on a bank holiday. For those of you who don't know England I'll explain that in England they call public holidays bank holidays, and there's a moral somewhere in that, if you can find it.

On we went and on and on, and just as I saw a green field and rubbed my eyes the bus turned off to the right and I wandered through a draughty hall with a bookstall that said to me, 'Good morning, have you read *Insanity Fair*?' and then the engines were roaring in my ears and the smell of petrol was in my nostrils and I felt myself again a cub lieutenant in the Air Force in France and the next moment England lay beneath me.

England. I urged you to take a look at London with open eyes,

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to see what manner of men are having their hair oiled and their hands manicured in the marble basements of Piccadilly, what sort of people are expensively cultivating their dyspepsia in the foreign restaurants between Soho and the Green Park, what kind of citizens live around Tottenham Court Road, Oxford Street, Shaftesbury Avenue and Leicester Square, what breed of human beings conduct your picture theatres, your nude revues, your bottle parties, your slot-machine orgies, your brothels, your poached-egg-on-chips palaces.

Now take a look at England from the air. Contemplate the leprous and scabrous landscape where once all was greensward and pleasance, if you can believe your poets, your painters and your prints.

London sprawled endlessly behind me, featureless, meaningless, random and unplanned. Even from the air you could not see the end of it. Beyond that turgid mass lay blobs, the 'estates' and 'parks' of the merchant adventurer of 1938, the jerrybuilder, as if the great splash that was London had cast a few drops farther afield. Everywhere were the scars of the builder, newly made or not yet healed. As we drew clear of the last outcrops I saw great footprints all over the countryside: a giant had been walking about England while England was wet. These were the bunkers of the golf courses.

Here and there were the rare signs of health, the good green and brown of growing crops and ploughed fields, but everywhere they were threatened by the nondescript grey of uncultivated land, of waste acres, of no-trespass areas, of unkempt woodland.

Trains seemed to be running along the roads; but as I peered closer I saw that they were motor-cars in endless procession, moving slowly towards the delights of Margate and Ramsgate, and as the great wing of the aeroplane slowly cleared the coast and a strip of blue appeared behind it, I saw thousands upon thousands of ants, all jumbled up together, crawling about those sands. London was making merry, London was having its day at the seaside.

I turned and looked out to starboard and saw with a feeling of

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wonderment that the wing of the aeroplane had hardly cleared Dover before the French coast appeared beneath it. The strip of water between the two was so narrow that there seemed barely room for the little steamer that was just passing between them. For the ants down there on the sands France and the French were things almost as far away and as foreign as the moon. From up here you felt that you could lean down and join them with a piece of stamp-paper.

Then I turned again and looked out to port and had another shock. The French and English coasts fell away so steeply that from this side I could see neither of them. Strange atmospheric conditions prevailed. A cloudless blue sky and a motionless blue sea were mated by a blue haze that raped the horizon. You could not see where sea left off and sky began, what was sky and what sea. They were all one. There was nothing, above, below, around, but a blue something. Nothing to measure height by. Nothing to measure movement by. Nothing but blue, and the roar of the engines to say that we were living beings still belonging to a world that had vanished. Nothing but that blue and a golden sparkle in it that you could not locate, but which told you that the sun, somewhere, was finding something in that blue emptiness and gilding it.

A man could go mad if he set himself to think about that endless emptiness, inexplicably coloured blue. Think of it as a coloured glass bowl, as most of you do, and you are all right; 'the blue vault of heaven' is a warm and comforting conception. Take away the glass bowl, try to apply your human understanding to the infinite, and you need to hold your scalp on. And why blue, anyway? Not what is to come after worries me, as it seems to worry so many people, but what was before. In the beginning was . . . well, all right, if that satisfies you. But before the beginning, you had to have space, and who put space there?

As I hung there, an infinitesimal fly on an endless blue wall, I thought of these things until it hurt. On my left — this. On my right — Margate. Hurriedly I took a last look at that stupendous, beloved, terrifying blue and sought refuge in my morning paper.

## BIRD'S - EYE VIEW

When I looked again the sun, groping through the haze, had picked up a faint white filament that was the sands of the Dutch coast, and I was glad.

Rotterdam. Ships in the trim and busy harbour. A fine green field. Bright and cheery citizens, come out to watch the air-liners come and go. A cup of coffee. The roar of engines again.

The wing of the machine slid slowly across the frontier and I was looking at Germany once more. Germany, that is always with us, the men of my generation, and seemingly will stay with us from the cradle to the grave. In my childhood all the talk had been of warlike Germany and her plans to destroy England. I had spent my younger manhood fighting against Germany for four years and had had a German bullet in my leg. In my later manhood I had spent seven years in Germany, and after that I had spent three years in the other Germany, Austria, and seen German armies come roaring in again. Now I was going to Czechoslovakia and soon, I knew, I should see the German armies there. After that, I also knew, I should see them in other places. As long as I lived they would give the world no rest, unless the world chose to capitulate before them. I wondered whether, given the choice, I would choose another time to live in. I answered, No — I can't say why.

Slowly and smoothly an invisible hand drew a flat and lifeless map beneath me, a harmless, amusing thing of browns and greens and yellows, with towns and roads and railways hatched upon it, and after two and a half hours it was gone. Could this, I asked myself, be the country before which all the world quailed, this coloured inanimate sheet with its toylike towns and no sign of life save tiny puffs of smoke from stations and factories? This big field across which you could fly in an hour or two? Could this page out of an atlas be the thing that continually formed and reformed all my life, that repeatedly changed all my plans, that from my nineteenth to my forty-third year had always intervened when I thought to map out the route of my future, and seemed likely for the rest of my days to intrude between myself and the places where I wanted to live, the things I wanted to do?

From the height at which we flew — at which we had to fly, for

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Hitler was at work night and day on his concrete retort to the Maginot Line, and foreign air-liners had been warned to keep above 10,000 feet — all that ant-like activity had become invisible to the human eye. But I knew that down there, while France was busy with her eternal cabinet crises and England was languidly discussing whether she ought to make some kind of preparations for defence against air raids, down there Hitler could with a stroke of the pen take a million men overnight from their daily occupations and set them to work building fortifications, that those tiny puffs of smoke, in all that placid map the only signs of human activity that reached up to where I was, meant that a greater air fleet, mightier legions of tanks and artillery than the world has ever seen were being built.

The contrast with the face of England was immense. Here the ploughman, the sower of seed and the woodsman had etched the land in oblongs and squares and triangles of green and brown and gold. On every inch of it something grew to feed man or serve him, save where the towns lay, and they were orderly settlements, built to plan. Their suburban outgrowths picked their way cleanly and carefully into the surrounding countryside. No scars, no scabs, no blots and blobs. Everything tidied up and left trim and shipshape.

At last the aeroplane crossed the Czechoslovak frontier and I reflected, as I had often reflected before, that the German air fleets of 1938 needed about a quarter of an hour to reach Prague. While I was still thinking about this, Prague appeared beneath us, and a few minutes later I was bowling into the city in the airport bus, glad to be back and full of curiosity to learn how Benesh and his people, whom I had last seen in January, were bearing the strain now that Austria was gone and the battering ram of Germany's urge to expand had slewed round from Vienna and was pointing menacingly at Prague.

## CHAPTER 4

### A COLOURED HANDKERCHIEF

I WAS astonished at what I saw in Prague. The people of this small, isolated and beleaguered country, surrounded by enemies, unable to count on any of their friends, living under the hourly threat of a danger before which even the imagination quailed, were unafraid, calm, in good spirits. They held their heads high. A few days before, on the night of May 20th-21st, Benesh and the Government, fearing a lightning German swoop on the Austrian model, had mobilized the army and manned the defences. Now, at least, Czechoslovakia could not be taken by surprise. If the Germans attacked they would find men waiting to resist them. Czechoslovakia, if she perished, would perish fighting.

I was astounded by the spirit and tranquil resolution of the Czechoslovaks in those early summer days. I admired them, but I feared for them. They thought that, outnumbered ten or twelve to one, they could resist for days or even weeks. After what I had seen in Austria I did not believe it. They thought France, England and Russia would come to their aid if they could hold out a little while. After what I had seen of British policy in the five years since Hitler came to power I did not believe it.

I thought they would be deserted at the last moment, and had said so in *Insanity Fair* and in articles I wrote many months before. Here was a little country faced by the imminent threat of brute force, and British policy all over the world in recent years, in China, in Abyssinia, in Spain, in Austria, had been to retreat before the aggressors, even to help them to their successes. I did not believe that this policy would be changed in the case of Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, I thought that it would be pursued even to the capitulation of England herself, and I think you will see this.

So, once more, I walked about a great city feeling like the one-

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eyed man in the country of the blind and with compassion in my heart for these people who so stoutly turned their faces to the future. If they had been despondent and overawed I should have found it easier to bear. But, in spite of all that had happened in the world, they still had their faith, they still believed in the victory of that cause for which the World War was said to have been fought — the right of small nations to live their own lives. The thought of the shock that this faith was going to receive overclouded those glorious June days, for me.

Just before I left London, in May, I had given a cocktail party and among the people who came to it was the managing director of a Prague newspaper. He asked me if I thought there would be war, and I said no, Czechoslovakia would disintegrate without war because she would be faced with the threat of overwhelming force and would be deserted by those who alone could help her to resist it. He thought this a wild opinion and said that, even if deserted, the Czechoslovak army would never retire without fighting; he had not seen, as I had, the growth of the new German army, and its first employment, in Austria. When he returned to Prague he looked up all the reference books and told me triumphantly, when I saw him there in June, that frontiers had never in history been substantially altered without war. When I saw him in October he said to me, 'You are a prophet.'

Who wants to be a prophet?

I was glad to have had those summer days in Prague. I felt that I should not often see that Prague again. The more I see of it the more I come to think that Prague is one of the loveliest of all the cities I know. It has not the incomparable surroundings of Vienna, it has not the peerless river front of Budapest. But the Hradschin, with St. Vitus's Cathedral, dominating the city; the Moldau curving by beneath its ancient Charles Bridge; the lovely old winding streets and houses, still unspoiled; the narrow alley where the alchemists sought the secret of making gold; the ironworkers and woodworkers and leatherworkers and glassworkers, almost the last craftsmen in Europe; all these combine to make a city of inexhaustible beauty. I never take a walk in Prague with-

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out the pleasant feeling that I have a minor adventure before me.

The city was packed with young men and girls in the loveliest peasant costumes that Europe can show or in the dress of the Sokols. Long ago, about the middle of last century, when Czechoslovak independence seemed but a vain and distant dream, these Sokol gymnastic societies were founded to keep alive the idea of nationhood under the rule of the Austrian Emperors. When the World War came the young men who had trained and hardened their bodies in the ranks of the Sokols formed those fine Czechoslovak Legions which fought with the French, the Russian, the Italian armies against the Central Powers. After the war they came back and built the army of the Czechoslovak Republic, that army which now, in June 1938, was standing on guard at the frontiers.

The Sokol rallies, displays of gymnastics and physical exercises on a stupendous scale, were great events in liberated Czechoslovakia and united Yugoslavia after the war. They were held every six years and chance had ordained that the greatest of all was held in this fateful summer of 1938, in the big stadium outside Prague named after the President-Liberator, that Thomas Garrigue Masaryk behind whose coffin I had walked only a few months earlier.

It was an unforgettable pageant of Slav costume, colour, music and physical fitness, that mass rally in the Masaryk Stadium, with mortal danger overhanging the city. The young men and girls you saw in Prague in their red and grey uniforms, with the falcon's feather in their caps, were the living proofs of the progress that the free Czechoslovak Republic had made in nineteen years.

Its twentieth birthday, on October 28th, was at hand, and these people confidently looked forward to it. Prague might be in ruins, they knew, and they calmly accepted that thought. The one thing they did not foresee was that Prague might be a vassal city, reduced without a fight.

As I strolled down the Wenceslas Platz I saw an old lady in peasant costume with odds and ends of embroidery in her basket, lovely things among them. I had sometimes bought from her on

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earlier visits. Now I saw that she had in her basket printed coloured handkerchiefs, produced to commemorate the coming twentieth anniversary of Czechoslovakia's independence. There was a map of Czechoslovakia printed in bright colours on the silk; around the map pictures of Czechoslovak infantrymen and aircraft and cannon and tanks; beneath it Masaryk's motto, 'Truth prevails'; in the top left-hand corner '1918' and in the bottom right-hand corner '1938'.

This was June. Not quite five months until October 28th. If things were going the way I expected, Czechoslovakia would never celebrate that birthday, and this handkerchief would make a useful addition to the little collection of memory-laden things I have picked up on my travels and surround myself with whenever I have the luck to be able to make myself a home somewhere for a month or two.

I bought it. The old lady remembered me and smiled a greeting. I told her I should be frequently in Prague during the summer. But then I think she fell ill for a time and I did not see her any more. When I did encounter her again in the Wenceslas Platz my handkerchief had become a historical curiosity, and, although it was not yet October 28th, she had no more of them in her basket. She no longer smiled. She looked older and careworn.

## CHAPTER 5

### DAVID UNDAUNTED

I SAT with Count X in his mansion not far from Prague. A lovely old baroque house built around a courtyard. In front of it the village, which belonged to Count X. Behind it the park, which belonged to Count X. Beyond, as far as the eye could see, smiling in the June sunshine, fields which belonged to Count X.

Count X was tall, of good physique, easy-mannered. He sat among his pictures and treasures and acres and complained incessantly. He had all the wealth and land that a reasonable man could want, I thought, as I sipped the vermouth which an obsequious serving man brought at his master's call. But far away, beyond the reach of the naked eye from the great baroque mansion, were other fields that had been taken from him, against compensation, when the Czechoslovak Republic was formed, and given to the landless peasants, those serfs who had lived for centuries without rights or land or liberties under the rule of German or Hungarian noblemen until the War Called Great freed them.

Hewers of wood and drawers of water for the German and Magyar magnates they had been until then. They were not even the bondmen of tyrants of their own blood. The Czech nobles had been exterminated by the German armies at the Battle of the White Mountain, near Prague, three centuries before, when three-quarters of the Czechs were killed or driven from Bohemia, when Catholic nobles came in from Austria, and confiscated the lands of the dead Czech aristocrats.

Count X had never forgotten or forgiven the loss of his distant fields, never been able to look without loathing across to those distant acres where a few Czech peasants were now wringing a scanty living, as freemen, from their native soil. Until Austria collapsed he, like nearly all the other landed nobles in Czechoslovakia, had longed for the return of the Emperor to Vienna,

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hoped for Czechoslovakia's return to the fold of the Habsburg Empire. Now that Austria was no more, and the Reich had declared young Otto, vegetating in Steenockerzeel, to be an outcast and criminal, he had given up that hope and was for Hitler.

Bear in mind that the rich men in all countries are helpers of Hitler, and you will understand a good deal of what has happened in Europe. You never found rich and titled Englishmen, in any number, ostentatiously visiting Prague in the twenty years of that free Republic.

You did not find them rallying to the cause of Czechoslovakia when that little land of freemen was confronted with the threat of extermination. You will find their names at the foot of many documents signed, during these twenty years, to demand 'justice for Hungary' — where millions of peasants, to-day, are landless serfs. You could have seen them, in large numbers, at Hitler's dinner table, at the Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg. You will see their names beneath letters in the newspapers appealing for 'a fair deal' for Germany, for 'magnanimity for Germany', for 'a better understanding with Germany'.

Bear in mind that the rich landed noblemen of East Prussia brought Hitler to power. Some people say they regret it now that they are being progressively squeezed out of their estates, deprived of their power, shorn of their lands. I am sceptical. The rich men in other countries would not so surely plump for Hitler if it were so.

Count X languidly but incessantly complained, as he sat among his collections and books and looked out through the windows to his smiling acres, and the servile and slippered steward brought us vermouth. He had a new grievance. The Czechoslovak army was mobilized. The defences were manned, from the inner ring round Prague to the first line at the frontier. The air squadrons, to throw enemy bombers off the scent, had left their home landing-grounds and were standing on open fields, ready at a moment's notice to take to the air.

One squadron of bombers and fighters was lying behind the tall trees that fringed his park. Some of the officers and men were

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billeted in a remote wing of his mansion. In the old clock tower on the roof two soldiers sat day and night and kept watch on the northern sky. This annoyed him.

Muttering complaints, he led me through a long corridor to that distant wing where he had had to give up a few unused rooms. He had had chests and cupboards built, barricade-like, across it to shut out the unwelcome sight of his visitors. We squeezed through, and visited the Czechoslovak soldiers. They saw Count X coming, jumped to their feet, saluted him, gave smiling answers to his genial questions. How genial he was, suddenly. One good Czechoslovak to another.

We went out through the park, saw through the foliage of the tall trees the aeroplanes hiding, bombs and machine-guns ready. Officers and soldiers, stripped to the waist, lay in the grass under the warm sun, lazily waiting. Their commander jumped up, clicked his heels in greeting, cordially but respectfully welcomed the German lord of this Czech manor. Big, blond, well-built, simple, honest fellows, ready, ardently ready, to go and fight Goliath. Count X was all smiles and geniality.

We went on. Count X grumbled. Behind some bushes the soldiers had built a field lavatory. In their visits to it they had trodden flat a narrow path through the rank grass, uncut these hundreds of years. Count X complained. A peacock screamed, stalked across the path in front of us. The sun blazed through the leaves and gnats danced in the dusty beams.

I left Count X to his complaints and drove over to his neighbour Count Y. On the way I talked with my chauffeur. A quiet fellow who weighed every word, who kept himself decent and worked hard for a frugal living. He was diligently learning English, the better to ply his trade. He had no complaints. He was filled with a quiet exaltation. He was partly German, but he was a loyal Czechoslovak to the core. He was a working man and knew what the free Republic meant. Count X had looked down on him with suspicion from one of the windows and said gloomily, 'I suppose your chauffeur will report in Prague that you have been to see me.'

As he drove me across that lovely countryside — the loveliest

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lands for me are those where good crops are growing, growing, and men and women work in the fields from dawn to dusk — Jan Czech, my chauffeur, spoke with quiet fervour of the mobilization. The world had not thought the Czechs had it in them, he said, but the Czechs had known. Late on that Friday night the postmen had gone racing round with the mobilization notices, he said, and by dawn on Saturday the frontier defences were manned, the men had gone with joy in their hearts to defend their country. He had not yet been called on, he said, but when the word came he and every man he knew would go by the quickest way they could find to fight for this State. Germany could not take them by surprise now, swallow them at one gulp as she had swallowed Austria. His mother was a German, and he had relatives up there in the German frontier districts. But he was a Czechoslovak and, he said quietly, his life was of no value. Czechoslovakia must live.

As we drove to Count Y, I saw the signs of that lightning mobilization, that astonished military experts the world over. Compare it with the utter confusion that reigned in England in that September week when war seemed at hand. Here I saw, hiding behind a farmhouse wall, the great tin ear-trumpets of the listening machines, behind another the glistening eyes of the searchlights, alongside a hedge the muzzles of the anti-aircraft guns, in fields the bombers and fighters waiting ready to spring, on bridges the newly dug holes with the dynamite fuses and soldiers lounging by them, ready to touch them off. All got ready in a night.

Count Y was sitting on his terrace and I had a late breakfast with him, drank coffee, ate toast and marmalade and listened to his tale. He, too, had lost some distant acres; he, too, had awakened that Saturday morning to find the aeroplanes squatting on his fields. But no soldiers had been billeted on him, so that he was feeling better than Count X. Count Y also had the misfortune to have a little Jewish blood in him, so that the course of his political allegiance lay less clearly before him than before Count X. But he shared with his neighbour the lack of feeling for the Czechoslovak state, a feeling that seemed to diminish as your property and wealth grew, unless you happened to be a Czech, and this was

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rare, because the relatively few very rich people in the Czechoslovak state were nearly all Germans or Hungarians or Jews.

I left him, and drove on to the German-populated districts and the frontier. The flat Czech plain, where the peasants worked so hard for a frugal return, where the Czechoslovak state had done such wonders in building roads and schools and hospitals in these twenty years, gave way to the lovely mountains where the Germans live. You only had to travel this road to see why the Czechoslovaks could not give up the Sudeten lands and remain independent. It was like a walled city; give up the walls, and how could you defend what lay within?

In Reichenberg, where once, only three years before, I had seen Nadya dancing and found a quiet town full of contented people, were all the signs of things to come that I knew from the last days of Austria. Hitlerist uniforms and badges were forbidden, but the young Nazis knew the way to get round these bans. The young men wore white stockings and shorts, the girls Dirndl dresses, and all saluted each other with the upraised arm and 'Heil', leaving out the Hitler for the time being. The word had been passed round that 'He' was coming soon.

I sat on the balcony of the hotel in the market square and drank coffee with Jan Czech, who insisted on paying for his own. The waiter, the guests, looked askance at us. Here everybody knew everybody, there was a grape-vine system of unspoken intercommunication between the Germans that you could feel like a living thing. They knew that we did not belong, they had seen the Prague number plate on our car.

On the car, too, was a token from the Sokol Congress in Prague, and the Nazis hated the Sokols. Outwardly orderly, they were already working on the nerves of the Czech minority, in the manner they have perfected by practice in Germany and Austria, with dark hints of what was to come, of concentration camps and beatings and vengeance generally.

Jan Czech took no notice at all of these things. Unruffled, he looked down from the balcony, and seemed not to see the hostile and menacing glances, the muttered words exchanged. Only once

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did they succeed in stinging him. We were looking for the British Consulate and, stopping the car, he asked a woman politely and in perfect German if she could tell him the way. 'British Consulate?' she answered challengingly. 'No, but I can tell you where the German Consulate is if you like.'

Jan Czech slipped in the clutch and drove on, a little red in the face. 'Ach, ja, Deutsch,' he muttered, and then his lips closed again and his face regained its resolute serenity. I saw that same expression on the face of the Czech policeman, quietly directing the traffic, on the faces of the few Czech officers and soldiers, lonely men in a hostile town, who were in the streets.

Then we drove on, through one German village after another, to the frontier. The Nazis, who had been making trouble everywhere in order to give the pretext for German intervention, and had in the streets been spitting at Czech officers who had been ordered at all costs to avoid clashes, had been abruptly checked by the mobilization. They saw now that intervention would mean heavy fighting in their own country. They were perfectly orderly.

In all that drive I saw only a handful of troops, and yet the frontier defences were fully manned and ready. At a spot where the road fell steeply on one side and rose steeply on the other, so that tanks or mechanized divisions could not make a detour, the road was mined and through the trees you could see two or three soldiers, with a little tent, smoking and talking as they waited for the order. Near the frontier, concrete barriers had been built across the road, to check the progress of tanks. Sometimes, in a field of growing corn, you saw the humped back of a concrete machine-gun post, with a solitary Czech soldier watching your car through field-glasses to see if you were taking photographs. At the frontier itself two or three Czech gendarmes and customs officials, stranded out here in a hostile countryside, far from their fellows.

Down the road, a kilometre distant, I saw, for the first time since they marched into Austria, the Germans. Little toylike figures in the distance, standing about the customs barrier in the sunshine. All around, placid, abundant, sunlit fields, with peasants working

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in them. Beyond, rolling, well-tended hills, with not a hint of menace in them — Germany.

I drove back to Prague with Jan Czech. That evening I ate at Manes, on the wooden veranda, with its coloured lights, overhanging the Moldau. Music, and coloured spirals in the water. A crescent moon over the Hradschin. In all Europe that I have seen I know of no lovelier place to dine. All around me young and carefree people or quiet and solid elders enjoying an evening meal in this fresh air, at once cool and warm.

As I sat there white fingers stabbed into the sky and probed about and fastened together upon a glittering moth that came humming down along the Moldau. They held it and held it and then let go and it vanished into the night. Half an hour later it came again, and again they groped about for it and found it and followed it and let it go, and a third time, and a fourth.

It was the symbol of the menace that hung over Prague. I watched it and then turned and watched the people round me. They raised their heads from their conversation and looked at it, gravely, without fear or surprise, then turned back to each other, made some quiet remark, and began to eat again. They were unafraid and calm. I sat as long as I could, until the last of the guests had gone, watching the moon fall behind the Hradschin, the lights go out and the water darken.

## CHAPTER 6

### PORTRAIT OF A GENTLEMAN

I WALKED across the Charles Bridge, up the hill, lost in my affection for these winding streets, these unspoiled squares, turning ever and anon to look back over Prague and the Moldau, and went past the sentries, in their French uniforms, into the Hradschin, to see Benesh for the last time — in Prague. I knew that it would be the last time. Did he? Right up to the end, to that last broadcast of his, he professed that unvarying optimism that I could never understand.

In the outer office I spoke again to the official who spoke perfect English. He had fought with the British armies, as the Legionaries outside had fought with the French, the Italian, the Russian armies.

Inside was Benesh, earnest, honest, hard-working, truthful as ever, the man who was to miss the good ship Success, that fine new liner in which all the best people travel nowadays, and stand forlornly on the quayside waiting for the old tub Honour, which has long since been laid up. He came to shake hands, with the silken and satin Habsburgs watching in the background, those Habsburgs who were Kings of Bohemia as well as Emperors of Austria and Kings of Hungary and this and that, until Masaryk and Benesh took their places in 1918, and we walked over to the windows to look at the city spread below.

We turned and sat down, and as Benesh talked, laboriously picking out the phrases from the English he had taught himself, I looked back along the years and then into the future and felt my heart heavy for this man and his State. Not yet twenty years since Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, with his devoted American wife, and Eduard Benesh, exiles triumphant, had proclaimed Czechoslovakia an independent state, amid the thunderous plaudits of the Allies, at Washington and returned to Prague to take over the country that those allies had set free. Now Benesh

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sat before me, his eyes earnestly fixed on mine, and once more professed confidence in the future, against all the overwhelming odds of 1938.

I have just read a book by somebody who says it is a good thing for journalists that the things they wrote yesterday are soon forgotten, that their mistakes and their false forecasts are buried in the yellowing files. I happen to know that if the forecasts, not only of experienced journalists but also of experienced diplomats and professional students of foreign affairs, had been believed, and the policies they advocated pursued, Europe and the world would not be in the plight they are to-day. Given the determination to amend just grievances, but also the determination to mobilize overwhelming force against any attempt to remedy these grievances or to subjugate small nations by force, you could have had peace in Europe now and for long to come, and your journalists, your diplomats and your students could in 1933 have told you, and did tell you, just what was coming in 1938 and what to do about it.

For my part, I like to read, with the eye of the craftsman, an article I wrote which was published in the *New York World* on May 28th, 1938. These are extracts from it:

Benesh holds the stage: the spotlight of history is full on him . . . He is the next prey of the dictators . . . Already the end of free Czechoslovakia is at hand. Isolated, remote from apprehensive allies and lukewarm friends, held like a nut in the grip of the mighty German nut-crackers — look at the map — Benesh has only the choice of two evils left to him twenty years after the liberation of his countrymen from German (Austro-German) rule. Either he may try and save something from the wreck of Czechoslovak independence and capitulate to all the German demands, cancel his French and Soviet alliances, become completely subservient to German orders, make arms and munitions for Germany — and possibly be allowed to remain as vassal President of a little rump Czechoslovakia bound slavely to the chariot of the German conquerors. Or the Germans will march in, Czechoslovakia will disappear entirely, Czechs and Slovaks

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will form labour battalions for the German army in a new European war, the efficient Czech aircraft and armaments industry will be swallowed up by the already mighty German military machine. There is no other choice, in 1938. I saw the invasion of Austria and do not now believe that the Czechs, brave and efficient as they are, could resist this enormous might for long enough to shame France or England or Russia into intervention.

France has sworn to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia if she be attacked. But will France? Can France?

England longs to keep out, and only dreads that France may intervene. One of her junior Ministers, on the morrow of the German invasion, practically invited Hitler to take Czechoslovakia.

Benesh's tragic destiny is written in his face. His neighbour, Kurt von Schuschnigg, crying 'God Save Austria' into the radio as his last words to his countrymen, has disappeared into captivity. The spotlight relentlessly swivels from Vienna to Prague, probes the windows of the Hradschin, fixes on Benesh, as he sits at his desk among the painted Habsburgs. . . . His is the tragedy of the man who put all his eggs in one basket — that of loyalty. Europe is full of slick premiers who make up to the dictatorships while blandly professing that this in no way diminishes their loyalty to their old friends. . . . Benesh is impatient of such methods. They are dishonest, he says, and mean that in the long run everybody will be let down. His policy, and Masaryk's, was that of friendship and collaboration with the countries that had befriended Czechoslovakia and helped to liberate her: of collective resistance, with them, to aggression.

He will follow that policy, he has told me, to the end. If he is wanted. But if he is not wanted. . . . why, then, he would make terms with Germany and Czechoslovakia would go all the way with her. But he must know. He must know.

But they will never tell him. They will leave him there, caught in the jaws of the German pincers, to seek his own salvation, and if he can at this last moment save something by coming to terms with Germany, which I doubt, he would be wise to do it.

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Of all sad things of tongue or pen, the saddest is this: I told you so. It is as comfortless as a bad cheque, as cheerless as an empty grate in winter. But as a last word on behalf of a hard-working class of men, the British newspaper correspondents who told you for years what was coming, I want to say it.

We shall probably not be allowed to tell you much longer. It was our job to study foreign countries, to inform you about them, to tell you what they meant to you, what their future actions would be. Doing our job, we have come to be people 'who foul their own nests', doubting Thomases, irritating scribblers who make relationships with the dictatorships difficult, and soon we may be suppressed.

The people who know better, not from knowledge but from intuition or divine revelation, will be freed from this encumbrance. Lord Halifax has spoken of the British distrust of people who claim to know too clearly what is going to happen.

Why have specialists? Why have experts? There is a post vacant in the cabinet, the Ministry of Antarctic Exploration. Give it to old Sebastian Broadacres, who has spent 'a lifetime in the service of his country'; he was at Eton and Balliol, he served a term as ensign in the guards and was honorary attaché for three years in the Legation at Sofia, he was a member of the Governor-General's staff in New Zealand and has sat for two decades as member for Oblivion-in-the-fields, he did awfully well as British Commissioner during that plebiscite in Bechuanaland and is now Chairman of the Artificial Ice Trust, the very man. And that reminds me, I must say a sharp word to the Editor of the *Antarctic Gazette* about that carping fellow who claims to have spent years in Antarctica and keeps on writing those annoyingly critical articles.

These were the kind of thoughts that kept fluttering round, bats-in-the-belfry-like, as I sat and listened to Benesh. Two unimportant little men, of rather similar origins, for we had both acquired our positions, in their vastly different spheres, by hard work and the laborious acquirement of knowledge, not by inheritance. This was especially bad for Benesh. He would have done

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better, in a class-ridden world, to be born Graf Benesh with an estate in Transylvania. For my part, if I were to have any regrets, they would be that I did not somehow contrive to become a painter or musician, a doctor or possibly an engineer, because you could then close your mind to our contemporary times and yet put your feelings for humanity on to paper or canvas, into your work for your patients or into a big bridge. But for a British journalist, dearly as I love my craft, the day seems to be drawing to its end.

I fixed a picture of Benesh in my mind, as I saw him that day, with the bewigged Habsburgs behind him. He showed his working-class and peasant origin. He was rather short, his features were commonplace, but his eyes and expression, his carefully chosen words and the manner of speaking them all told of an honest purpose and a clean character. I have seen many men in high positions, and know how to judge them. He was healthy, in mind and body, untheatrical, hard-working, full of energy. He had, unless I was deceived this time, faith. He still believed in the victory of justice, in Masaryk's motto, 'The truth prevails'. In spite of everything, he still believed.

Why did he not rat, in the age of the rat, when ratting is foreign policy, when everybody's doing it now? I am not even sure whether it would have been ratting. Perhaps he owed it to his country-people to change his policy, and not, in 1938, to continue steadfastly in pursuit of the mirage honour. For years he had been urged from many quarters — not from France and England — that he was on the wrong tack, that he would be let down, that he should make his terms with Germany. His Little Entente associates urged him repeatedly to do this. In Yugoslavia Prince Regent Paul and his Prime Minister, Milan Stoyadinovitch, had seen the red light two years earlier, when the French passively accepted the German seizure of the demilitarized Rhineland zone and therewith the closure of their only path of succour to Czechoslovakia. From that day on, anxious voices from Belgrade had continually urged him to make friends with Germany at all costs. 'Do it now,' they said, 'or France will let you down.'

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Benesh would not. He thought that this was treachery, that these were untrustworthy allies who gave such advice. He anchored his hopes to France and England, to that magnificent principle of collective resistance to an aggressor that England had betrayed in Abyssinia. He could have hitched his Czechoslovak wagon to the German star on good terms, and would not. He was wrong, bitterly wrong. He should have done this.

I had seen him last in December 1937. For three and a-half hours he had earnestly explained his motives and intentions in that painstaking English, and as he is now gone from the political scene I think I can repeat some of the things he said. This conversation seemed to me of such historical importance — I was already convinced that Czechoslovakia's fate was sealed — that I took a shorthand note of it and still have the account, word for word.

The whole burden of his tale was that he would not and could not change his policy unless France and England told him that they did not want him, that they regarded Czechoslovakia as a liability rather than an asset. Repeatedly he said, 'I must know, I must know.'

Read these words:

If Germany takes the question of minorities as a pretext for attacking Czechoslovakia, where they are better treated than in Poland, Hungary or Italy, for instance, British opinion must understand that this is done, *not* because the situation of the minorities is bad in this country, but because we have not been submissive to German foreign policy in general and have resisted.

I could also very easily make peace with Germany if I had cared to make the same equivocal policy as Monsieur X or Monsieur Y. I could make the same peace as Monsieur Z has made with Italy, if I wished to accept German influence in our general foreign policy.

All this German campaign against us — if only this could be understood in England — is not on account of the German minority and its treatment, but because Germany thinks she can force us to adopt a different foreign policy — to abandon

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France, England, collaboration with Western Europe, and to submit to German influence.

I put this question to every British citizen, especially to British politicians:

Do you think that we should continue to maintain this extremely important geographical position in Central Europe for a general European policy and for the maintenance of peace and democracy, or should we abandon it and yield to German pressure and accept German influence?

Yes or No?

Is that a matter of importance to Great Britain or not?

I don't ask the help of England or France against a German attack, because I can't ask for help on my own account. I understand that every country must defend its interests. I understand that Czechoslovakia is not imprinted on the hearts of British citizens. They do not know where Czechoslovakia is.

I understand that perfectly.

But I say, if to-morrow this position which we have here and are maintaining should have to be abandoned; if Germany becomes again the master of this country directly or indirectly — because we shall be probably independent but under German influence, as Austria will be, as Hungary will be — what will happen after that to the interests of England and France?

I say that the international position of this country is of the greatest importance for Western Europe. I know very well that England does not like to undertake commitments in a part of Central Europe which is not understood by the man in the street.

But I am convinced that if we abandon this position and if we do not resist the influence and pressure of Germany we shall in a few years have war again — not against us, but against France and England, as we did in 1914. Czechoslovakia would have to fight again for Germany, as in 1914 for Austria.

My conclusion from this is not that England must come to the help of Czechoslovakia, but that England has the greatest interest to maintain the *status quo* and the present situation in

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Central Europe. I have never asked for a treaty with England. I have never asked help from England. I always accepted the point of view of England, that we must proceed in such a general way that we should not give a pretext that would enable us to be accused of provoking a war.

But on the other hand I ask from England comprehension, understanding of the situation here, in the sense that if we are destroyed the history of 1914, in one form or another, will repeat itself.

Just as in 1914 Germany, through Austria and Turkey, menaced the Mediterranean and the route to India, so will it come again.

Therefore I say that Prague and Czechoslovakia form one of the most important geographical situations in Europe. If we are abandoned by Western Europe we can do nothing else than make an agreement with Germany.

England should understand that I do not wish to be hostile to Germany. We wish to agree with Germany. But we wish to do so together with France and England.

I wish not to abandon, in this fight for general peace in Europe, France and England. I wish to do it together with them because I think that peace can only be durable if made in this way.

If, on the other hand, I am obliged to make a bilateral treaty with Germany, entirely independent from England and France, that means that Germany is master of the whole of Central Europe.

The consequences of a British policy of disinterestedness in Central Europe would be really disastrous for Europe, in my opinion.

Germany wishes to force us to change our policy, to abandon Western Europe, and to bring the whole of Central Europe under German influence, in order to fight for the colonial question, in order to prepare its new world situation. Germany thinks that when she has broken completely the resistance of these small states, Austria and Czechoslovakia, everything will be at her mercy.

She does not wish to make war. When she has the whole of Central Europe under her influence she will be in a far better

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position towards the Great Powers and the same policy will begin again as in 1914 — Atlantic and Mediterranean, colonial question, rivalry of the Great Powers.

One object of the World War was to establish in Central Europe independent states in order to give them exactly the same position as Belgium and Holland, to prevent the small states from becoming the instruments of Germany. If England is not disinterested in Central Europe this means that England will help us to maintain our independence and to fulfil this mission of the little states in Central Europe, to help to maintain peace.

If we are put again under the direct or indirect influence of Germany we shall be exploited against the other Great Powers.

I repeat again — I am not anti-German. We do not wish to make an anti-German policy. I do not wish to be the instrument of another power against Germany. I wish to maintain my own independence and liberty. I wish to collaborate with Germany. I recognize that Germany, being in the neighbourhood of Central Europe, has great economic and other interests in Central Europe.

But I do say that Germany is not the *only* state which has interests in Central Europe, that other states like England and France have also interests, and therefore I wish that the negotiations of the states simply give to every great power in Central Europe its real place.

Germany has only one aim — to put Czechoslovakia in a position of complete neutrality in any European conflict. Germany would give us every imaginable guarantee tomorrow in exchange for that. I put the question — if this is so, what is the point of view of the French and British Cabinets?

In practice this would mean that in any war Czechoslovakia would be obliged, not to remain neutral, but to help Germany. I have told Hitler: 'I am prepared to make a treaty with you but if I negotiate with you I shall immediately inform the Cabinets of Paris and London.'

Germany is manœuvring our German minority in order to force us to change our international policy. We are in our

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view contributing in an extraordinary degree to the general peace by resisting German pressure and maintaining democracy here and by preparing in collaboration with England and France to save all Europe.

But if the loyalty of Czechoslovakia to France and England is regarded by certain quarters in England as something that may be an obstacle to a general agreement, that is a complete misunderstanding of the whole Czechoslovak policy, and would have to be considered by Prague as a completely hopeless situation.

Czechoslovakia would be forced to realize that she is completely misunderstood, that Great Britain does not appreciate the contribution she is making to general peace, and that she is being pushed to a policy which would force her one day to go into the arms of Germany and against England.

It is a tragic misunderstanding.

Again I say, if you think that we are of no use in maintaining this extraordinarily important geographical position in Central Europe, on which all European peace rests, that means that finally our interests will be to agree with Germany and to go with her in all German conquests.

We are at the crucial point in the negotiations of Europe. We must choose. I must know what France and England want. If France and England wish that Czechoslovakia, as the last democracy in Central Europe, should separate herself from them, they must tell us.

Then we shall know what to do.

That is the point.

So spoken by Benesh, and noted by me, on the evening of December 19th, 1937. Before, long before, the seizure of Austria.

As I went down the hill that night, into a damp and foggy Prague, I thought drearily to myself, 'They will never tell him. They will lead him to think that they stand with and for Czechoslovakia, that he is right in fighting for his democracy, right in resisting Germany, right in adhering staunchly to the system of collective resistance to aggression that they themselves devised. Then, when he is face to face with the German army, they will leave him to it.'

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That was what I thought, that December evening, and that was why I wrote as much in an American newspaper in May 1938, and why I wrote, in *Insanity Fair*, 'Czechoslovakia is finished — for us. You will see this, and soon.'

I never had a heavier heart than when I wrote those words, for I saw in my mind's eye a prophetic picture — homeless refugees huddling in unheated huts, terror-stricken women and children trailing along wet roads, despairing people weeping in the streets of Prague. The reverse of that shining golden medal, peace with honour.

On this sunny June day I took leave of Benesh again, shook his firm hand, received the usual warm invitation to come again, any time. I knew I should never come again to see him in the Hradschin. I went down the hill and said good-bye to Prague. The streets were full of cheery and smiling people. At the frontiers stood their fathers, sons and brothers. They did not mind: they were prepared to perish, so that Czechoslovakia might survive, truth prevail.

When I next came to Prague Benesh was a broken man. A few days after my arrival I saw him, almost alone, driving to the airport to leave his country. As I write he lives in a villa in Putney.

I meant at first to call this chapter 'A man of no importance'. On second thoughts I altered it to 'Portrait of a Gentleman'. In our time these are coming to be interchangeable phrases.

Incidentally, the question whether Benesh 'was right or wrong', from the point of view of his own country, of Europe, and of a wider humanity, is one to which the answer cannot yet be given; in a year or two you will know it.

## CHAPTER 7

### HUNGARIAN SUMMER

WITH rancour in my heart I came in the dawn to Budapest, drove to a hotel, booked myself a room. I had left behind me Prague, where all the newspaper-men were gathering, where the next act in the European tragedy was being played. All my American and British friends were there. They had been jollyng me about a book I had written in which I had said that Czechoslovakia was finished, for England, that England and France would deliver her up to Germany, that Czechoslovak hands would in coming years be making weapons for Germany and probably bearing them for her in the next war.

I was too sure in my forecast, they said. But I knew, I had watched this thing taking shape for nearly six long years, from that day in January 1933 when Hitler came to power, and I was certain I was right. England and France were firmly set on their Gadarene policy, nothing that one man could say would alter it.

Now I wanted to be in Prague and see it happen. I was Central European Correspondent of my paper, responsible for all the countries of the Danubian Basin, and all the other Central European Correspondents, after the end of Austria, had automatically moved to Prague. I had been ordered to go to Budapest, a news cemetery. 'Other arrangements' had been made in Prague. I was resentful, but not surprised. I had put down in black and white what I thought was going to happen to Czechoslovakia, and if I was right it was logical that the description of the tragedy would not be wanted from a man who felt so strongly about it as I did. Raging, but held back by some inward pull from immediate resignation, I went to Budapest.

I am thankful now to that inner voice, for I would not have missed that Hungarian summer for anything. I was able, at my free week-ends, to make flying trips to Prague on my own behalf,

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to peep through the window at the progress of that historic siege and enforced capitulation, the most terrible thing, in my view, that has happened since the World War and the most disastrous in its results. You will see this, and soon.

But I thank my stars for those summer days and nights in Hungary. Here I found again, for a few brief weeks, the rest and happiness which I had just found when the German armies crashed into Vienna, when Insanity Fair shattered the tranquillity that, after so many years, I had found within the massive walls of the old house in Vienna where I had my rooms.

There is going to be no peace for us who only want to work and build a world where the poorest have a right to sufficient food, to light and air and sunshine in their homes, to dignity and beauty, where weak nations have the right to protection against predatory great ones and where a majority of nations is ready at any time to combine against the pirates and despoilers, the slave-traders and tyrants.

You could have had that world, but now we who think like that are on the run again, the darkness is thickening once more. I myself, a tiny unit in the mass of human beings whose lives had already been changed or ruined by the first raiding forays of the new hordes of Armageddon, had for months been constantly on the move, travelling thousands of miles by car and train and aeroplane, living in suit-cases in hotels and bed-sitting-rooms, trying, while the cyclone of events howled about my ears, to plan a new future. I had not expected to find any rest at all in this summer of 1938.

I was the more grateful to Hungary for those sun-laden days, those starlit nights, for that little sheltered dwelling among the trees that was mine for nearly three months, for the balcony where I sat and talked and drank wine while the twilight thickened and the lights came palely out on the Schwabenberg and the scent of the flowers came up from the garden where the janitor was hosing the grass and singing softly to himself haunting Hungarian songs.

Outside, the world was mad and lecherous, and brutality and the lust for conquest were once more on the march, and fear was flying

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before them, with its few goods and chattels, homeless, despairing, hungry. The four horsemen were on the prowl again. I looked into that world when I flew to Prague, when I flew to Geneva. It poked its foul head even into my dwelling when I touched a switch, and the radio blared into the room the raving, ranting voices of the new Caesars.

But when I came back from my flying excursions, or turned the knob and silenced that blasphemous box, there was a peace, in that little refuge in a green corner of Budapest, that came to you like a warm and fleecy blanket in a bitter cold night. I loved it. Always there was, far at the back of my mind, the thought of that outer world, the thought of the future, the rage that men of my vintage must feel, if they have any feelings, when they look at the wreck of their hopes, at the shambles that 1938 has made out of 1918, when they think of the men who have committed these things or those old, rich men, more guilty still, who have omitted to prevent them, or did not want to prevent them.

But on those afternoons and evenings in Budapest this cankerous anger was only like the faint and distant clangour of an alarm bell in a still night. Here was peace and beauty. I loved my books — not mine, but mine for the nonce — I loved those quiet and starry evenings on the balcony, when we threw a rope of hopes into the air and sent the cherub of our imagination skimming up it, when the lights spattered on the black bowl that was the Schwabenberg grew brighter and brighter, the wine better and better, when the cheery German landlady brought coffee and sandwiches and retailed the talk of the town, when the moon rose higher and higher and the barking of the dogs filled the night and then gradually dwindled and was hushed, the last omnibus clattered by at the bottom of the road, the yellow windows blackened one after another — when Budapest went to bed and we sat there, talking quietly of the things that had been and were to come.

Unforgettably tranquil days and nights, stolen from Babel.

I must make an honest man of myself about Hungary. In *Insanity Fair* I included a chapter about Hungary, too hurriedly strung together and filled with the irritation that Hungary

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often inspired in me, because I saw, or thought I saw, there a country in the van of those that, nose-led by a small and covetous clique, lead our Europe from war to war and simultaneously oppose, with relentless consistency, the betterment of the masses. Because this small group, that kept power in its hands in much the same way as the ruling class in England, was inter-linked by blood or acquaintance or common class prejudice or mutual interest with people of the same type in other lands, and because it employed a feminine skill in the exploitation of these relationships abroad, Hungary — its little Hungary — enjoyed particular sympathy in some other countries, particularly among the ruling class in England, which was coldly denied to countries where more plebeian rulers had done much greater things.

In England, for instance, several score Conservative Members of Parliament had once signed a manifesto calling for justice for Hungary, a small country that most of them knew nothing about. When the question arose of justice being done to another small country that they knew nothing about they were as silent as the grave. I saw in these things the influence of that class-antagonism which knows no frontiers, which ultimately caused England to connive at the rape of Abyssinia, to favour the Fascist cause in Spain, to compel the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia to the advantage of Germany and of Hungary, and which is now going to lead England to all sorts of queer places.

Bear this in mind, remember that Czechoslovakia took some of their acres from the great landlords and gave them to the landless peasants, that in Hungary agitation against 'the great estates' was an offence punishable by imprisonment up to 1936 or 1937, and that millions of peasants there own no land, bear in mind that Germany and Italy have both suppressed working-men's parties and organizations but have never encroached on the property either of the big industrialist or the big landowner, that the net result of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia is to isolate Soviet Russia and give Germany a free hand in that direction, and you will begin to see the outline of things in Europe, the reason that events happen which continually take you by surprise, because

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you do not see this scarlet threat of cause and effect running through them.

In Hungary, as she was ruled, I could find no justification for the greater sympathy that was lavished on her by the class of people that rules England, and I suspected the motive. I knew that most of them, as I wrote in another book, did not know Hungary at all, though they might have been lavishly entertained in the restaurant of the Duna Palota Hotel, shown the excellent baths on the Margareten Island, taken round the night-clubs. The history of political entertainment in Hungary since the war, is one of those books which will unfortunately never be written.

But in the other Hungary that these people did not see, did not want to see, I found the peasants poorer, the workers worse off than in the other Danubian countries I knew, three of which had after the war gained territories previously under Hungarian rule. In Czechoslovakia I found insurance against unemployment and sickness and old age well rooted and thriving, roads, schools, hospitals being built, a country moving ahead fast and steadily raising the standard of the people's life. In Yugoslavia I found a movement, not yet so far advanced, but still firmly set on that path. Rumania was still farther behind, but still moving in that direction. In all these countries the peasants owned their land, and that is the priceless thing, that gives an entirely different look to the country, a different feeling to the very air you breathe.

In Hungary life seemed to have stood still since the war. It had stood still for decades and decades before that. Here you found, if you ventured out into the countryside, the still and lifeless atmosphere that springs from poverty and the peasant's land-hunger. With scarcely an effort, after the Rumanians had put an end to the brief, and predominantly Jewish, Communist regime of Aaron Cohen alias Béla Kun, the Hungarian ruling class had reimposed its iron grip on the country. Your charming Hungarian hosts often tried to discourage you if you told them you thought of spending a month or two deep in that uncharted countryside. If, nevertheless, you went, you found bitter poverty,

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primitive houses and roads, workers living in squalor, social institutions in their infancy, backwardness general.

Yet the Hungarians had lorded it for centuries over their neighbours, and the whole motive and keynote of Hungarian policy after the war was not to improve domestic conditions, but to regain those lost territories, where new rulers were making many improvements, and lord it over them again.

The Hungarians themselves have changed beyond recognition in the thousand years they have been sitting among the Carpathians and you will be a very clever man if, among the most interbred people in Europe, you can to-day put your finger on a Hungarian and say, 'This is a Magyar'. The aristocracy and middle classes, those very people who most delight your ear with their stories of the thousand-year-old Hungarian Kingdom and the close resemblance between Hungarian History and English History and between the Hungarian Constitution and the British Constitution, are in their origins largely German, Jewish, Czech, Slovak, Croat, Italian, Serb, Rumanian, Greek, French, Irish, and Turkish.

It is extremely difficult for you, bless your innocent hearts, to realize this, because they all bear romantic Hungarian names, and successive governments for long enough have encouraged this process of name-changing, but you would have a shock if you knew that practically every Magyar or Arpad or Istvan you meet is Schmidt or Cohen or Popovitch.

One of the recent governments, that of M. Darányi, was popularly said to contain one minister who was a true Magyar. The tale is that when this story got round to M. Kánya, the long-standing Foreign Minister, who is by way of being a wit, he said, 'What? Who is it? Show him to me.'

I see nothing to object to in this, indeed, it is another of the points of resemblance between Hungary and England. I myself am half Irish and half English, the Irish being, as I think, the bigger half; my English Jekyll frequently shudders at the things that my Irish Hyde writes.

But the astonishing thing is the way this cosmopolitan people

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has, in one respect, retained the chief characteristic of those raiding Asiatic horsemen who came, killing and plundering, from the Don and the Volga to the Carpathian lands a thousand years ago. Hungary in 1939 is like an enlarged photograph of Vienna before 1938. The blood of a dozen races is inextricably mixed here. Go east from Budapest and you come to German and Rumanian settlements. Go west from Budapest and you come to German settlements. Go south from Budapest and you come to German and Serbian settlements. Go north from Budapest and you come to Slovak settlements. And in Budapest itself, a third of the population is Jewish and the rest is a compound of which the ingredients defy analysis.

Yet they retain, unfiltered, that main characteristic of the nomadic Magyar horseman so well described by an Arab trader of the ninth century:

The Magyars are a race of Turks and their leader rides out with 20,000 horsemen. They have a plain which is all dry herbage and a wide territory . . . They have completely subjugated the Slavs and they always order them to provide food for them and consider them as their slaves . . . These Magyars are a handsome people and of good appearance, and their clothes are of silk brocade, and their weapons of silver encrusted with gold. They constantly plunder the Slavs.

Leave out the silk brocade and the gold-encrusted daggers and there you have it after 1100 years, in 1939 — the proverbial predilection (I have taken this quotation from C. A. Macartney's *Hungary*) for plundering Slavs. In November 1938, as a pendant to the honourable peace of Munich, about 350,000 more Slavs were handed back to Hungarian rule.

Compare that old Arab's judgment with the genial description of his class given by the elder Count Andrassy about the middle of last century:

We Hungarians are noblemen, who make politics; for our labourers we need Slovaks and Germans, for our business affairs the Jews, who buy our wheat and wool, not to forget the gipsies, to make music for us.

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The remarkable thing about the Hungarians is that, although the Magyar blood has thinned down to vanishing point and they have not in recent centuries been able to indulge their 'proverbial predilection' by means of conquest, as those ancient warriors did, they have been able repeatedly to maintain their privileged place among the Danubian peoples by the astute exploitation of favourable circumstances.

In 1867, for instance, they were able to exploit the defeat of Austria by Prussia to obtain from the Emperor Francis Joseph, who until then had consistently gainsaid their demands, and even called in Russian help to suppress them by arms, a privileged position within the Habsburg Empire, and became the Overlords of Slovakia and Croatia. Those cads the Czechs had even offered to help the Austrians against the Prussians and been rudely rebuffed with the words, 'This is a war of Germans against Germans'. The Hungarians sent a corps of volunteers to help Prussia. The Czechs had a foretaste, in 1867, of the bitter dose they were to be made to swallow in 1938. 'Those nationalities which support the Government suffer and those that oppose it prosper', wrote Count Lützow then. He was right. The demands of the Czechs that the ancient rights of their Bohemian Kingdom should be restored were ignored. The Hungarians were made full partners in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

So in 1938. 'Those nations that support the League and democracy and collective resistance to the threat of force suffer and those that oppose it prosper.' Czechoslovakia was dismembered: Hungary profited.

Even in 1867 Hungary might not have come so well out of the mix-up but for that uncannily astute exploitation of circumstances. The lovelorn Francis Joseph might even then not have been won over to make Hungary a full partner in the Habsburg concern but for the passionate appeals, from Hungary, of his Empress Elisabeth — who did not love him, and who had been won over by the handsome Count Andrassy.

That is how Hungary looks to me when I contemplate our Europe, and I shall watch with great interest to see if, once again,

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Hungary is going to grow great and strong in Europe by such strange chances and devices, and whether, while that goes on, her peasants will continue to hunger vainly for the land, and her workers for social progress.

But I still have to make an honest man of myself about Hungary. I admired and respected Germany, though I think that the present rulers of Germany have an obsession of self-aggrandizement and self-commiseration, and lust for conquest and contempt for the rights of those weaker than themselves, which is going to bring inconceivable suffering to our Europe in my generation. I loved Austria, although I felt that the extermination, by Italian-inspired Fascism and the Roman Catholic Church, of the free Republic there in 1934 was one of the first of the crimes that have implacably, inevitably, led Europe to the edge of a very steep place.

So with Hungary. The guilt is not all on one side. Too much was taken from her, and some of it should have been given back years ago, but only as the price of an armour-plated and indestructible arrangement, which you then could have had, to confront any violent peacebreaker with overwhelming force. That much being said, it is equally true that her rulers, belonging to a small and exclusive class, have consistently pursued a policy that puts her at the side of those opposed to domestic progress and international peace.

But these processes are spread over many years, and in between there are so many days to be lived, and I know few countries where you can live them better than in Hungary. A man of my mind and generation, who sees all the ideals of humanity and social progress and freedom that a million Britishers died for being tossed contemptuously away as each day passes, can only be exasperated when he finds a country, socially backward, that still aspires to rule over freemen of other races, that still occasionally talks in terms of *Extra Hungariam non est vita* — 'Outside Hungary there is no life, or if there is a life, it is not like ours.'

But it is nevertheless true, as Macartney wrote, and I cannot better this phrase, that there is, and probably always was, a peculiar beauty and abundance in Hungary. I do not agree with

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him that it 'removed the temptation to wander'; I know too many Hungarians who long to wander. But the peculiar beauty and abundance are there. The abundance lies in the land, although it often does not yield the men who till and plough it enough to eat. The beauty lies in those Hungarian suns and skies, in those endless plains, as featureless as the ocean itself, in the charm that the people can so effortlessly exert, when they will.

These things are always with you, when you are in Hungary. The others do not so consistently obtrude themselves on you, especially if you are a foreigner; you have the good things of Hungary and do not feel the bad ones.

I was glad that I had, for a little while, lived in Hungary, and that I was able to see and feel and do so much in that short time. It was long enough to get the feel of the water. I did not find the people incessantly thinking about their frontiers, hating Czechs. They wanted the great landlords to be forced to relax their grip on the land, the Jews to be forced to relax their grip on the cities. They wanted to live as freemen. But their ruling class, while paying a little lip-service to these longings, actually did next to nothing about them, and once again sought to divert the thoughts and emotions of the people from these things by an incessant campaign about the injustice of the frontiers and the iniquities of the Czechs. Once again, the great game of politics between the big powers seemed likely to bring in its trail success for the ruling class in Hungary, at any rate for a time.

Meanwhile, I lived in that quiet and secluded corner, watched the great conflict from my sheltered alcove, enjoyed to the full my Hungarian days and nights. This was only a respite, I knew, a noontide rest upon the grass, in my eventful journey through Insanity Fair, but a pleasant one, that I shall never forget.

## CHAPTER 8

### END OF A BARON

I SAT on a café terrace in Budapest and read one of those Jewish emigré publications in which you find a great deal of Inside Information about Germany, much of which I advise you to read with a cold and critical eye, and a certain amount of actual news which you will not find anywhere else. As I read a paragraph leaped out of the page at me:

#### BARON VON KETTELER'S BODY FOUND

A body recovered from the Danube at Hainburg has been identified as that of Baron von Ketteler, the secretary of Herr von Papen, who has been missing since the German annexation of Austria. After Herren Bose and Jung, he is the third of Papen's collaborators to have met a tragic end.

I put the paper down, and leaned back in my chair and thought, and looked back along the years.

I saw a young man, outwardly calm but with the hunted look of the fugitive at the back of his eyes, standing in the Bendlerstrasse on June 30th, 1934, the day of the great killing in Germany. I saw the same young man, now in relative safety but still with the same curious, veiled look in his eyes, receiving me at Papen's Embassy in Vienna, moving in evening dress among the guests at Papen's receptions.

He always seemed to be looking for something, always made me feel as if he kept his nerves in a strait-jacket. He always seemed to be expecting the touch on his shoulder. I saw him sitting behind a newspaper in Meissl and Schaden's in Vienna. I had a glimpse of a motor car passing mine in the Kärntnerstrasse, and of Ketteler sitting in it.

Then I saw another picture — Hainburg, one of the many Danubian towns that I love. There I had sat, in a vine-clad courtyard, and drunk wine with my good friend, while strolling

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musicians played Austrian songs and through the open gateway I could see the Danube flowing past. There I had seen the relay runners bringing the torch that was lit at Olympia to Hitler's Olympiad in Berlin, and the Nazi demonstrations that I saw then first convinced me that the end of Austria was coming soon. I often went out to Hainburg on summer evenings, from Vienna. It lay at the gates of Czechoslovakia and Hungary and was picturesque. The Danube was lovely there. I liked the wine gardens.

Not quite four years, Ketteler's race had run, from that day in 1934. For nearly four years he had been travelling with the baying of the wolves behind him, looking over his shoulder for them. Now he had been pulled out of the Danube, at Hainburg.

A curious thing. I had hardly known this man, personally, and he had hardly known me, and yet for four years I had followed his fate with keen interest, understood what was passing in his mind, watched him as you might watch the electric hare, with the greyhounds straining after it.

It all began on that red day, June 30th, 1934, when Hitler had his bosom companion Röhm, and dozens of the Brown Army commanders, and General von Schleicher and his wife, and the Catholic leaders, and the reactionaries associated with von Papen, all put to death. In *Insanity Fair* I told how I drove past the Bendlerstrasse on that day and saw a friend, a Spanish Catholic journalist, talking on the pavement to a young man I recognized, a young diplomat who was a collaborator with Papen, how my Spanish friend came and told me that Bose and Jung had been shot and asked if I could take and hide the young man he was talking to.

My interest in Ketteler, the other man on the pavement, began that day. He was a member of Papen's 'Brain Trust', a group of brilliant young men whom he had gathered about him and who were all, save possibly one, a thought too brilliant, for they put all their money on Papen.

They devised those tortuous schemes, those fantastically ingenious intrigues, to bring Papen back to power which eventually

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gave Germany to Hitler, which later cost three of them their lives and brought Papen near to losing his. They, when Schleicher had overthrown his own protégé Papen and taken the Chancellorship on himself, worked for the revenge that is sweet and brought about the reconciliation between Hitler and Papen, in order to overthrow the traitor Schleicher; but their calculation, that Hitler would remain the prisoner of the President von Hindenburg and his Vice-Chancellor von Papen, miscarried.

They, when Hitler was hesitating whether to take office on these terms and risk disaster, prodded him to the decision by telephoning to a British newspaper correspondent that the villain Schleicher was again secretly negotiating with the other villain Gregor Strasser, Hitler's discredited chief lieutenant, who had earlier thought to split the National Socialist Party and lead half of it into a Schleicher-Strasser coalition. They advised the British newspaper correspondent to telephone to X, one of Hitler's closest confidants, and ask him if he had heard of this report, so that X on the telephone roared, 'WHAT? Hold on a minute', and then went away, and came back a minute later and said, 'The Führer thanks you', and that, if it had not already been prepared, was the death warrant of Kurt von Schleicher and Gregor Strasser.

They, sixteen months later, in May 1934, thought that the exasperated Army was about to turn on that band of loud and swaggering interlopers, the Brown Army, and rend them, and that was why they put Papen up to make that speech at Marburg on June 17th attacking the Brown Army commanders and the extremer spirits of the National Socialist Party, that speech calling for the removal of 'the wrong men who have been put in the wrong places'.

They thought that the Brown Party and its army were about to be crushed, and that Papen would be the next Chancellor. They expected to play the part of *der lachende Dritte*, the smart and smiling guy who stands aside until the free-fighters have wrecked the saloon and then steps in and clears the till. They were too clever. Hitler appeased the army by killing off the most objectionable

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Storm Troop commanders, but he struck at the same time at those who thought they were going to step into his shoes.

A bad day for the Brain Trust. Jung was taken from his dwelling and shot. Ketteler escaped across the frontier and, when the barely-escaped Papen a month later was made Minister in Vienna as 'a gesture of conciliation', much praised by the confiding outer world, he joined his chief there. Count Z was taken and had his head shorn and thought he was going to be shot, but they let him go, and he disappeared to some distant foreign clime. Bose was shot in his office in Papen's ministry.

Ulrichson — let us call him — heard the shots, put on his coat and withdrew to his ante-room, where he sat, hat in hand. SS men came in with revolvers in their hands and asked the old janitor, at his desk in the corner, 'Where's Ulrichson?' 'I don't know,' he said woodenly. 'I haven't seen him.' They turned to Ulrichson. 'What do you want here?' they said. 'I'm waiting for Herr Ulrichson,' he said, 'but I seem to have come on a bad day.' They went. Ulrichson went down the stairs. At the entrance SS men, with levelled revolvers, stopped him. 'This is the end' he thought. Behind him, down the stairs, came the first SS men. They looked at him and said, 'He's all right, he can go.' Ulrichson walked out into the sunny Wilhelmstrasse. A few days later, smoking a fat cigar, he walked across the Czechoslovak frontier in a misty dawn.

Not quite four years, I thought, as I looked unseeingly at the Andrassy Ut, and now they had caught up with Ketteler. Another ant crushed by the machine, that was devouring more and more lives every year as it moved, faster and faster, to its final orgy.

I had spoken to him twice, in Vienna, at receptions, just a few words. He never showed that he remembered me, never referred to that request that was made to me on his behalf on June 30th, 1934, to shelter him under my roof. Yet the circumstances in which I had first looked at him with an especial interest caused my thoughts even now to quicken whenever I saw him.

An inexplicable young man, moving doggedly, and yet with that hunted look in his eyes, to his doom. And why? This was the

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question that puzzled me and caused me to think about him so much. What loves, what loyalties, what convictions, what motives of self-interest prompted him? It was a question without an answer.

For Ketteler, now prompting his chief Papen in Vienna as he had done in Berlin, had not made his peace with the avengers who had been after him since June 30th, 1934.

I knew another German who had also fled to Vienna at that time, we'll call him Dettlevsohn, a good friend of Ketteler's, and he, in the course of the years, had somehow managed to reinstate himself. Now he no longer feared the advent of Hitler.

With this man I lunched the day after Schuschnigg had paid his fateful visit to Hitler at Berchtesgaden. The day when he agreed to hand over the Austrian police to Hitler's nominee, the day when the fate of Austria was sealed.

We lunched in the Italian restaurant in the Neuer Markt and it was part of my craft on such occasions to warm the innards and loosen the tongues of my guests with wine. Conversation is a flower that blooms best in a wine-wetted soil. The reluctant petals readily unfold and disclose within the honeyed secrets that the bee-journalist seeks. This harmless little device is not only used by those who write. Past masters in its employment, in my experience, are British military attachés in foreign countries. As the evening wears on, and the glasses fill and empty, fill and empty, nothing more than a rosebud flush mantles those well-shaven cheeks, nothing more than a certain fixity of the glance creeps into those genial blue eyes. Articulation remains perfect, bearing unconstrained, and when the evening ends and the other man is under the table or thereabouts you feel that a retentive mind has held a true impression of all that has been said, ready for transfer the next morning, in compressed form, to a diary.

On this day my plans went astray. I plied and plied my German with brandy and all went well up to a point; that is, he unfolded and we talked with complete frankness of the things that interested us, and I confirmed the view I had already formed two days before, that the end of Austria was at hand. But then I suddenly made an alarming discovery. I, and not my guest, was drunk, and drunker

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than I had ever been. I had sacrificed myself in the cause of duty. I had overdone it.

I do not know to this day how it happened. I had been working at enormous pressure, day and night, tearing round the town from government department to legation and from newspaper office to coffee house, and writing long dispatches, and snatching hurried meals, and racing against time betweenwhiles, sometimes until the dawn broke, to get a book finished that events were already overtaking, and all this under great nervous strain, and now, for once, I had overtaxed the engine.

Anyway, there I was, at five o'clock in the afternoon, with the evening's work ahead of me, completely out of control. I stepped out into the February air, which gave me the finishing touch, and found a high sea running in the Neuer Markt, so that the houses rose and fell and swivelled round and I wondered desperately how I should get home, only to find the next moment, to my surprise, that I was on my landing, with the door in front of my nose, trying to find the keyhole, and then, by some miracle, I had all my clothes off and was lying in a bath full of ice-cold water thinking 'I must get my head clear, what day is this, is it night or morning, what was it that I was going to write about?' and fixedly resolved, for some mysterious reason, at all costs to go to the British Legation, and I did later arrive there and ask some questions and about eight o'clock I was back in my rooms with the keys of the typewriter swimming before me so that I missed them repeatedly and tapped away on the table and then I was in another room trying to read what I had written into the telephone in a voice full of swishing sounds, like the sea breaking on the shore.

Believe it or not, that dispatch was one of the best I ever wrote. In those uncharted moments, soaring on wine-dark clouds, I cast away most of the 'ifs' and 'buts' and 'well-informed circles incline to conjecture that' and 'in quarters where things are believed it is believed' and other lifebelts of contemporary journalism and wrote clearly and concisely what I believed. I wrote 'Austria is finished' and somehow the sub-editor at the other end let it

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through and it brought me three leading articles full of grave reproof from the Catholic *Reichspost*, which had another month to live before it was stripped of its black coat and forced into a brown one.

But the interesting thing about all this is that the next morning I had a perfectly clear impression of all that we had said in the Italian restaurant, and particularly remembered my German's references to Ketteler. Ketteler was in a bad fix, he said, and the evening before, when they had met, he had broken down completely, tough though he was. They were after him and now that the end of Austria was at hand they would get him. 'But why doesn't he clear out now?' I asked. No, Ketteler was tough and would stay.

In the weeks that followed, the picture of this man, whom I hardly knew, was always in my mind. I felt what he was feeling. I was working harder than I had ever worked, yet the thought of him recurred and recurred. The thing was a complete puzzle to me because I knew that Ketteler, the last of the Brain Trust, had helped to concoct that scheme, for luring Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden, which helped Hitler to his greatest success, up to that time, the bloodless capture of Austria. A friendly talk with Hitler, the amicable elimination of misunderstandings in a fire-side chat at his comfortable Bavarian ch  t: that was the picture that Papen dangled before Schuschnigg. Only in the train on the way there did Papen tell him that the generals and air marshals would be there behind Hitler, only when he got to Berchtesgaden did he discover that he was to be confronted with the threat of invasion.

The idea in Papen's and Ketteler's minds was the rehabilitation of Papen through this great coup, of Papen who had been coldly and summarily dismissed from his Ambassadorship a week before. Now the coup was about to succeed. Papen ought to be able to count on rehabilitation, I thought.<sup>1</sup> So should Ketteler. What was

<sup>1</sup> The coup and the part he had played in it did not rehabilitate Papen. After it his dismissal took effect and he disappeared at last, after six years, from the stage on which he had appeared so unexpectedly in 1932, when Hindenburg made him Chancellor, and on which, between then and 1938, he had played so strange a variety of parts. He is said to be living on his estate in Westphalia.

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Ketteler afraid of. Why had he worked for this thing if he knew that it would cost him his life?

In the stormy month that followed I thought continually of Ketteler with the net closing around him. On Saturday, March 12th, when the German troops were already in Austria, Himmler and his secret police already in Vienna, Dettlevsohn telephoned to me. He was no longer the humble refugee of 1934, 1935 and 1936. He had made his peace with the Gestapo, was safe, and was already much broader round the chest. He was already tasting with gusto the sweetness of being a German in this age of Germany's might regained, when the world was quailing before Germany's arms once more.

'Well, how do you feel now?' he asked, and already the ring of the boaster was in that friendly voice. 'Fit, thanks,' I said, 'and, by the way, how is Ketteler feeling?' 'Ah, that's another story,' said Ketteler's bosom friend, and rang off.

The hours and days that followed were so filled with the howling of crowds, the roar of aeroplanes, the thunder of mechanized armies, the rush of events, that you would expect my mind to have been full of them to the exclusion of all else. Yet even in those days I thought repeatedly of Ketteler, the mystery of the little part he had played in this stupendous drama, the mystery of his fear, that lurked always at the back of his eyes, tough as he was said to be, and indeed seemed to be, for he had stayed and faced the wolves. Was he hiding somewhere? Had he escaped? Had they got him in prison, in a concentration camp?

I often asked myself these questions, when I was in Switzerland, in England, now that I was again in Central Europe.

Here, in the Andrassy Ut, I found the answer. The scene around me dissolved. I saw Hainburg, that pleasant garden, the Danube flowing by.

## CHAPTER 9

### HUNGARIAN IDYLL

WE drove out of Budapest on a sunny Sunday in the early morning and followed the road to Belgrade for a while and then turned off and travelled between the rich nurseries of the Bulgarian gardeners, through a German and then through a Serbian village, deep into the heart of the Hungarian countryside until we came to, let us say, Dunapatay.

Janos and his wife Ilka were excited, because they hadn't been home for a long time and they looked forward to seeing their people, Janos's parents and Ilka's in-laws, and the little farm they hoped to inherit one day, only that Janos's mother, who rather disapproved of Ilka, seemed at seventy-five likely to live to be a hundred and Janos's grandmother, who was already ninety-nine and bedridden had been declared by the doctor to be good for another ten years, so that this business of inheritance moved slowly, and meanwhile Janos and Ilka lived frugally in Budapest and thought longingly of that little farm.

After an hour we turned off the rough road into a still rougher one, and drove for a few minutes through tall kukuruz fields, and then the view opened out again and there, remote and peaceful, was Dunapatay, with Janos's father waiting at the entrance to the village for the approaching cloud of dust that would bring his son with it. They seldom saw a motor car in Dunapatay and when I turned into the little farmyard, with the buildings standing round it, the village lads and girls came in afterwards and looked at it and touched it, and opened the door and sat in it, and when I began to take small parties for trips round the village there was great excitement and one octogenarian lady sprang in like a kitten and thoroughly enjoyed herself.

A great day. A wonderful tranquillity reigned in that farmyard, with the geese clucking about in one corner and the pigs

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snuffling in another and a patch of grass under an acacia tree where there was a table and wine. In the kitchen Janos's mother, who from behind looked like a girl of eighteen, so trim was her figure, so youthful her gait, prepared the midday meal, with the help of three or four other women, near or distant relatives, who had been pressed into service for the great occasion. The whole village was related, and cousins and uncles and nephews and aunts, all forewarned of the visit, kept coming in and drinking my health, and I theirs, until I realized that a test of my endurance lay before me.

I was glad to sit there at peace with the world and be proudly shown off and warm myself in the sun and drink that home-made wine, which we fetched from the cellar, with lust and gusto. Janos's father was not wearing so well as Janos's mother, and mortgages and foot-and-mouth disease and heavy labour were clouding his old age, but now he warmed up with the sun and the wine and his pleasure at seeing Janos and in having a guest, and when Ilka, a born tyrant, told him he ought not to drink so much wine, it only brought on those griping pains, he told her roundly to be still, to drink water gave him a frog in the stomach and he would drink wine as long as he lived and when he could no longer drink it he didn't want to live. Then he went and looked at the car, inspecting it with curiosity, chuckled, sat down on the grass and said this was a good day, he only wished his father were there to enjoy it.

I studied Ilka with much interest in these surroundings. She did not belong to this village, she was a German girl from one of the German settlements near Belgrade, and Janos had met her somewhere and married her, his second wife, and brought her home to his father's farm, which he waited to inherit.

But he had caught a tartar. In Budapest Ilka was a very humble person whom you would never have noticed. But in this village she was important. She spoke three languages, German, Serbian and Hungarian. Nobody else could speak anything but Hungarian, save the one Jew; he and Ilka could talk together without anybody else understanding what they said. She had

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seen the world, she knew Belgrade and Budapest. She soon felt herself powerful and important. She would be the queen of this little community.

But Janos's mother, though she had never been outside Duna-patay and spoke only Hungarian, was a woman of character. She thought Ilka a humbug, not a real peasant at all, and indeed she wasn't, for some strange reason, although she had been born and bred in a village: she was a typical town product. Janos's mother was determined to be mistress in her own household as long as she lived. That was why Ilka and Janos were living in Budapest.

Now I saw how swiftly Ilka, that working girl whom you would never have noticed in Budapest, put her spell on the women of this remote village. In deference to a tart remark of her mother-in-law she did bind a kerchief round her bare head. But she did not belong.

The midday meal was ready. With great ceremony we went into the house, into the cool room with the great open hearth and chimney that the hams used to be smoked in. But now they didn't use that splendid chimney any more. They had had a cheap iron stove put in. The factory-age has stamped its ugly and ruthless imprint on the remotest cot and hamlet in Hungary.

In the guest room stood the guest beds, piled high with mattresses and pillows. On the walls were photographs of Janos as a boy, Janos as a soldier, Janos as a young farmer, Janos at his wedding — his first wedding, but the figure of his bride, that wanton who had sullied Janos's good name and still lived somewhere in the village, had been scratched out, even to the hand on his arm, so that his arm seemed to have a hole below the elbow.

The meal began, served to the menfolk and to Ilka by Janos's mother and her host of helpers. That meal! My buttons protest when I think of it. First came soup, of which I partook amply, and then some stewed meat with potatoes, of which I also took my full share, for I thought this was the end and was hungry. But then plates full of roast chicken appeared, and the worst offence you could give was not to eat, so I had a good deal of

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that too, and they were followed by plates full of baked chicken, and after that an enormous apple tart, and I could only keep up at all by drinking lashings of wine and the room swam round me. That was followed by a large chocolate cake, Ilka's gift, brought from Budapest, a thing that brought all the women hurrying into the room, for stewed meat and chicken and apple tart were things they knew, but a town-made chocolate cake was a thing they tasted only once in six months, if then, and they ate it with zest and licking of the fingers. Ah, that was good.

Then I was shown the bedroom, with its three beds and I looked casually round and then had a shock for somebody was in one of them. 'Who's that?' I asked Ilka. 'Oh, that's the old one,' she answered, and went over to her and bent down and spoke loudly, and the figure stirred and laboured over and looked vacantly up and said something in a voice like that of a young child. It was the grandmother, ninety-nine years old and good for another ten, the doctor said.

Until she was ninety-seven she had done her daily chores. For two years she had been lying there. Her wits were failing her and she could not hold a spoon, so that her daughter had to feed her, but in wind and limb, the doctor said, she was as sound as a bell.

Now her daughter brought her a piece of that chocolate cake and fed it to her. That she could still understand. She ate it avidly. Afterwards she said, 'That's good, you can eat that.'

So even at ninety-nine, when your mind is clouded and you lie all day and all night in bed, and wake when the others are sleeping and complain fretfully about something, you know not what, in the darkness, even then there is still something you want, something that warms you, something that pleases you, I thought. Sweetmeats. And she was going to lie there ten more years like that, I thought, with nothing to live for but, at intervals of many months, a piece of chocolate cake. Perhaps, before she died, another world war would come and go. Its echoes would not reach to Dunapatay, at all events not to this room, with the old woman in the bed in the corner. If they told her about it she

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would not understand. But she would, until the last of those 3652 days understand chocolate cake.

When we sat again outside, at the table under the acacia tree, and drank more wine, my thoughts returned continually to her, in that chill room.

The evening came and we rose and went out through the village to the little inn, where there was music and dancing. Istvan, one of Janos's many cousins, came with us. In the course of the afternoon he had come into the farmyard, lifted his hat, bowed to me and smiled with a flash of white teeth. He attracted me at once. He was a man of about forty, but with the figure of a youth, plentiful white hair, a brown face, perfect teeth, an eager, friendly smile. He talked to me in Hungarian, I to him in German, neither of us understood the other, but we laughed and toasted each other, he was of those men whom you instinctively trust and like. I noticed that every time we drank, and I took a full-sized pull, he only sipped, and put his glass down. His wife was among those helpers in the kitchen, and I thought I noticed her eye on him. Perhaps that was why? Something had come loose in my car; smiling he went running off for tools, came back and mended it.

A thing that I noticed without thinking was that he had a curious fixed stare. He had fine grey eyes, but kept them wide open and seldom blinked, fixed them on you with a gaze full of friendliness but strangely rigid.

We came to the open common land at the end of the village. It was twilight, and here was a picture like an old coloured print of England. A wide green expanse, with cows in the distance, poplars and elms against the evening sky, rooks tumbling round them, and in the middle a little inn, with lights and the sound of music. We went in. The young men sat all at one side, the girls at the other, all in cheap frocks that became them ill. Among them was a group of girls who had come in from the Serbian village, and the Hungarian girls kept apart from them and looked askance when the Hungarian lads asked them to dance.

The band struck up, the lads and girls stood up and danced the Czardas, drumming the feet, tilting the shoulders, faster and

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faster, the girls' hands on the men's shoulders, the men's hands on the girls' hips. I sat with Istvan and talked with him, through Ilka. Yes, he thought a new war was coming, but he would not go this time, he had had enough in the last one. And as for Hungary, the whole trouble was that the Kaiser was gone. The Kaiser must come back, then the good times would return and all would be well.

Alas, poor Istvan, I thought, anyone can see that you live at the back of beyond. There will be no Kaiser in your time.

The evening grew late, and I had to get back to Budapest. We rose and went out and my flagging spirit nearly failed when I found that before I started for home I had to pay a round of return visits to all those relatives who had called to be presented to me in the afternoon. Through the dark lanes we went and turned in at a house here, a house there, and in each one there was the obligatory table round, the menfolk sitting at the table, the womenfolk standing dutifully in the background, the wine, the cold meat, the wine, the cold chicken, and the wine. I must have drunk between three and four litres of wine that day and went from strength to strength.

The last house was Istvan's. Again I drank with him, again he only sipped, while his wife stood in the background. I expressed interest in his wartime souvenirs, particularly some plates with the pictures of Kaiser Wilhelm and Kaiser Francis Joseph printed on them. Immediately he gave me two and would not be denied. His wife gave me a lovely old brocaded kerchief and would also not be denied; I certainly knew somebody who would care for it, she said, and they all laughed. For fear I should thirst on the homeward way Istvan gave me a bottle of wine to take with me.

I went and fetched my car, said good-bye to Janos's father and mother, promised to come again, Janos and Ilka climbed in and we started for Budapest. A marvellous day.

As we drove through the village the moon was up. At Istvan's house a figure stood in the garden waving, there was a flash of teeth. He had been waiting there to see the last of us. We waved back and I settled into my seat for the run to Budapest.

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I thought a good deal, on the way, about the people I had been with. For the first time I had found real Hungarians, the people who ploughed and tilled this fertile land, and how good they had been to me. Particularly Istvan. He was a sympathetic and gallant looking fellow, and I was rather moved that he should wait in the garden to wave good-bye to a stranger. I often thought of him and the hard life he had, to wring a modest living from his few acres there in Dunapatay.

## CHAPTER 10

### SWASTIKA OVER HUNGARY

ON August 20th, 1938, I stood on the hill in Budapest and watched the Regent, Admiral Horthy, lead the historic procession, bearing what is alleged to be the right hand of St. Stephen, to the Coronation Church. On August 20th, 1038, Saint Stephen died. He was that first crowned King of Hungary who received the title of King from the Pope himself, together with the Holy Crown which the crowds, in this anniversary year, had been flocking to see in the Palace at Budapest. In that Crown the whole tradition and ancient claim of Hungary, so long overrun by the Turks, so long ruled by the Habsburgs, to be an independent kingdom were vested.

Hungary, the land of St. Stephen's Crown, is a Crowndom rather than a Kingdom; that, at any rate, is the theory which the Hungarians expounded to you, and you always wondered, privately, just how far they believed in it.

Nevertheless, that Holy Crown, with the crooked cross atop of it, with the two venerable Hungarian noblemen who are its Keepers, with its own special Bodyguard, in gorgeous uniforms, is a bauble of some interest, as it lies in its special strongroom in the Royal Palace at Budapest, and if half the things that are told about it are true it must be one of the most famous jewels in the world, so I had better give you a brief account of its adventures.

The Holy Crown — not quite this crown, but half of it — was given to Stephen's emissaries in the year 1000 by Pope Sylvester II. When King Stephen died it lay, on his head, in his sarcophagus for forty-five years, and was then taken out again. King Bela fled with it before the Turks to Dalmatia. Only those crowned with it at Székesfehérvár by the Archbishop of Esztergom, Primate of Hungary, were rightful Kings of Hungary, and as kings are sticklers for the law, and liked to stand well with the Pope, this led to fierce competition for it.

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Good King Wenceslas wore it, and took it to Prague, but, despairing of obtaining recognition for his claim, he sent it to his cousin Otto of Bavaria, who came riding down from Vienna, with the Holy Crown in a wooden casket fastened to his saddle to claim his Hungarian throne, only to find, when half-way, that he had lost it; riding back in haste, he found it in the mud at Fischamend, where on summer's evenings, when I was in Vienna, I used to drive out to eat fish suppers in the little inn by the Danube, with its leafy and flowery courtyard, and very good they were.

A bold and bad Transylvanian baron, Apor, king-maker by inclination, captured Otto and took the crown from him. The result was that the Pope's candidate for the Hungarian throne, Charles of Anjou, though he was crowned three times, was not accepted by the Magyars. Not even a Papal anathema on the stolen crown could shake their reverence for it, and ultimately a Papal Legate had to go to Transylvania and induce Apor, somehow, to give it up, so that Charles could be crowned a fourth and last time and made an honest king. Next Elisabeth, Queen of the first Habsburg King Albert, stole it to make sure that her newborn son, and not a rival Polish prince, should be crowned King of Hungary, as he duly was, whereafter his mother took the crown to Vienna.

When the Turks crushed the Hungarians at Mohács the Crown remained safely in the fortress at Vishegrád, about thirty miles from Budapest on the Danube, and was even shown to the Sultan when he came down from his bivouac near Buda to see it; in jocular mood he tried it on the head of some of his attendant pashas.

After many adventures in succeeding centuries Francis Joseph came to the throne in Vienna and was refused recognition by the Hungarian Government of Louis Kossuth, whereon Austria called Russia to her help and attacked Hungary and the crown was removed and buried in a wood near Orsova. Several years passed before Baron Kempen, Chief of Police in Vienna, found a man who knew where the crown was buried and was willing for

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a price to tell. Kempen's emissary met him in Trafalgar Square, paid the money and returned triumphant to Vienna. The crown was disinterred, and after Austria had been defeated by Prussia in 1866, Francis Joseph, urged on by his unloving Empress Elisabeth, who had fallen in love either with Hungary or with a Hungarian, made terms with Hungary and came to Budapest to be crowned with it. In 1919 came the Bolshevist regime of Béla Kun and an advertisement offering the crown for sale cheap was inserted in a German newspaper.

To-day you see the Holy Crown, in image, everywhere in Hungary — on the Royal Palace, on the coins, on the postage stamps, on the letter boxes, on uniform buttons and badges, everywhere. It is not to-day as it was when it was sent to Saint Stephen by Pope Sylvester. The lower part, they say, is a coronet sent by the Greek Emperor Michael Dukas to King Géza I, and the Holy Crown, which had suffered in the burial of Saint Stephen, was altered and superimposed in cupola shape on this. A golden cross was fixed on top of it, like that which surmounts many a cathedral dome, and this, apparently from faulty workmanship, later became loose and crooked. By last century, when none remembered ever to have seen it straight, it was fixed so. Thus are traditions born, and Hungary became the Kingdom of the Crown with the Crooked Cross.

This gives you a broad idea of the involved theory of Hungarian kingship. The Holy Crown, which has gone through so many adventures since Pope Sylvester sent it from Rome, has a mystical status superior to that of its wearer. The territory of the Hungarian Kingdom is formed by 'the lands of the Holy Crown'. The lands belong to the crown. The crown is more than the King.

It is fortunate that this should be so, because the wearer of the crown has sometimes been pretty roughly handled. The last wearer, that unhappy Emperor Charles who succeeded to the venerable Francis Joseph during the Great War and whose son Otto is the present claimant, was twice chased out of Hungary by the present Regent, Admiral Horthy, when he tried to return, and

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soon after died on the island of Madeira, whither he had been removed by the British Navy.

On that August morning, the nine hundredth anniversary of the death of King Stephen, the founder of the Hungarian Kingdom, I thought of these things as I watched Admiral Horthy and tried to sort out the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. A Kingdom without a King, and little prospect of receiving one! A Holy Crown without a wearer. A Regent without a reason. An Admiral without a navy. It was all very difficult to understand. But in Insanity Fair not inappropriate.

I studied Horthy Miklós as he passed before me. Here was another of those remarkable men who, on the stage of our contemporary Europe, play so many parts. A Hungarian aristocrat, brought up on the broad Hungarian plain. Naval cadet at Fiume, on the blue Adriatic. Naval officer, world cruises, a command at Constantinople in the days when the sick man on the Bosphorus lay dying. Naval aide-de-camp at Schönbrunn to his Emperor Francis Joseph, whose successor he was to expel by force of arms from Hungary. Naval battles in the war. Last Commander-in-Chief of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. Embittered retirement, during the Károlyi and Béla Kun regimes, to his Hungarian estate. Entry into Budapest, at the head of the national forces, after the Rumanians had driven the Bolsheviks out. Regent of Hungary.

And now, here he was, passing before me. Only a few months before, I had seen him in the old Imperial box of the Vienna Opera between Schuschnigg and Miklas. Now Schuschnigg was a prisoner, and Horthy's Austria, where he had seen such great events, was no more. On the evening of this very day, the nine hundredth anniversary of King Stephen's death, he was due to leave on a State visit to the new arbiter of Hungary's destiny, Adolf Hitler, together with his Prime and Foreign Ministers, Béla de Imrédy and Coloman Kánya de Kánya.

I studied them, too. These three men were trying to do what Hindenburg and Papen had tried to do and failed in Germany, what Miklas and Schuschnigg had tried to do and failed in

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Austria, what Benesh and Hodza were trying and would fail to do in Czechoslovakia — to keep their country independent of Hitler in its foreign affairs and to repress Hungarian National Socialism, to retain power for the traditional governing classes. Would they succeed?

Imrédy was bald, thin, hatchet-faced. His admirers said he looked like Savonarola, the Nazis said he looked like a Jesuit. He was a devout Catholic, he had won many decorations in the war and was entitled to call himself *vitez*, or hero. His name, Imrédy, was the Magyarized form of Heinrich, which indicated Germanic origins. A curious trio: Horthy Hungarian and Protestant, Imrédy Germanic and Catholic, Kánya of mixed breeding and agnostic. Imrédy had been a successful banker and Finance Minister and early in 1938, when the annexation of Austria showed that National Socialism was at the door of Hungary, he had been called in as the last hope of the anti-Nazis.

Kánya, too, was an interesting figure to study. A wary, wily and aged diplomat, seasoned in the Ballhausplatz at Vienna before the war, in the period of tortuous Balkan intrigues and Balkan crises that led up to the Great War. He had been in the Press Department of the Vienna Foreign Office when that bloodcurdling story was put out, that afterwards proved to be untrue, about the Austrian Consul who had been castrated by the brutal Serbs. From the Legation in Mexico he had watched the collapse of the Empire he had served. As Hungarian Minister in Berlin he watched, from 1925 until 1933, the rise of Hitler and the re-entry of Germany, with steaming nostrils, into the European bull ring. Now he was Hungarian Foreign Minister. Silver hair. Wary eyes in a wrinkled brown face. Tightly clamped lips. The largest ears I ever saw on a man, but lying back close to his head, not protruding handle-like.

These three men, about to go to Germany, were the last hope of the monarchist aristocrats, the Catholics, the Jews, and any others in Hungary who dreaded the advent of National Socialism in any form. Would they succeed in their task? I asked myself, as I watched them on that August day. After the things I had seen in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, I thought not.

## SWASTIKA OVER HUNGARY

When I went to Hungary, in June 1938, I had immediately noticed a vast change in the atmosphere. The air felt quite different. I had last been there in the preceding January, when Schuschnigg was there, the Roman Entente of Austria, Hungary and Italy was still in existence.

Since then Austria had been annexed. Budapest looked just the same, to the casual visitor. But for me, who have a sensitive skin nowadays for political temperatures, all was different. I felt, in the air, the same suspense, the same foreboding, the same nervous expectation, compounded of hopes and fears, that I remembered in Vienna before the annexation.

The feeling of the air in Prague was quite different. There, too, was suspense, but without fear. The people knew that an ordeal was coming, but thought it was to be ordeal by fire, and were not afraid of it. In Budapest people knew intuitively that a change was coming in Czechoslovakia and that any change there meant changes in Hungary, but they could not foresee what these changes would be, or how quickly they would come; one part of the population hoped against hope that they would yet be avoided, the other part dreaded that they would not come; and thus you had, once more, that indescribable feeling, the chill that is thrown by the shadow of clouded coming events.

The annexation of Austria, and the appearance of German armies at the Hungarian frontier overnight, but an hour or two distant from Budapest, had sent an electric shock through the country and put the Jews in Budapest almost in panic. Now, in the summer, they were calmer again. Imrédy, they told themselves, was using a firm hand. The leader of the 'Hungarists' (the Hungarian National Socialists), Major Franz Szálási, was in prison with a three-year sentence before him, noisy demonstrations in the streets had been checked, perhaps all would yet be well.

For my part, I doubted it. Imrédy was trying to do just what Papen and Schuschnigg had tried to do — to take the wind out of the Hungarists' sails by doing a little of the things they demanded. The method had failed elsewhere and, with a new German success impending in Czechoslovakia, I could not believe that it would

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succeed here. Under the surface there was, I found, a very strong body of Hungarist feeling; was it conceivable that Germany, riding on the crest of a wave of success, would fail to foster it when she thought the moment ripe?

The Hungarists were campaigning among the people with three main cries: land for the landless peasant; out with the Jews and Jesuits; collaboration with Germany and Italy to recover Hungary's lost lands. These made great appeal in a country where the peasant is so poor and so much of the land held by the nobles and the Church, where the urban workman is so badly paid and the social services so backward, where the Jews are so numerous and so wealthy, where the real ruler, in large tracts of the countryside, is the gendarme with his heavy hand.

Would the Hungarists, if they achieved power, really take land from the great estate-owners and give it to the peasants? That was a question. The same thing had been promised in the parent country of National Socialism, but not carried out after the attainment of power. But the Hungarian peasant, if he knew that, did not bother about it; he was poor and landless and desperate and ready to grasp at any straw of hope.

The thing that surprised me was that many of the more extreme men of this mind were ready to think, not only in terms of Hungarian National Socialism in Hungary, but in terms of Hitler in Hungary, and this made me a little sceptical about the mystical power of St. Stephen's Holy Crown.

Had the national spirit of the Hungarians been watered down by cross-breeding and poverty to the point where masses of the people were indifferent about 'Hungary's independence', where all the talk about 'the thousand-year-old Kingdom of St. Stephen's Crown' was just a cliché of the better-to-do few, devoted to the God-of-things-as-they-are?

It almost looked like that. I found that large numbers of people wished for nothing better than for Hungary to go hand-in-hand with Germany in international affairs and to run her domestic household on the National Socialist system, and the more impatient ones simply clamoured for 'Hitler to come here and

## SWASTIKA OVER HUNGARY

clean things up', by which they meant to put them in power and drive out the Jews.

They derided the minor cleaning-up measures which Imrédy took. His Bill to restrict the Jewish share in all business undertakings and in the professions to twenty per cent of the whole they dismissed as a bluff, prepared in concert with the Jews to delude the public into thinking that Jewish influence was to be restricted whereas in reality nothing would be done, and indeed the visible effects of this measure were hard to perceive, the visible preponderance of the Jews in Budapest remaining what it had been. With the same derision they received the announcement of land reform measures which, on paper, looked drastic; 'land for the landless', they said, had been promised times without number and nothing was ever done, nothing ever would be done until this reactionary, clerical, Jewish regime was removed.

It was extraordinary to me, who had watched National Socialism triumph in Germany and Austria and move to its triumph in the Sudeten-German lands now, to watch it at work among people of another blood and to find that not a word or a phrase had been altered. The barrier of racial independence, which I had expected to find, was not there. The Hungarists said the same things, word for word, as the Nazis in Germany, in Austria and in Bohemia. When I listened to their leaders I might have been listening to Hitler in 1930, to Seyss-Inquart in 1937, to Henlein in 1938. They threatened the same kind of vengeance on their opponents — 'We'll have them cleaning the streets yet'. Their badges and flags were almost copies of the Nazi emblems, their programme and organization were completely attuned to those of German National Socialism, their leaders from time to time visited Germany, were honoured guests at the annual Nazi Rally at Nuremberg.

These Hungarists, sitting round a table, were friendly and smiling people, just as the Austrian Nazis had been, they did not bark or thump the table or go red in the face. But I formed the opinion that if Hungarism comes to full power in Hungary, there will be at the beginning a period of explosive violence and

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vengeance probably worse than those that Germany and Austria experienced.

To make the parallel with the development of German National Socialism complete, the Hungarists had their martyr, their imprisoned leader, Major Franz Szálási, whose incarceration they were honouring by self-imposed abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, with occasional lapses. He and they, like the German, Austrian and Sudeten-German Nazis, always declared that ultimate victory was as inevitable as the rising of the sun, that their oppressors only strengthened their cause by oppressing them, and that they would in due course pay for it.

Major Szálási, a former staff officer with two brothers serving as officers in the Hungarian army, always professes a mystic faith in his mission that recalls Hitler's oratory and after being sentenced for seeking to overthrow Parliament and 'the thousand-year-old Hungarian Constitution' and establish a dictatorship, replied, 'you say my ideas are confused and incomprehensible, but God created the world out of chaos', and on another occasion he said that the progress of mankind towards God was achieved by stages, and if a new stage could only be reached by bloodshed, then this blood would be spilt in the cause of God.

Major Szálási's imprisonment did not seriously hinder the work, which I found busily in progress, of organizing the Hungarists. His deputy, Koloman Hubay (Hubay is the Magyarized form of Hübner, so that M. Hubay seems also to be of Germanic origins) was efficiently taking his place.

They had another breezy young leader in Count Louis Szechenyi, a member of a famous aristocratic family who was spoken of with much contempt by most people of his own class in Budapest, possibly because they thought that he was acting against the interests of that class. I found him by no means unintelligent and he may play a part yet. But if he were my political opponent I should know just how to disarm him: I should collect several of the best gipsy violinists I could find in Hungary, and send them to him, with instructions to play continually to him, because when he has them before him, playing

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the tunes he loves, he passes out completely and politics mean nothing to him.

Wandering about Hungary in the summer of 1938 I came to the conclusion that great changes impended here too and that if Czechoslovakia should disintegrate without war, as I expected, the ultimate victory of German influence, if not of the Hungarists, would be certain. Another patch on the map of Europe would need to be coloured brown, another small state would become the vassal of Germany.

One fine day, when the fate of Czechoslovakia was in the melting-pot, Admiral Horthy, Béla de Imrédy and Coloman de Kánya all dashed off to Germany to see Hitler. They wanted to make sure that, if the German lion were going to have a meal, the Hungarian mouse should be given some crumbs. At night, with the lights flickering on the hills around and a searchlight blazing a white trail down the landing-field, they came back, Imrédy and Kánya in the special aeroplane that Hitler had sent for them. He was already the master of Danubian Europe; if you wanted anything you went to him. The aeroplane landed smoothly, Imrédy and Kánya stepped out of it. I saw that they were smiling happily.

‘Hitler’s promised them something,’ I thought.

On the landing-field was a man I knew, assistant editor of a Hungarian National Socialist newspaper. I happened to look at him now, as he eagerly pressed forward to listen to Imrédy’s announcement about his visit to Hitler. I was to see him again, not long afterwards, in very different circumstances.

## CHAPTER II

### BLUE-FACED VENUS

A DISMAL Douglas Reed, the very wraith of a journalist, wandered about that peerless Danubian riverfront in Budapest. I love that vista of the Danube from the Gellert Hill, I love every inch of the river from the source to the mouth, including many inches that I seem unlikely to see again, but particularly I love that superb stretch where the Danube runs beneath graceful bridges between old Buda and new Pesth. I can watch it for hours, animated by the changing light, from that hill, and I love to travel on it in the little river-steamers, and let it revolve around me, so that it seems that I am waltzing and Budapest is my buxom partner. I would like to build a one-roomed cottage for myself in a certain spot that I know on the hill from where the view is best and I would like to have a window running round three sides of the room and there to live and write and write.

But I pined and was disconsolate in Budapest, for all that I loved it and would love to live there, for it was just off the news map and I longed to be in Prague and see the end of the tragedy that was being played there. True, the suspense that hung over Prague was just as heavy in Budapest, for German domination in Czechoslovakia meant German domination in Hungary, but it was a reflex and not a direct suspense, and I wanted to be in the centre of the drama, in Prague. So, on that sweltering summer day, I dragged forlornly about and wondered how I could take destiny by the ears and shape my future as I wanted it.

The bookshops were selling *Insanity Fair*, but as I passed by them, and paused to look at it in the windows, and re-read the reviewers' commendations on the cover, I felt somehow that it had nothing to do with me, that it must have been written by somebody else. I was getting letters about it, from all manner of people and places, but these communications seemed to me like voices from some remote world that I once had known, having no direct

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relationship with this dejected journalist who traped around Budapest and wanted to be in Prague.

It was blisteringly hot. I sat down at a café terrace facing the Danube, read the papers, drank my coffee, wiped my streaming forehead, and was bored. On the other side of the road people who came and went were stopping to lean over the railings and look at something in the river. I always go the other way when I see crowds looking at something, but I was bored. Listlessly I got up and went across.

The dead woman, tethered to the quayside like a boat, lay face downward in the water. She wore something green, an undergarment, and her swollen shoulders strained against the straps; she had been some time in the water. Black hair streamed about her head and the Danube as it passed rocked her at the end of the rope, so that her head lolled to and fro and knocked on the stones of the sloping quayside wall.

The river, that had taken her life, mocked her by giving movement to her stiff limbs. Her body, grotesquely sprawling, seemed to express the feelings with which she had gone into the water: despair and hopelessness and grief and impotence. A living woman, come to the end of her hopes and dreams, might have lain so and beat her head on the stones, oblivious of all around her. She seemed, in inconsolable sorrow, to be rocking herself to and fro, her head upon her outstretched arms.

Somebody had found her and made her fast to the quayside until the police and the mortuary car should come. Now she lay, a scrap of green in the sandy yellow Danube, that swept by in a broad and stately curve. A flaming sun hung over the city, burnishing the turrets of the Parliament building as they stabbed the cloudless sky. The great royal palace, with St. Stephen's Crown atop of it and the inexplicably crooked cross atop of the crown, lay heavy in the heat on the heights of Buda, sleepy behind the lowered blinds of its unpeopled rooms.

The pleasure boats plied to and fro. The motor cars of the foreign tourists stood parked before the great hotel, each with a different number-plate — GB for England, F for France, D for

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Germany, CH for Switzerland, I for Italy. These pleasure-makers from near and far were splashing about in the baths, that outdid Caligula, behind the hotel.

To the right Mount Gellert climbed up to the fortress, and on its green slopes men were hosing the flowerbeds and lawns, so that flashing silver jets of spray rose and fell. Half-way up the hill was a chapel built in a grotto, a palace of mumbo-jumbo with cunningly contrived niches for illuminated saints and virgins, and from this came the sound of voices singing. On a projecting crag above it stood a great cross, sharply silhouetted against the sky. From where I stood I could see among the people in the chapel a very dirty beggar in a kind of monkish dress. He was always there, praying and praying, and when he knelt to pray you saw the blackened and gravelly soles of his bare feet.

On the edge of the quay, their legs dangling over the sloping wall, sat children. They had got there first and waited expectantly. Behind them stood young lads and girls, men and women, workmen, clerks, soldiers, officers. There was a policeman, his little shako set rakishly askew, his trousers tightish, his hands in white gloves, the sword of authority at his side. He looked at the woman at the end of the rope sternly, as who should say, 'Now then, you, what's all this 'ere about', but suffered the crowd to stand and gaze at her until the mortuary car should come.

Above, where the roadway ran, a second crowd of people, young and old, leaned on the railings and watched her as she lay, her head knocking on the stones, her haunches bobbing in and out of the water. Twenty yards from her a fisherman sat and intently watched his float, an old man with a battered brown hat, and braces suspending his ancient pants. His mind was given entirely to his fishing and he alone of all the people there did not turn his head to look at the drowned woman. Probably the sight had no interest for him; if he often fished at that spot he would have seen enough corpses fished out of the Danube.

In her lifetime the woman in the green slip, I thought, had never had so much attention bestowed on her. About two hundred people stood looking at her. In their tones I heard neither horror

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nor pity, and in their faces I saw no compassion, but only curiosity, and even something like contempt. Women said something to each other and smiled and chatted. A man near me made a jest and others laughed. What had he said?, I wondered. Perhaps that the woman was lucky to be dead, such jests come easily to the lips of men in crowds. Then came a man selling newspapers and he looked casually over the railings and said something facetious and others laughed, but one man turned angrily on him and objected loudly, and there was a noisy altercation with the two of them swearing at each other, and then he went away and everybody turned to look again at the woman in green, who went on bobbing about.

For fifteen minutes, for half an hour we watched, and from time to time the people craned over the railings to look upstream at the bridge and I guessed they were looking for the mortuary car. This was nothing new to them; they knew the direction whence it must come. Presently there was a stir and a pointing of fingers and a nodding of heads and I saw a black closed car come across the bridge, disappear, and then reappear beneath us, driving along the quayside wall.

Now the policeman, with his white gloves, bestirred himself and started moving the crowd, so that it split into two parts, drifted off right and left, and reassembled fifty yards away on either flank, and into the space thus cleared the mortuary car drove up and two men got out. They wore overalls and the inevitable shako of State employment. One was young and talkative; the other old, with a bloated red face and the manner of a man whom nothing can disturb or hurry.

They gave a professional look at the woman at the foot of the steps, the kind of look a prizefighter runs over his opponent or a farmer over the cow he thinks to buy. In that cursory glance they sized her up, how long she had been in the water, how heavy she would be, and all the rest that they needed to know. Then they turned their backs on her and lit cigarettes and chatted to the policeman and the driver, and the woman in the water seemed to go on lamenting and the crowd watched.

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For another fifteen minutes she jiggled at the end of her rope and then another car drove up and the Police Commissioner got out, pulling his well-fitting tunic down with one white-gloved hand and managing his sword with the other, and after him two plain clothes officials and there was saluting and hat raising all round at the head of the steps. The two mortuary attendants sprang to life and prepared for action. The Police Commissioner and his two colleagues and the policeman who had been first on the scene took out pocket-books and pencils. All was ready for that sacred rite, the taking of the protocol. Not life, not death, matters, but the protocol.

The Commissioner gave a sign. The two mortuary men, rubber gloves on their hands, ran down the steps, turned the woman over, took her under the arms, and laboured backwards with her up the steps. Her stiff legs bumped from step to step. At the top they laid her down, moved back for the Commissioner and his colleagues to look at her. I saw her face.

It was blue-black and the size of a football. No passing sculptor would have tarried to take a death mask of this unknown woman from the Danube, no poet to weave about her as she lay on her slab in the mortuary a melancholy tale of loving and losing. A few days more or less in the water make a deal of difference. Yet she was not much older than that other unknown woman who was taken from the Seine. Her face and shoulders were swollen and discoloured, but her body and her legs had not yet suffered, and they were those of a young and beautiful woman.

So she lay on the quayside, with the sun sweltering down on her, and she was dressed in her green shift, green knickers, cheap silk stockings and one red shoe. The fish or the river had had the other red shoe, I supposed, but I wondered about the rest of her clothing. Would a woman who meant to commit suicide take off her dress first? Could she have been murdered?

The Commissioner made notes in his pocket book and then said something to the two mortuary men, pointing with his pencil at the woman. Briskly they stripped her of her shift, examined it for markings, found none, and told him so. He made a note,

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they put the shift in the black box which was waiting for her, he gave another order, and they quickly tore off her knickers, examined them with like result, and put them down. Another order, and off came one stocking. The Commissioner made his notes and bent down to examine her and spoke to his two colleagues and they nodded sagely and all three wrote something else in their pocket books. The protocol was growing.

So there she lay with one stocking and one red shoe, and then he gave another order and off came the shoe and the stocking, and she was naked and lay there with her legs astraddle and her stiff arms outstretched and her purple and swollen face upturned, on the quayside by the Danube, with the trams clanging by and the fisherman stolidly fishing and the crowd watching, and on the other side of the street the expensive foreign motor cars coming and going before the great hotel. Behind me a woman said something: I turned and saw that she was asking me to make a little room for her child, who could not see. In the chapel on the hillside they were singing.

Sing, I thought savagely, sing for her immortal soul, you, corpulent priest, and you, dirty monklike beggar, praying and singing is your trade, but isn't there any man jack of you to spare her mortal body this final indignity. Because she was poor and desperate and jumped into the Danube, or was thrown, must she lie there like that, naked, obscene, helpless, having her bits of clothes torn off her. If they had found a coronet embroidered on her shift they would not have let her lie there like that.

The devil take your ranting about humility and charity and immortal souls, I thought, if you can treat even the carcass of another human being like that.

Then they slumped her over, looking for marks or injuries, and with a shock that was like a stab I saw the Rokeby Venus lying there on the quayside before me. The pose was exact, the small waist, well turned legs, good hips; a young and shapely woman. Then they slumped her back again, and one of her legs fell across the other as if she were alive, and her blackberry pudding of a face came into view, with its distended and staring eyes.

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They dumped her in the black box and drove her away.

That night I sat on the terrace of a villa high up on the Schwabenberg, behind Buda. A terraced garden, with tall trees dressed back on either side to make a frame, fell away beneath us and between the trees lay the lovely night scene of Budapest, with the Danube shining between the bridges and the lights flickering like fireflies. I sat and talked to compatriots, English people who were making a leisurely way by motor car about the Continent and had for the first time come to Budapest. One of them, a woman, said to me, 'Do you know, I think Budapest is even lovelier than Venice.'

I looked contemplatively down at the picture spread between the trees. It was indeed a lovely city.

Later I drove homeward and stopped on the way to go to a bar, a place, that is, where you drink and dance and watch girls dancing. Perhaps I had a glass of wine too many, for I seldom go to bars, night-clubs, bottle-parties, or any other of those exasperatingly dull places where girls try to make the men buy them champagne in the interest of the proprietor and the men comply in the hope of favours to follow and comes the dawn and the men find themselves, much poorer than they were, waiting in the grey street outside while the girl has left by another entrance with the gigolo, whom she is keeping.

I can understand a straightforward brothel, like those you see in Marseilles or Port Said, but I don't understand these places where the intention is to mulct the inebriated male by flashing before him the picture of that which he expects to find in a brothel and then playing the three-card trick on him. Also, I don't much care to see young girls of anything from sixteen years upwards posturing nearly naked before more or less drunken males. This always seems to me like the shop window of a brothel and if these places were avowedly brothels, with specimens of the wares on display, I should have no objection to them, but as they pretend to be something quite different I loathe them.

This particular bar, which would have called you out if you called it a brothel, paraded the female form unclothed on a

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scale and at a pace that staggered even me. Mechanically the place was a marvel of perfection, and it was more like the conventional conception of hell than anything I have seen. The performance was on a circular stage, raised about two feet from the ground and round this, their faces upturned like animals waiting to be fed, sat the guests. Leggy women with lots of bust came up through the floor and down through the ceiling and appeared in alcoves in the walls or in miniature reproduction on tiny moving-picture screens incessantly, while the lights changed from red to green and blue and yellow and back to red and the smoke rose and drifted about. They danced, these grinning girls, they floated overhead, they disappeared into unexpected apertures in the walls and reappeared through others, they performed acrobatic feats, they were whirled round by the rotating stage, they vanished into the depths and were shot into the heights, they tied themselves into knots on trapezes, they posed in suggestive, red-illuminated tableaux with almost naked male partners, and finally they flew round overhead on a kind of merry-go-round, so that you should see the only thing you had as yet missed, the soles of their feet.

For me, each of them had a blackberry pudding for a face. Somehow, I was sure that the woman I had seen was one of these, that the answer to the questions I had been asking myself about her was to be found in such a place as this. But she was beautiful.

I went, swearing never to come to one of these exasperatingly stupid places again. The next morning I sat again on the little café terrace over against the Danube, the same terrace from which I had seen the people across the street craning their heads over the railings as I drank my coffee. Now I drank coffee again, and read the *Pester Lloyd*. In an obscure corner I found a little item, headed, 'Three bodies recovered from the Danube'. It began like this:

Yesterday afternoon the body of a female person aged from 20 to 25 years was seen near the quayside before the Technical High School and was recovered. The body was partly clothed, but no clue to its identify could be found.

## CHAPTER 12

### HALF A LEAGUE

I HAD to lecture at Geneva, so I stepped into the evening express at Budapest and travelled uncomfortably through the night, for I had malaria on me and sweated incessantly, and the next morning I stepped into the aeroplane at Prague and held my breath, as I always do from old force of habit, until the wheels were well off the ground.

I now fly frequently but I don't suppose I shall ever, after those wartime crashes, be able to step into an aeroplane with the blissful unconcern of the normal traveller.

This day the flying weather was perfect; if this had been an open machine — I detest the closed-in air-liner — it would have been an exhilarating flight, I should have recaptured the feeling of keen enjoyment that I had sometimes had, in similar weather, in the open cockpit of an RE8. Now, from boredom, I began to study my fellow-passengers. They were nearly all Jews.

Insanity Fair has brought with it a new aerial game — playing leapfrog across Germany. Before the little men down there started making history again all the trans-European air-liners, as a matter of course, landed somewhere in Germany. Now, many travellers do not care to land in Germany, the air companies have opened all kinds of new services that hop across the Reich — Strasbourg-Prague, Rotterdam-Prague, Prague-Zürich, and so on.

Slowly, from that great height, I saw Vienna and all Austria pass beneath me and then the Lake of Zürich glittered in the distance and came nearer and I could even identify the Bahnhofstrasse, where we had bought red tulips, and the Hotel Eden au Lac, where we had found such peace after tumult, and I thought of that other journey that I had made, along this very route, but down below, so long ago. How long was it? Years, I thought. I reckoned backward. Five months.

## HALF A LEAGUE

Just as the aeroplane is changing all our ideas of distance, so does the rush of events alter our sense of time. We crowd into a few weeks, in this helter-skelter age, the experiences and emotions of a normal lifetime. Hopes and fears, laughter and tears, follow after and tumble over each other so quickly that you never get them sorted out. You are always running a race with time — or at any rate, I am — always trying to make plans for the future and execute them before the next surprise bursts upon you and you have to pack your grips again, leave everything, abandon your plans and hurriedly make others, keep just one move ahead of the four horsemen.

I thought a great deal that day, as I looked down on the same scene from above, of that March journey that I had made from Vienna to Zürich, of that transition from pandemonium to perfect tranquillity. It gives a picture in little of the lives of many men in our time, save that the unlucky ones do not reach that longed-for peace; just as they are within sight of it the pursuer spurts and touches them on the shoulder.

Now I spent half an hour at Zürich airport, one of the pleasantest in Europe, and then we were off again and soon the great Lake of Geneva lay beneath us.

I would have liked to take a parachute and jump out. Here, below me, lay another station in that race with time, and one that I had failed to make. Ever since that summer in 1936 I had been planning to come back here, where I had first been able to satisfy the longing that had been in me ever since the war — to get really fit. I had planned to come in 1937, and then I had felt that irresistible impulse to write a book about the things I knew and foresaw, and had had no holiday at all, but had worked night and day in my rooms in Vienna and used up a deal of those reserves of sun and air that I had stored within me at Montreux. I had consoled myself with the thought that I would at all costs go there in 1938 and drink some more of that marvellous wine from the Château Chatelard, row to and fro across the lake, wander about the lovely old castle of Chillon, laze on the bathing beach at Villeneuve, eat in utter peace of mind at the little hotel

## DISGRACE ABOUNDING

there, rest my eyes on the serene and reassuring Dent du Midi, climb the hills. . . .

Then came March 1938, and the invasion of Austria, and now the summer was already waning and I was dashing to and fro and working harder than ever and this was the only glimpse I should get of Montreux this year. Would I at last contrive to get there in 1939? I saw the places I knew and loved loom faintly out of the blue-gold haze below, and then recede into the haze again.

As the airport bus rolled into Geneva I saw that it passed over a place in the road where fresh concrete had been laid, with metal slots in it. Anti-tank obstacles! Even here, in this farthest corner of Switzerland, the hoofbeats of the four horsemen had been heard.

Again the peace of a Swiss town. But not for me. An hour or two to spare, just long enough to prepare that lecture, tip-tap in a hotel bedroom, quinine tablets. In the back of my mind, always, that angry question, why cannot I, who in all conscience have worked hard enough in my life, stay here awhile, in this peaceful place? — why must I gad about? neither myself nor anybody else is the better for it, who on earth wants to hear this fatuous lecture? is there anything else, save space, so limitless as sweating? — how am I going to lecture, with a head like this?

Then a garden, familiar faces, cocktails — one, two, three. The fighting spirit revives, time passes quickly, I find myself on a platform in the old League building, with some hundreds of seekers after knowledge, of many nationalities, before me. They want the best forecasts, I have them. I tell them what is going to happen to Czechoslovakia. Does this do any good? Any harm? Who knows? We go on and on, as a great man once said. The cocktail is the friend of man, in such a moment. I am as full of spirit as a fighting cock. When it wears off I shall try the tail of the cock that bit me. It was a good lecture, as lectures go, and if people like listening to lectures, then why not? I avoid them, for my part. I have often wondered whether the world would not be better without lectures, even without newspapers. I have tried to picture a universe in which the *Observer* would cease

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observing and the Garvin garve no more. Why can't I stop sweating?

Applause. Questions. An emptying hall. I look around me. I am almost alone.

This place is full of ghosts. Austen Chamberlain, good-looking, clear-minded, well-informed, stalks past; why the Neville hasn't his half-brother his personal knowledge of European problems at this juncture? Briand, brilliant in senility, dodders by. Stresemann, clear-minded, unhealthy in the flesh, swollen-necked, with his small eyes flickering to and fro. Benesh, earnest, diligent, bond-slave of an optimism that does not show at the back of his eyes. Laval, saturnine, inscrutable. Titulescu, monstrous, flamboyant, gesticulating, fluent.

The Negus, cloaked and bearded, moving with the dignity of a panther. Stephen Lux, the Jew, putting the muzzle of a revolver to his head. At the end of that spectral procession, doing the goose-step, comes Greiser, the Nazi from Danzig, with his fingers to his nose, cocking a snook.

A tragedy? A comedy? A harlequinade?

History will give the answer, say the letter-writers to *The Times*. History is a nitwit, that never learns anything from history. If history is our hope in years to come, good Lord deliver us.

The night air is cool. I go to the bar where all the caricatures are of those men who used to come to Geneva and try peacefully to settle the quarrels of the world. How meaningless they are to-day, those pictures, like studio portraits of Victorian grandfathers and grandmothers, with their necks and limbs in iron rests, with the aspidistra in the background.

A bad night, more quinine than sleep. The next morning I have four or five hours before I catch the aeroplane for Prague, start gadding about again. I take a look at the League.

The offices of the permanent foreign delegations are forlorn and lifeless. The great League building itself is an empty marble hall, full of despondent echoes. The permanent officials are writing their resignations, looking about for new jobs. They, too,

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are packing their grips, trying to plan new futures that will keep them ahead of the pursuers. There was once — my hat, there still is! — a Disarmament Section, with a numerous staff. For years old Arthur Henderson presided over it. Agnides, the new head, is resigning, Zilliacus, one of Henderson's secretaries, too. About fifty senior officials, in all, are going. The lesser lights, the interpreters, the archivists, the librarians, the girl typists, who once thought they would perhaps end their days in Geneva, are all getting ready to go.

I look back from the aeroplane on the white mass of the League building, framed among green trees. The tomb of so many hopes. There you should bury your unknown soldiers, together with their hopes. Dig them up, in Paris, in London, in Rome. They don't belong there anyway, now. Transplant them to Geneva.

The League was killed by England on that day in 1935 when the world was summoned to give combat to a predatory Great Power that had attacked a weak one — its own protégée in the League — without any intention really to lead the nations in resistance to that power, Italy. The intention already existed to allow Italy to dismember Abyssinia. It was merely electioneering policy. As soon as the election had been won, and the back benches of the House filled for years to come with an overwhelming majority of docile followers who would support the government in the surrender of one small state after another to brute force, the pretence was dropped that England meant to lead the world against the aggressor.

To win an election! Show me, in the pages of your precious history, an act as cynical, as infamous, as disastrous in its consequences as this. The great majority of the states of the world were ready to respond to that inspiring call, after so many centuries, to confront brute force with overwhelming force. Even within the countries that were outside the League hundreds of thousands of men would voluntarily have offered themselves for this cause. You could then have mobilized a force, in the cause of humanity, of justice, of idealism, the like of which the world has never seen. Since that day the hopes of these men, of

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the men in all countries who stood in that camp, have been humbled and humbled, until to-day they lie in the dust. To-day you can no longer mobilize that shining army.

Men, like myself, who have seen this tragedy take shape from day to day, seen the men who acted in it, seen the places where its acts were played, feel this more bitterly than those who were distant lookers on. To us it is more plastic.

To win an election! It is blood guilt that England has taken on herself in these three years.

I looked back once more at the white roofs of the great building among the trees. Not even half a League!

## CHAPTER 13

### BETTER THE DEVIL...

I WALKED with an American friend through a street in Prague and we saw, in a passing motor car, Lord Runciman. My American, an embittered democrat and a staunch friend of the Czechoslovaks, looked lugubriously after him and shook his head. 'I don't like this Runciman business,' he said. 'I think it means that the Czechs are going to be urged in a gentlemanly way down the steep slope of concession and given a sharp push when they are near the bottom. They are too naive to see the catch in this. The military danger they understood and, since they mobilized on May 20th, they have been ready to meet it and, if need be, to perish fighting. This, in my view, is a greater danger to them. Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know.'

'I saw neither horns nor tail,' said I.

Lord Runciman, his golf clubs atop of his ample baggage, an English milor called in his seventieth year from a yachting cruise on some sunny sea to produce a rabbit from the Czechoslovak hat, to make a nice cup of tea out of the devil's brew that was boiling in Danubia, had reached Prague a day or two before. My American friend was not quite right. Some of the Czechs did see what this meant for them. 'Are we now to commit suicide?' asked one paper. 'Must we sacrifice our democracy to make Germany master of Danubian Europe?' asked another.

That was exactly what they were required to do.

The few weeks that Lord Runciman spent in Prague, studying a question that has kept Europe at loggerheads for centuries, now seem as remote as Queen Victoria's jubilee, but as his report was seemingly taken as the basis for the surgical operation performed at Munich on a small country that we know nothing about, and as this is going to have incalculable results for the British Empire, the Runciman mission deserves a little space in this book.

## BETTER THE DEVIL . . .

My Czech acquaintances complained that Lord Runciman spent too much of his time in aristocratic households, a thing they disliked because the aristocracy of Czechoslovakia is almost entirely German, and in its sympathies is either for Hitler or for Habsburg, and Habsburg is a dream that has faded. Their attitude towards the Czechoslovak state was also unfavourably influenced, apart from these old allegiances, by the fact that it took from them, against compensation, part of their land and gave it to the landless peasants, the serfs of the past.

The Nazi *Völkischer Beobachter* published on September 13th, a few days before the surgeons met and decided on the operation, a photograph of Lord Runciman giving what appeared to be the Hitler salute at a march-past of Hitlerist Sudeten Germans. Was some fortuitous movement of Lord Runciman's right arm caught by the Nazi photographer? Who knows? It looked bad for an honest broker. You need to keep your right arm down on such occasions, if you wish to count as impartial.

Lord Runciman's report was taken as the bible which Mr. Chamberlain, Sir John Simon, Lord Halifax and others invoked, after the dismemberment, to make many statements, two of which are particularly important as examples of the muddled misinformation which is given to the great British public on these occasions, of the lullabies with which its conscience is put to sleep.

The first is the Lord Chancellor's statement that Czechoslovakia was 'a state which should never have been created'. If this was meant to make the public, with its blissfully short memory, believe that the boundaries of this state were set at Versailles it may have been successful; it is also absurd. These boundaries were mostly settled in the early Middle Ages. You cannot have an independent Bohemian state without these boundaries; it is like razing the walls of a walled city. The Germans who live inside them came after the Czechs.

The second was the statement of Lord Halifax and Lord Runciman that these areas would never have been given back to Czechoslovakia even after the most victorious of wars. What? After a victorious war you would take from one of the victors

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land that had formed the historic frontiers of her state, in independence and in subjugation, for many hundreds of years? Even within the German-ruled Habsburg Empire these were the frontiers of the Bohemian Kingdom.

Then there was the statement that the principle of 'self-determination' demanded the surrender of these areas. But areas containing only fifty per cent of Germans were handed over, and if only one of these fifty Germans desired to remain outside the Reich 'self-determination' demanded that this district should not be transferred. Not self-determination for the Germans, but the principal of German racial unity prevailed, and that meant self-extermination for Czech independence. Areas predominantly Czech were handed over. What has this to do with self-determination? The principle is that Germany must have what she wants. It need not, will not, stop there. On this principle you must hand over the rest of Bohemia, because a few more thousands of Germans live there, you must hand over Hungary because 600,000 Germans live there, Rumania . . .

But the most striking and most important thing of all in Lord Runciman's report was that part to which Lord Davies called attention in the House of Lords on October 4th:

. . . that those parties and persons in Czechoslovakia that have intentionally encouraged a policy antagonistic to the neighbours of Czechoslovakia should be forbidden by the Czechoslovak Government to continue their agitation, and if necessary legal measures should be taken to put an end to their agitation.

If you want to know what is likely to come to you in England, read these words of a Liberal politician in the year of democracy 1938. Read Lord Davies's comment on them:

As far as I can understand, this means that all free speech in Czechoslovakia should be suppressed, that no Czechoslovak should in future be allowed to criticize the policy of other countries which happen to be the neighbours of Czechoslovakia, or even to comment on it. That appears to me to

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be the quintessence of totalitarianism. It is synonymous with the denial of all democratic ideas, and it is by far the most unfortunate idea put forward in this report. . . .

The things that Lord Runciman advocated have happened. He and those who think like him need not fear. All parties antagonistic to Germany have been suppressed in Czechoslovakia, all criticism stilled. Czechoslovakia will go with Germany in peace and in war. Those carping critics in Czechoslovakia, who to the last man would have gone with a song in their hearts to fight for England if England had been attacked, are silenced.

I have before me a letter of Lord Runciman, written after Munich to the Federal Council of the Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia. 'Be of good cheer' is its general tenor. In one place he says, 'I believe that, if peace prevails, a happy and free Czech nation can live in the centre of Europe — faithful to its old traditions and its best ideals. That this may be so is my most earnest prayer.'

Well, well. Prayer, I fancy, will not now avail much. 'If peace prevails.' Well, perhaps it will: I see no reason why war should come as long as the supply of small states lasts. But 'a happy and free Czech nation, faithful to its old traditions and its best ideals'. How can that Czech nation be happy, and free if it has to submit its whole life to the totalitarian doctrine of the mighty Hitlerist Reich? And how can it be faithful to its old traditions and best ideals if an alien system is thus imposed by force upon it?

Lord Runciman may know the answers. Anyway, there he went, all on a summer's day. My American friend and I looked after him and then resumed our stroll. The sun was shining. The streets were full of people who were not only unafraid, but who seemed even to find an uplifting of the spirit in the thought of the fearful ordeal they expected soon to undergo. They thought their friends would be at their side and that was the only thing they really cared about.

The Sokol Rally had sent their spirits soaring to the highest altitudes of self-faith and patriotic fervour. The Association of Czech Officers, fearing the new development, issued a manifesto:

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We officers, standing in the front rank of those consecrated to death, in full responsibility claim the right to raise our warning voice. The authority of the State must not be diminished or degraded, neither by one deed more nor by one word more. There must be no retreat from this position. Within it we can live and work, defend ourselves and fight. We can die, but we cannot yield, not a single step.

Do you know that these men would have fought the whole German Reich, without a single friend at their sides, but for that final blow that broke their spirit — the knowledge that the Poles and Hungarians would be against them too. 120,000,000 against 14,000,000. It was too much.

But on that sunny day the Czechs, blind to their fate, still believed in their star, and Lord Runciman drove by to his hotel.

## CHAPTER 14

### HUNGARIAN TRAGEDY

THREE horsemen rode slowly along the road past the house, their horses' hooves stirring little puffs of dust. Three horsemen out of a fairy-tale, with close-fitting red boleros and long, flowing white sleeves, embroidered white skirts beneath which their tall boots showed, green, white and red ribbons round their broad-brimmed hats, and plumes of puszta grass waving from them.

Three gallant mounted figures, moving with the peculiar grace that a good seat on a horse gives a young man. Behind them came farm wagons, bedecked with flowers and foliage, and sitting in them the village girls, in tight red bodices and white embroidered skirts with red aprons, and red diadem-like headdresses framing their faces.

Behind them, again at a little distance, came the clowns, macabre figures with black stockings pulled over their faces, performing clown-like antics in the dusty road, and behind them again, at a respectful distance, came all the little village boys, running after the clowns. Every now and again the clowns turned round, pretended angrily to discover the little boys and ran menacingly towards them, and then the whole cloud of little boys, looking fearfully over their shoulders, turned round and ran away, until the clowns gave up the chase and went after the procession again, and then all the little boys turned again and ran after the clowns.

Bringing up the rear, as if drawn by an invisible string of curiosity, came platoons of geese, waddling, squawking, their necks elongated, their beaks open.

I stood in the garden of Istvan's house with him, and watched the pageant go by. This was the festival of the wine harvest, and I had come by special invitation to see it. As I watched it I envied Hungary the customs and costumes, the unspoiled village

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life that she had kept. Yet I knew that this was in reality only a museum-piece.

All those young men and girls had their lovely costumes, that they automatically put on once or twice in a year, for such occasions as this. But they always put them off again with relief. The young men, who made such gallant figures in this dress, were always glad to get into their cheap suits and look like corner boys. The girls pined for the tawdry pink and blue frocks, from the Jewish shops in Budapest, that so little became them. They were already beginning to conform to the mass-produced type of woman, sleek as a balloon and as empty, all with the same eyebrows and mouths and smiles and hair, that Hollywood showed them in the little hall that was a cinema once a week.

When they had gone, Istvan, with the pride of a father, showed me his farm. The mare had foaled, and with flashing white teeth and real affection he showed me the baby, that looked shyly and yet trustfully as he came in, suffered him to stroke its shining neck and flanks. His dog lay basking in the sunshine, among the noisy geese; suddenly, like a policeman who feels that the crowd is getting above itself, he raised himself to his feet and hurtled round the farmyard like a rocket, scattering them in all directions, pretending to snap at them with vicious jaws that really held no malice, only the determination to assert his authority. Satisfied to have shown off before us, he returned to his place and lay down again, looked about him, laid his head on his paws.

In a corner of the farmyard sat Istvan's wife and his daughter, feeding the geese. They sat with their legs across the bird's body and held its neck, just below the head, in one hand, so that the beak opened, and with the other hand they stuffed it continually with maize. Forcible feeding, an unpleasant custom, is the thing that makes the geese vicious, so that when somebody approaches them they stretch out their necks like battering rams and waddle at him, squawking angrily.

But it makes their livers big and they fetch a better price and the peasant longs, more than anything, for a little cash. His life is labour, labour, labour, always with the earth, his friend

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and his enemy, beneath his eyes. In good times he has enough to eat, he can kill half a dozen chickens for his Sunday meal if he has a guest coming and think nothing of it, he makes his own wine from the grapes he grows, and often this is his only consolation, but money, coins, those metal disks and pieces of paper, these are hard to come by, in Hungary, in these times, and when he gets them he usually has to hand them over to the Jewish banker in the market town, who holds his mortgage, or the tax-collector, who leaves him little rest.

Then we went to the little inn again. It had been transformed for this festival of the wine harvest. The walls and ceiling had been strung with vine-leaves, so that it was a bower, and among the leaves, put there by the girls, giggling together, were many little packets, containing a sweet or a cake or some small gift. The young men continually tried to secure one of these packets without being seen, but they would have been annoyed if they hadn't been detected, because that meant arrest by the girl, or girls, who saw them, and indictment before the judge of the festival and his wife, who sat in a corner, and payment of a fine — and a dance with the girl.

Then there was the rite of the dance with the judge's wife, who was only his wife for the purpose of the festival. The young men continually presented themselves for a dance with her, and the judge, by tradition, became very angry, and sent them about their business and warned her to mind hers, and then in the end she told him saucily that she meant to have a dance anyway and he, with his false nose and whiskers, pretended to be furious, but she was off and away, stamping her feet in the Czardas, her arms on the shoulders of a stalwart young man and everybody very jolly, with the music playing faster and faster, and the couples dancing quicker and quicker, and the wine flowing freely and smoke rising to the ceiling.

A merry evening. Round about, while those lads and girls danced and danced, the very picture of what a village festival should be, what village festivals perhaps once were in England, if that merry England ever existed, sat the older men, with their

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wives sitting dutifully a little behind them. I talked and drank with Istvan, while Ilka translated. Again, I noticed, he only sipped, but a little more freely this time, and suddenly he began to sing, his strangely staring eyes full of friendliness and merriment, and again I noticed that his wife's eye was on him, and that he remarked it and didn't care.

Afterwards we walked through the quiet village, where one of those gaily dressed and gallant couples sometimes passed us in the darkness, the man's white sleeve just discernible about the girl's waist, to Istvan's house. As I sat at the table I heard Istvan's wife, in the next room, say something to him, heard him answer angrily back, heard her retort more fiercely still. There was an altercation, I guessed that she was telling him not to drink any more, then silence, and she came into the room, composing her features into a smile, followed by her daughter.

I did not care for her. I saw that she had the worst of all feminine wickednesses, that she was a scold. I had seen that Istvan, after a very little wine, became very wild, a completely different man, but why not? He laboured like a slave in his vineyard and was obviously a *herzensguter Kerl*, a man with a heart of gold, industrious, who was devoted to his home and family, loved his horses and his land, had very little reward for all his pains, and why should he not, once in a long while, drink a little wine.

Constraint fell upon us, in spite of the pleasant smiles, the wine, the cold meat, Ilka's fluent stream of conversation. Istvan did not come in. We talked and talked. Still he did not come. I was puzzled, for I would have staked my life that Istvan, in or out of wine, was a man who would never forget his guest. I asked Ilka where he was, she spoke rapidly with Istvan's wife, and told me, 'She says he has probably gone back to the inn'.

I was very much surprised. At last Istvan's wife got up and went into the other rooms, looking for him. He was not there. She looked into the outbuildings, went into the farmyard, called. No Istvan. Ilka suggested that we go and fetch him from the inn. Again we went through the dark village towards the little pool of light on the common, where the band was still playing, the boys

## HUNGARIAN TRAGEDY

and girls still dancing. No, said the innkeeper, Istvan had not been back there. We made a round of calls on neighbours. He was not there. Istvan's wife was getting worried.

At last we went home again. The house was empty, as we had left it, with the wine and meat on the table, but without Istvan. We sat down again. Suddenly Istvan's wife told her daughter to go upstairs and see if her father was in the loft. We heard the girl mounting the stairs, heard a scream. We rushed up after her.

Istvan was hanging from a rafter, his head on one side, his booted legs stupidly dangling, his eyes staring. I understood that stare now. With the help of his wife, who was as strong as an ox, we got him down. He was long past our help, this friendly and merry Istvan. He would not fight in the next war, never see the Kaiser come back. Somewhere, in another house in the village, the old grandmother was lying awake, staring into the darkness, muttering plaintively, thinking confused thoughts, listening to the clock tick out the seconds of her hundredth year. At the inn the boys and girls were still dancing.

I left Dunapatay in the darkness and drove soberly to Budapest. I had spent very happy hours there, hoped to come again often, even to live there for a little while, sometime. Now I knew that I should never come back again.

## CHAPTER 15

### WAR IN THE AIR

I SAT with a glass of wine and a book in my quiet retreat in Budapest. The windows were wide open. The September night was warm. Faint footfalls sounded in the street: I raised my head and looked, and a couple, the man's arm round the girl's waist, passed beneath the street lamp and were gone, the footfalls dwindled. Moths flew in and out. The dark hillside opposite was spangled with lights, among them one that moved — a motor car, too far away for me to hear its engine.

On such a night as this . . .

Reluctantly, I bent down and turned the knob of the radio, searched among the stations as it came to life. Immediately the stillness was shattered. Hoarse, raving, choking, a maniac voice broke crashing in, the peace was gone, the darkened room was full of envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, beating the air with their foul pinions like carrion crows.

Wir haben vierzehn Jahre gekämpft . . . Der Oberlügner Benesh und seine Mordbanditen . . . Unsere deutschen Volksgenossen, diese armen und gequälten Kreaturen . . . Die feige tschechische Soldateska begeht Meuchelmord an unseren Volksgenossen . . . Wir wollen den Frieden, aber . . .

Hitler. Henlein. Some Sudeten German speaker at Dresden. No matter who, they were all one, they all raved in that same obscene voice, all used the same obscene threats.

When we get hold of them we'll lock them up until they turn black . . . And take good note of this, you Czechs who are listening now at the loudspeaker, shaking with fear, for every slight and injury that you have done us in these twenty years we will take vengeance tenfold. . . .

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A roar, a howl of cheering, like ten thousand hyaenas on the trail. Bared fangs, slobbering jaws. This was the stuff they liked, this they understood, this warmed their hearts and hit the bull's-eye of their emotions. Overwhelming might; a weak and helpless adversary; brutality without fear of retribution; hit him, he's got no friends.

So it went on, day by day, week by week, in that September, in a rising crescendo of lust and hatred. It inflamed the mind, the nerves, the imagination to bursting point. I thought back to the World War, its atrocities, its propaganda; what an affair of gentlemen was that compared with this. This new instrument of warfare was, to me, worse than all the others, worse than high explosive, bullets or poison gas. Hard words can never hurt you? Perhaps not, but this animal exhibition of human baseness could destroy your last vestige of faith in the race.

Then I turned the knob, and another voice, grating and guttural, took up the tale. 'Achtung, hier Moskau. In der Tschechoslovakei haben heute die braunen Morbdanditen . . .' Then a woman's voice, announcing another item of anti-Fascist news: 'Achtung, hier Moskau. In Spanien haben die Franco-Fascisten . . .' On and on it went, first the man's voice and then the woman's, venom alternating between bass and falsetto, telling how the murdering Fascist thugs were blowing women and children to bits in Spain, putting anti-Fascists in concentration camps in Austria. . . .

I turned the knob again and another hate-laden voice filled the room. It spoke Czech. 'Pravda vítězi.' 'Truth prevails.' Now we shall hear the Czech version, I thought. But the voice took up the chorus of Czech iniquities, how the terrified German population of the Sudeten lands was being pursued from village to village by Czechs painted red and with horns and tails and cloven hoofs and all the other drivel.

Vienna, broadcasting in Czech. With satanic ingenuity they had borrowed Masaryk's own motto, *Pravda vítězi*, for this hymn of hate. Ye Gods, I thought, if only Ernst Lissauer had been alive to-day, and hadn't had the misfortune to be a Jew, how he would have enjoyed himself shouting into the microphone:

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We will never forgo our hate  
We have all but a single hate  
We love as one, we hate as one,  
We have one foe, and one alone —

CZECHOSLOVAKIA!

Once more I turned the knob and got Moscow in English, an extraordinary performance. Again a man and a woman. The man spoke East Side American with some kind of additional accent, the woman Wigan English with adenoids and a sniff. The blood-curdling anti-Fascist items sounded ludicrous in these tones.

A turn of the knob, and a cultured voice saying reasonable things in good clean English came on the air. What now, I thought? It can't be England; the English is too good. It wasn't. It was Prague broadcasting in English. I don't know who prepared the material, but it was the only thing worth listening to, a reasoned refutation of anti-Czech propaganda, chapter and verse given, delivered in an unemotional but sympathetic voice.

Again the knob, and some of the most extraordinary English I have ever heard filled the room. After listening for some time I decided that it must be English, and after considering the announcements, which were all about the sins of the Chinese and the prowess of the Japanese, I decided that it must be Tokyo's English Hour.

Then another loud voice speaking in German, but giving a version of German events which had clearly not been passed by Dr. Goebbels. Who could this be? The list of stations gave no clue; my radio was like that. At length I decided for Radio Strasbourg.

Then an English voice which promised light entertainment but infuriatingly broke into an advertisement for some purgative; a ranting voice in bad French which was telling the French-speaking world about the murderous Czechs from Berlin; the English Speaker, oh so refaned, cursing the Czechs from Rome; Republican Spain defending the Czechs from Barcelona or somewhere in weird German; America putting in a terse and colourful (poidon me, colorful) word about both sides from New York; and finally

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back to Dresden, where the tumult and shouting was still going on and that Henleinist speaker was shouting at the top pitch of a voice grown hoarse but still willing about the things he was going to do to the Czechs.

In a new war, or at any rate in the first stages of it, until the population gets inured to these things, I think all governments will have to do what the Czechoslovaks did during the crisis and impound radio sets. No human nerves can, without a transition period, stand this infernal cacophony of lies and hatred, beating about the ears at all times of the day and from all parts of the earth.

Listening to it, I had an idea which seems to me to have the seeds of great things in it. Why has no military genius employed noise as an instrument of warfare? Just noise, amplified and amplified and amplified, growing louder and louder and louder until everything cracks and quails before it. Try it for yourself sometime. Get Hitler on the radio and then make it as loud as you can. Imagine that noise amplified a hundred or a thousand times.

I hope somebody will try this out, I think there is something in it.

On this night, physically and emotionally exhausted by this devil's concert, I tried to get London. It was the most difficult of all stations to reach, on my radio. But I diligently sought and sought. Here, I thought, I should find something restful.

At last I found it.

All the little pansy voices.

I'm in love with my dear wife, are you?, yes eye-yam.

I do like er little bit er snuff.

Good naight.

*Good* naight.

My God!

## CHAPTER 16

### AND THOU

I HALTED my car at a place, on the road from Budapest to Belgrade, where tall acacias stood round a green and shady wayside grove, an ideal place for the midday meal, sheltered from the noon-tide heat. The sun was high and burning, a vast blue Hungarian sky spread over a green plain where the gooseherds and goat herds, little boys and girls barefooted and in reds and blues, tended their flocks, where occasional white farmhouses stood, each with its frame of trees and its well.

Again I had pulled up for a moment on that mad ride through the Haunted House which is the lot of our generation, a thing of shrieks and surprises and explosions and glimpses of skeletons and being flung hither and thither, and found myself utterly at peace, the sun above me, the grass under my back, the leaves making patterns on the sky.

This was that very September day when men were digging trenches in London parks and sending trainloads of children away from Paris and in Prague the people walked the streets with their gas-masks at their side and in Germany the great war-machine was lumbering into its gigantic stride, the day when all seemed lost, when in the afternoon the House of Commons became a bedlam of cheering and laughing men, because Mr. Chamberlain was about to fly, fly, fly again.

My heart was in Prague, but I had had an imperative order to go to Belgrade, and here I was, while men and women in so many countries trembled for the morrow, while an intolerable nervous tension lay on all the cities I knew, lotus-eating on the Belgrade road.

A jug of wine? We had that, and very good it was, drunk from those Hungarian drinking cups that we loved so well. A loaf of bread? We had that too, and meat and cheese to savour it, and

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those meals, beneath the bough, are the ones you remember longest; I would not trade them for magnums of champagne and pounds of caviare, in marble halls. A book of verse? For that we had our thoughts, our talk, our hopes, the things we had seen, the times we lived in, the best of all books.

A wilderness? This was no wilderness, but a green and pleasant land, but you made it so. Singing? Your voice, as I often told you, was a thing between Marlene Dietrich and the croaking of a bull-frog, when you sang, but I liked to hear it nevertheless, this was only the kind of joke that we were wont to make, in our good companionship. There was music in your voice, for me, whether you sang or talked, and staunchness and truth and loyalty and courage and loving care, all the things that are so rare in our time, that men strive after and so seldom reach on their journey towards the gold-mine in the sky. You were as good as gold, and as blonde, and what could be fairer than that?

Beside me? That was the best thing of all. Unafraid, smiling, always at pains to make life more pleasant for me, always laughing at the setbacks, rejoicing with me in the victories, never desiring more than that good companionship. I always knew that we should only go a short part of the way together. Something tells me these things.

I knew it, somehow, at the beginning of that companionship, one day when we stood on a hilltop, a glorious March day, as warm as June, and I chanced to look at you with your native Danubian hills and fields behind you, with the Danube curving by below, and the invigorating call of spring was in all the air, and yet my heart was sad, for in that moment I knew that the road along which we should go together was short.

You asked me what I had — *Was hast du denn?* — and I said nothing, and I never told you that, you who will never read this story of our noonday rest beneath the bough. You sometimes asked me afterwards what had ailed me in that moment, and I never told you. Why should I? Why fret about them? . . . But fret I did, on this day too, on the Belgrade road. I thought then of that other day.

On that other day, as I looked at you, I saw all that Danubian

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landscape, that I loved so much, in your eyes. What colour were they? Now, I do not know, for that landscape was blue for the sky, and brown and green for the hills, and grey for the Danube, and yet your eyes seemed to match it all. I know that I found them beautiful.

You were a child of the storm, as I am. Your earliest recollection was of your uncle, in his sky-blue uniform and on his horse, riding off to war through the market-place, and how gallant and handsome he was, and how you admired him, and after that all your life, like mine, was shaped and moulded by the war and the things that came after it. No brave new world, no tranquillity.

You, when you dreamed, had only modest dreams, as I had, of the things to which other generations were able to aspire: a white house with a green vine by blue water, a little air and sunshine, if possible the mountains near at hand and the rustle of the fir-woods like the music of the sea, hard work from dawn to dusk.

Instead of that, a Europe where men are hunted like rats, where the free man is on the run, where the nepotist, the sycophant, the cheat and the brute grow fat, where the tyrant has again come into his own and there don't seem to be any lampreys to-day, or if there are they don't eat them, and there is practically nothing to hope for from a surfeit of spinach.

We were companions on the way long enough for you to teach me again that truth and faith do exist and cannot be quite exterminated even in an age of treachery and lies. You sometimes gave me things, worth much more in the thought behind them than in themselves, but you never gave me anything so precious as this. You saw that I frequently lost my papers, and you gave me a leather wallet for them, so that I never lost any more. One time, when I had a contract to sign that might mean much or little for me, you gave me a golden fountain pen, with orders to use it first only to sign that contract and it would bring me luck. Another time, when I had a succession of letters all bringing bad news and all the other letters that I hoped for didn't arrive, so that I hated the sight of the postman, I found on my table a tiny golden envelope with a tiny golden missive inside it — 'Keep

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smiling'. Soon, the post did change its tone, and golden news came. But your other gift was the best of all.

These were the thoughts that played in my mind that day, as we lay beneath the acacias. I was completely happy save for that tiny regret that never quite left me, the regret that we could not put this peace in a cage and keep it by us, that we could never stay more than an hour in the oases we found, that no white house but only an endless open road lay before us, that a turning in the road would soon come where our ideal companionship would end.

The sun had made a long stride towards the west, the shadows were already lengthening a little. Reluctantly we packed the drinking cups, left the acacia grove. A long, long journey lay before us. I looked at you again, silently, and thought of that other day on Danubian hills. You caught my glance and asked again, 'Was hast du denn?'

'Nothing,' said I, 'come on, let's go.'

## CHAPTER 17

### BOY KING

I **CAME** over the Danube bridge to Belgrade, and another car, leaving the city behind it, passed me, with a bareheaded young man sitting beside the chauffeur. I looked and saw that it was young King Peter.

What changes, in him and in Yugoslavia, since I had seen him last, four years earlier almost to a day. Then, a bewildered and shy-looking child, glancing with big eyes and a nervous smile at the wailing and weeping crowds that lined the streets, accompanied by a tall woman shrouded from head to foot in black, his mother, he walked through this same city behind the coffin of his murdered father, Alexander, shot at Marseilles with the French Foreign Minister Barthou by the Macedonian assassin Vlada Gheorghieff.

*Punch* at that time published one of its solemn pictorial comments. It showed little King Peter being fondled by a large and motherly woman in flowing robes and, probably, a helmet, I don't quite remember, who said to him, 'You will need all your father's courage, my boy. You have the sympathy of the world'. I think the allegorical matron symbolized Europe, but this is just force of habit; if I were to create an allegorical figure, 'Europe', to-day it would be that of a man in a top-hat, with a Hitler moustache on his gas-mask, an upraised Mussolini arm, a red shirt, a tricolour sash and an umbrella.

Anyway, in October 1934, from Bouverie Street, it looked like that. In October 1938, when I met young King Peter crossing the bridge, many things had changed. He had changed a great deal. At the age of fifteen he was already very tall and mature. He is going to be the tallest king in Europe, taller, I should expect, than the tennis-playing Mr. G. But when another three years have passed, and he enters into his kingdom, many more great changes

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will have occurred, the outlines of which you are only just beginning to see before you.

How quickly the fortunes of a country can alter, in this mid-twentieth-century Europe of ours, when the politicians have thrown away every opportunity of ensuring peace beyond the frontiers and goodwill towards the men who live within them.

In 1934, when Alexander was murdered, Yugoslavia was, indeed, in desperate plight. At home there was the bitter strife, which had led to the murder of the Croat leader Stephen Raditch in the Belgrade Parliament and after that had only been hidden by the iron safety-curtain of the King's dictatorship, between the Serb unionists, who wanted Yugoslavia to be a centralized kingdom firmly ruled from Belgrade, and the Croat federalists, who clamoured that they had not thrown off Hungarian rule and joined the Yugoslav Kingdom only to be ruled by Serbs and demanded home-rule for their Croatia.

The young state, thus weak within, was surrounded by enemies. Hungary and Bulgaria both claimed the return of territory she had taken from them. Italy claimed to be rightful owner of a strip of the Yugoslav Dalmatian coast (promised to her by generous Allies in the war, when many promises were being made). On the southern Adriatic coast Albania, under complete Italian tutelage, was a pistol thrust permanently into the Yugoslav side. Astraddle the Adriatic, Italy could at any moment close it and prevent French or British naval succour reaching Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia at that time was in the position of Czechoslovakia in 1938 — isolated, surrounded by hostile neighbours, remote from lukewarm friends. She, like Czechoslovakia later, tried to obtain from them binding promises of support if some new predatory peacebreaker in Europe should attack her. She failed. England, who in 1935 was to summon the world to combine against the Italian aggressor, was telling France, 'Make your peace with Italy'. France told Yugoslavia, when she asked for the conclusion of a pact of immediate and automatic mutual help against aggression, 'Make your peace with Italy'.

Alexander, far-sighted king, unluckiest of men, probably

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meant to court the friendship of the great dictatorships when the thickset gunman, Vlada the Chauffeur, sprang on to the running-board of his motor car in Marseilles and shot him, just in the place where his shirt of mail would have protected him if he had not omitted to put it on that Tuesday. Already in 1934, long before the Abyssinian fiasco and the later fiascoes, he seems to have foreseen that the great democracies did not really mean the things they were so loudly saying, that they lacked either the determination or the will to compel peacebreakers to keep the peace, that their mutual-aid, collective-security, all-together-boys-against-the-aggressor structure was a house of cards, erected to delude their domestic opinion, that would collapse at the first puff of a war wind.

He had indicated so much to Barthou, when Barthou was in Yugoslavia, and the good Barthou, who himself may have believed that the ring-a-ring-a-roses game of the peace-loving powers around the tigers would end without their all falling down, received a severe jolt. It gave him furiously to think, and he invited Alexander to come to France and talk things over.

Before he went Alexander had had a secret meeting with Hitler. He was the first of Europe's rulers to make that modern pilgrimage, and when you consider that this was in 1934 you will realize how very far ahead he saw. He had made up his mind that the game of pretending to bind with silken chains of peace great powers which were being allowed to rearm faster than anybody had ever armed before was farcical and dangerous for his country, and, as he could not count on the eloquent but empty promises of his friends, he was out to get on good terms with the others.

Perhaps he could have convinced the French, who knows? But just at that moment all the enemies of Yugoslavia joined hands and struck him down. The gunman was a Macedonian, he and his Croat terrorist accomplices received training in a camp on Hungarian territory and some of them travelled with Hungarian passports, others came from and afterwards fled to Italy, whence they were not extradited. France did everything she could to kill the remaining affection that she enjoyed in Yugoslavia by her

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dilatory fashion of bringing the murderers to trial. If you ask ardent Serb patriots, they will swear that international Jewish Freemasonry, centred in Paris, had a hand in the game too, having learned of Alexander's secret meeting with Hitler and of the innermost reason of his visit to France.

Another year, and Alexander would have been safe, because by that time the line-up had entirely changed and all those enmities were on the run or putting on the masks of friendship. Italy, scared by the combination against her of a sanctionist world, and especially by the naval alliance against her in the Mediterranean formed by England and the small Mediterranean states, pre-occupied by her Abyssinian conquest, disturbed by the new threat of a German advance southwards towards the Adriatic and the Balkans, threw her policy into reverse and courted Yugoslav friendship. The Bulgarian and Hungarian hounds were called off. Germany, bent on the subjugation of Yugoslavia's ally, Czechoslovakia, assiduously courted Yugoslavia too.

Thus young Peter, when I saw him for the second time on that September day crossing the bridge below Belgrade, Peter who had succeeded his murdered father on the throne of a country that had lived for years in mortal fear, with enemies on all its frontiers, was king of a country that had nothing but friends.

A few days before — the day when the hilarious House of Commons roared its applause of the news of the third visit to Hitler — I had come through Novi Sad, and there the Yugoslavs were demonstrating in the streets against Hitler and Mussolini, against aggression, for England, France, the League, Czechoslovakia and democracy.

The Government, which ever since Alexander's death had consistently pursued the policy of making friends all round, shook in its shoes that evening. If England and France had stood by Czechoslovakia and resisted the threat of force its whole policy would have been discredited. It would have been swept away, for the hearts of the Yugoslavs were still with their wartime allies, all the blood in them rose against the thought of a new age of military oppression of small states in Europe, they longed for democracy.

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How silly they looked, these people, a day later, when Czechoslovakia was humbled in the dust, when the Great Powers were all handing each other posies at Munich, when their own Government was able to say, 'We told you so'. The Government, thankfully reassured and sure of its triumph, quickly ordered a snap election.

In Belgrade there was an exhibition. 'Three years of Dr. Stoyadinovitch's Government'. In pictures and diagrams and graphs it showed you all the progress that had been made in those three years, the building of roads, the rise in foreign trade, the increase in savings, the conversion of foreign enemies into friends. Among the legends on the walls you did not see one reading: 'If we had hitched our foreign policy to England and France, if we had done what France, who rebuffed us when we wanted the promise of succour in 1932, wanted us to do in 1937, if we had made a pact of mutual aid against aggression with France and Czechoslovakia, we should have been in Czechoslovakia's plight to-day, or at any rate next in the dentist's waiting room.' But that was the unwritten moral of the tale.

The best possible recipe for a Balkan Prime Minister's success is for him to take office at a moment when events in the outer world are causing the foreign foes of his country to revise their policy and court its friendship, astutely to calculate the relative armed strength and moral determination of the groups of Great Powers, and to hold office during a succession of good harvests.

Lucky Milan Stoyadinovitch did all these things. Working in full understanding with the Regent, Prince Paul (pedantically I ought to call him The First Regent, but nobody ever hears anything of the other two, so he is actually The Regent), he had increased the strategic security and the trade of his country.

An interesting figure. Herculean, virile, smiling, with the constitution of an ox. Extremely pro-Stoyadinovitch. A good lusty Serb, he understands men like Goering, can outsit them at table, knows their minds, knows his own. He has to keep his end up among the politicians of Belgrade, and that is a hard school of

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experience. They shot at him once in the Skupshtina, as I wrote before, but they didn't rattle him. I have a treasured photograph of the Government leaving the Skupshtina that day; all you can see is a row of behinds above the desks, they couldn't bend down quite far enough. But Stoyadinovitch didn't go out bending, he remained unconcerned and walked out afterwards, cool outwardly, inwardly raging, but fearless.

Foreign friends have been trying to get him up to Belgrade golf course — the construction of this course is one of the few triumphs of western diplomacy in the Balkans — but I don't think they have had much success. The Serbs have not yet reached this Himalayan peak of civilization. Anything more ridiculous than a real he-man of a Serb fiddling about with a stick and a little white ball I can't imagine. In Serbia they work hard, eat hard, drink hard, live hard.

In Stoyadinovitch you see again a man whose career is a panorama of our times. Do not imagine that he likes the policy he has had to pursue — the memory of centuries of Turkish and Germanic oppression is in all Serb blood. Do not imagine that he does not see the danger of vassalage for Yugoslavia. He had to pursue this policy — because the Great Powers with whom Yugoslavia would have preferred to pursue a better one were too weak, too irresolute, too confused, too untrustworthy. Small Balkan states have to pick their steps carefully. They cannot pursue an independent policy, they are too small, they have to watch the big shots, and take care not to offend the biggest.

On the one side they see strength in arms and strength in intention; on the other they see weakness in arms, and intentions proclaimed but actions constantly belying them. They draw their inferences, and act on them. That is why the rulers of every Danubian and Balkan state have been, this year of 1938, to see Hitler. You have not always learned of this — but they have visited him.

Stoyadinovitch, a successful business man and Finance Minister, was chosen by Prince Paul for Prime Minister in the summer of 1935, just when all these things were in the lap of the gods. He

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came to office a democrat and a friend of what are miscalled the great democracies. He hoped to restore democracy in Yugoslavia, to keep Yugoslavia in the happy family of the democratic nations, all united in the determination to keep out or kill the burglar.

He soon found that he was wrong. Prince Paul had been appointed First Regent by the will of murdered Alexander. At the time, many people wondered why. Prince Paul was little known, he had always been kept in the background, in the army he had never been given a higher rank than major. You will know him well, now, in appearance, because his wife is the sister of your Marina, your lovely Duchess of Kent; otherwise he would be little more than a name to you.

Prince Paul was even slightly unsympathetic to the Serbs, because he had been educated abroad, at Oxford, because he had not fought at the front, like Alexander, because he had an aristocratic mother.

Soon Milan Stoyadinovitch came to realize why Alexander had chosen Paul for Regent. The dead King, who had seen so far ahead, had imparted his views to Paul, who fully shared them. In the spring of 1936 Germany marched into the demilitarized Rhineland zone, took back without a by-your-leave the last pledge for her future peaceful behaviour. A year before, at Stresa, after the proclamation of German conscription, France had told England and Italy of her fears that this would be the next German swoop, never mind Hitler's solemn obligation that he would always keep the pledges of the Locarno Treaty, and what about it? England and Italy had answered, publicly, that 'we formally reaffirm all our obligations under the Locarno Treaty and declare our intention, should need arise, to fulfil them'. That meant, to help France if France tried to throw the Germans out.

Now the Germans marched in, England and Italy were at loggerheads, France remained silent and passive. This date was decisive for Paul, trustee for the dead King and his son, and for Stoyadinovitch, watching from Belgrade. France and England, they argued, would never oppose anything that Germany did. They might always say they would, but they would never do it. If

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they meant to, this was the best, the ideal opportunity, the last opportunity offering hope of quick and relatively cheap success.

They shaped their course accordingly. They wrote Austria off, they felt sure that they would have to write Czechoslovakia off. In September 1938, for a day or two, they kept a breathless watch on Paris, London, Berchtesgaden, Godesberg. Had they been wrong after all? Even if they had, Yugoslavia was still free to come in with the stronger coalition.

Then came Munich. They nodded. They had been right. They had done the best thing for Yugoslavia. She stood outside the storm area, the friend of all, the enemy of none; she had broken no word, offended nobody, betrayed nobody, incurred the hatred of no mighty raider.

So young King Peter, now three years from his majority, drove over the bridge at Belgrade, two days after Munich, with a clear sky before him, a clear sky but for one distant cloud, much bigger than a man's hand, but still distant.

The policy had been right — for the present. A few years gained are a few years gained; so much may happen before they have run their course.

But on the horizon was that distant cloud — the unsolved quarrel with the Croats in the north, who claimed that as long as they were denied their home rule the very word Yugoslav, or South Slav, was a fiction, that there were only Serbs and Slovenes and Mohammedans and Croats, and dissatisfied Croats at that, within the boundaries of a state which at its birth had been called the state of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, but which King Alexander, the Unifier, had re-named South Slavia, to give it the appearance of a united empire of the Southern Slavs. They were not South Slavs, said the Croats, or at any rate not as long as they were ruled from Belgrade instead of their own capital Zagreb; they were oppressed Croats.

The Serbs in Belgrade used to accuse them of treachery, of an unconfessed longing to see the Kaiser back on his throne in Vienna, to return to his fold. The Croats, they said, had always been called *kaisertreu*, Kaiser-true, in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, and

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some of these Catholics wanted nothing better than to fawn again before a Catholic Emperor.

But now Austria was gone, and the Kaiser could never come back to Vienna, and where Austria had been was Germany. What now?, thought the Serbs, as they contemplated the Croats.

Here is the distant cloud. About the time that young King Peter was driving over the bridge a German map-maker, one Dr. Friedrich Lange, was publishing, with official National Socialist patronage, a new map of 'Middle Europe'. It now hangs in all German schools, universities and barracks. Red islands, of German-speaking inhabitants for whom the right of self-determination might be claimed one day, are spattered over Croatia and Slovenia, Zagreb is given its old German name of Agram, and the accompanying text remarks that 'Serbs and Croats are regarded by many people, in spite of their common literary language, as distinct races'.

After Munich, a German-Italian award at Vienna gave a large slice of Czechoslovakia to Hungary, a country that long proclaimed its territorial claims against Rumania — and Yugoslavia. About that time Milan Stoyadinovitch, electioneering in the countryside, declared, in allusion to this development, that Yugoslavia 'would never yield a foot of territory'. In respect of Hungary Yugoslavia can with ease make good that statement. But Germany?

I am convinced that the Reich will one day advance to the Adriatic. Nobody who has not been there can understand the pull that the call of the sea exercises on a nation that feels itself so strong, the magnetic attraction of the thought that there, only a few miles away, are great new harbours for your mercantile marine, new bases for your warships, so that they can reach the Mediterranean in a quick spring, without having to steam all round the coasts of Europe.

So this cloud, of the suppressed but unsettled dispute with the Croats and of the pressure from the mighty Reich in the north, hangs in the distance over the blue sky of peaceful and thriving Yugoslavia.

This domestic quarrel is a sad thing for those who love, and

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who cannot love, Serbia and Yugoslavia. While it lasts the country is kept in stern subjection by the police.

The police intrude upon your gaze more in Yugoslavia than in most countries, and this fact means something if you know the situation. When the population of Belgrade takes its daily promenade along the main street, the throngs pass between two lines of policemen, stationed at intervals of about twenty yards, who carry a bayoneted rifle slung over one shoulder, wear a revolver at their belt, and suggestively finger a truncheon with their free hand. In the environs of Belgrade, where the road passes the extensive grounds of the Royal Palace, already inhabited by the heavily armed Royal Guard, police are seen at all times of the day and night standing behind trees and bushes.

The hunger for power of politicians who have now been for years in the wilderness, the dispute with the Croats, and the controversy about the right foreign policy for Yugoslavia have led to the most extraordinary political mix-up that I have ever encountered. You never read anything about it, even in the country itself, with its Press censorship and rigid police control; it is largely a thing of whispers and handbills, and I am not sure that it means much more than the bitter rivalry for power of various groups, but it is there, and it may produce unexpected results some day, so that it is worth watching.

In Croatia you have, unchallenged spokesman of the Croat claims, Dr. Matchek, who succeeded the murdered Raditch and would in normal times be the voluble leader of the Croats in Parliament in Belgrade. But the Croats to-day say there is no good in taking their seats in Parliament, they might be shot at again. So they stay away.

Matchek always wears a collarless shirt, apparently to stamp himself as a man of the people, likes riding on a white horse, and has organized an army of Croat Storm Troops. His claims resemble those which the Slovaks have succeeded in realizing through the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia — loyalty to the Karageorgevitch dynasty, a united Yugoslav foreign policy, but beyond that full home-rule for the Croats in Croatia, with a parlia-

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ment in Zagreb. The Belgrade Unionists always reply that this would mean changing King Alexander's Unionist Constitution, and that the only man who can do that will be the new king, young Peter, when he comes of age. They really mean that, in their opinion, the state can only be held together by firm rule from Serb, Nationalist, Orthodox Belgrade, and that they are not going to weaken it.

In Belgrade, arrayed against Matchek and his Croats, you have at the head of the Government Milan Stoyadinovitch, the confidant of Prince Regent Paul, who in his turn is the executor of King Alexander's strong-hand unionist policy. Minister of the Interior, Milan Achimovitch, was formerly Police Chief of Belgrade, so that the police may be counted on to rule the country with a firm hand. Also in the Government is Mehmed Spaho, portly and red-fezzed, the prosperous modern representative of the simple Mohammedans, who mostly live in Bosnia. Until recently the Minister of the Interior was also the representative of Slovenia, Anton Koroshetz, a stout clerical politician, Habsburg-bred, who was to Slovenia what Seipel, Dollfuss and Schuschnigg were to Austria, Brüning to Germany, Hlinka to Slovakia. When Austria was annexed he expressed loud-voiced fears for his Slovenia, which lies on the Austrian border and has many Germans and some German towns; and these misgivings, which did not accord with the complete confidence that Belgrade expresses in Berlin, may explain why he was dropped.

Thus the Government is a Serb-Slovene-Mohammedan ring to contain the fourth major element in the State, the disgruntled Croats. Or it would be if Stoyadinovitch represented Serbia. But there's the rub. Stoyadinovitch is a man of giant physique, iron nerve, keen brain; he has been to America, knows the western world, knows his Germans and Italians too. But he is no orator, is little known to the masses, is detested by the politicians in Belgrade because he has been in office and they out of office too long, and he is pursuing a policy which, in view of the weakness of France and England, is the only one for Yugoslavia but which strikes no responsive note in the mind of the people.

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It is the policy of collaboration with Germany and Italy. In January 1939 I watched the arrival in Belgrade of Mussolini's son-in-law and Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, and marvelled at the changes that four years can bring in European politics. About four years before I had watched the coffin of King Alexander arrive at this same station.

Some of his murderers had been trained and paid in Italy, and after the crime the leaders fled to Italy, who refused to extradite them. The highest personages in Italy must have known what impended in Marseilles on that October day in 1934.

Now, Count Ciano travelled through Yugoslavia in his special train, the same peasants who then came weeping to watch the dead king pass came smiling to offer bread and salt to the honoured guest. Dr. Stoyadinovitch's green shirts and blue shirts cried 'Long live the Duce' and 'Long live Ciano'.

In politics memories are sometimes very long and sometimes very short.

The mind of the people is not for Germany and Italy. Yugoslavs have not forgotten Austrian domination, German occupation, the murder of the King, the Italian claims to Dalmatia. But reasons of State produce curious changes and, since the day when France passively accepted the German reoccupation of the Rhineland, the rulers of Yugoslavia have seen the best hope of safety in friendship with Germany and Italy. Tactically, the position is a fairly good one, because the points of weakness in the Berlin-Rome partnership lie in Yugoslavia. As long as the partnership pays the partners such good dividends, it is in their interest to keep it strong — and not to push their ambitions in Yugoslavia to the point where they could clash. Germany, undoubtedly, feels drawn towards the Adriatic, and when she appears there Italy will begin to tremble before her partner. Italy, undoubtedly, has only shelved, and not forgotten, her claims to Yugoslavia's Adriatic coast. But as long as the partnership remains valuable to Berlin and Rome, that coveted coast is likely to remain neutral ground, and Yugoslavia may deftly play off the partners against each other. It is her only hope.

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So Prince Paul and Milan Stoyadinovitch pursue an unpopular policy, hoping against hope to keep the country intact against dangers from without and within until the young King comes of age, until some unlooked-for event occurs to change the European line-up to Yugoslavia's advantage.

But the future is full of menace. The Croats are well organized and solid behind Matchek. They see frontiers changing all round them, they see Slovaks and Ruthenians gaining 'home-rule' at the command of Germany. The murder at Marseilles showed what results can spring from such a centre of disaffection, if a foreign power chooses to lend a hand. At the moment, no foreign power does this, for reasons of greater international policy, but the situation might change at any moment. The Croats have been setting up their own 'National Assembly' at Zagreb, threatening to refuse payment of taxes, threatening that no Croat would obey a mobilization order.

After Munich, Milan Stoyadinovitch held a snap election, his message to the electors being 'Look at Benesh — and look at me. Look at Czechoslovakia — and look at Yugoslavia'.

The Government obtained its majority — the electoral law strongly favours the government — but the election showed a very strong body of opposition in the country, in spite of the triumphant vindication that Munich gave to the policy which the Government has pursued.

There you have young King Peter's kingdom, a going concern, that foresaw bad times, cut its overheads, reduced its stocks, improved its sales, and can show a good balance sheet. Difficult times still lie ahead of it, but times less difficult, perhaps, than those that await some of the rest of us.

In three years King Peter will be ready to ascend his throne. He is a rather shy and delicate-looking lad, who has been kept closely cloistered, has had less opportunity of seeing the outer world than cousin Michael in Rumania. He was at school in England when his father was murdered; now his English tutor, Mr. Parratt, schools him and has a villa near the Royal Palace. His father, Alexander, grew up in a rough school. King Peter has

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grown up in a sheltered one. In three years he should mount the throne. A formidable and almost awe-inspiring task lies before this young man, if at the age of eighteen he is to be pitchforked into the world of Serbo-Croat politics, of Belgrade intrigue.

The Europe we know to-day is very different from the one we knew three years ago. Another three years will bring far greater changes. 'A king must learn each change and turn if he means to keep his crown.'

I wondered, as he passed me on the bridge, in what sort of Europe he and I would live three years later, when the time came for him to receive that crown.

## CHAPTER 18

### FLY, FLY, FLY AGAIN

I SAT in a room of a British Legation in a foreign capital, one September day, and told the man I was with, 'I've just heard on the radio that Chamberlain is flying to Berchtesgaden tomorrow to see Hitler.'

'WHAT?' he said.

That was what everybody said then. It was a new idea, for a British Prime Minister to fly to that Bavarian mountain retreat. It set a fashion. Everybody's doing it now.

Personally I have nothing against it. Lord Baldwin's subsequent effort in the House of Lords — 'When people talk as if there were something unclean in having face-to-face discussions with a dictator I wonder if they realize that one of the greatest difficulties throughout the last five years has been to get into contact with the dictators' — was just one of those phrases by means of which the dear old British public is continually thrown off the trail. I have no objection, and I do not believe any Englishman objects, if British Prime Ministers visit dictators every week-end, if more or less strong men, though they come from the ends of the earth, stand face to face every day. But what they do when they meet — that is a very different matter. I would give Mr. Chamberlain the fullest marks for the flight. But the outcome of it? That is the point at issue, and don't let yourself be bluffed.

Now my acquaintance in that British Legation said, 'WHAT?'

'Yes,' I answered, 'just that.'

'I must tell the Minister,' he said hurriedly. He lifted the receiver, touched a button, repeated the news — and a noise like a Mills bomb bursting far away rang through the room.

It was the Minister, at the other end of the telephone, saying, 'WHAT?'

As I write, the list of Herr Hitler's most important visitors since that day, when the fashion was set, is: the British Prime Minister

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(three times), the French Prime Minister, the Italian Dictator, the King of Bulgaria, the King of Rumania, the ruler of a Balkan country which shall be nameless, as the news of the visit was not made known, the Polish Ambassador in Berlin, the Hungarian Regent, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, the Slovak Premier, the Ruthenian (or Carpatho-Ukrainian, or Carpatho-Russian, this rather depends on Herr Hitler) Premier, the South African Minister of Defence, and many other minor lights.

But on that day the British Minister in that distant capital said, 'WHAT?'

The atmosphere in that city was laden with fear. Men who did not want to go to war were being called up: sitting in a little café in a town on the Danube I saw them, unsoldierly in their unaccustomed uniforms, leaving by bus for the regimental depot, their womenfolk crying as they went. Those tears! The porters of apartment houses were being supplied with brass gongs, with a few sacks of sand, and this, for some reason hidden from me, was supposed to be a precautionary measure against aerial attack. There was an air raid rehearsal one night, and a treasured memory of these days, to me, is of the other inhabitants of the house, who were without exception Jews, going down to take shelter in a cellar to which the smallest bomb would have penetrated; they were not quite sure if that rehearsal was only a rehearsal, and not the real thing. I have a vivid mental picture of one gentleman prepared for the ordeal; he had a hamper of provisions, a large thermos flask, a gas mask, a raincoat and a cap, and he sat in the cellar until dawn broke.

The next day I sat, in the early evening, in the room of a British friend and listened to the radio. The papers had been telling us that Mr. Chamberlain was expected to stay at Berchtesgaden for several days, for a nice, long, quiet talk with Hitler. Now, we did not believe that. Most of the people in that room knew Germany, knew Hitler, knew Hitler's method. The one thing we could not conceive was that he would sit in an arm-chair for days on end, talking to Mr. Chamberlain and being sweetly reasonable. His

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method, as we knew, was to demand a quick signature on the dotted line, or else . . .

While we waited we discussed Sir Horace Wilson. Most of us had never heard his name before. Why, we wondered, had he been chosen to accompany Mr. Chamberlain, who himself had no personal experience whatever of foreign affairs, of foreign countries, of foreign dictators, on a mission which might decide the fate of Europe? We asked one of our number who was an official in British service. 'Don't ask me,' he said rather bitterly, 'I hardly know his name. I believe his official capacity is that of "Chief Economic Adviser to the Cabinet".'

'But what are his qualifications for foreign affairs?' we asked.

'This is the new diplomacy', he answered.

While we waited, the radio announced that Mr. Chamberlain, after a few hours, was already on his way back to London. We smiled, 'I told you so', at each other. A little while later, and we heard the landing at Heston, Mr. Chamberlain saying into the microphone, 'I have come back rather quicker than I expected . . .'

'Oh yeah?' we said, but not quicker than we expected.

At Berchtesgaden Mr. Chamberlain, who had expected several days of quiet conversation, in his own subsequent words 'very soon became aware', when he was closeted with Herr Hitler and the indispensable interpreter, 'that the position was much more acute and much more urgent than I had realized', that Hitler, if he did not get his way immediately, 'would be prepared to risk a world war'. Yet for six years British journalists abroad had been foretelling this. But Mr. Chamberlain was taken by surprise.

Now with relief, we heard, 'I am going to have another talk with Herr Hitler, perhaps in a few days.'

That at least was a respite. We were all in the same boat, should war break out; we should be lucky if we managed to get out before the frontiers closed, lucky if we ever got back to England.

Then we heard the concluding sentence: 'But this time Herr Hitler has told me that it is his intention to come half-way to meet me; that he is to spare an old man such another long journey' (cheers.)

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Again I heard with despondent discomfort the voice of a man who did not know the man with whom he had to deal. If Hitler was going to meet Chamberlain half-way next time, I told my companions, it was certainly not from compassion for his age. It was to speed up the drama.

Four years earlier, on a June night in 1934, in a little Rhineland town — it may interest you to know the name of that town, Godesberg — Hitler had given the order for the mass execution of hundreds of political enemies of all ages and in all camps, and among them was a certain General von Kahr, who was seventy-eight years old and whose only crime was that in 1923, eleven years before that, he had suppressed Hitler's first attempt to march on Berlin.

At the age of seventy-eight General von Kahr, who had long been living in retirement, was taken out and shot. Hitler did not spare him that journey, on account of his age.

Mr. Chamberlain was always taken by surprise. I don't know what analysis of the situation Sir Horace Wilson had given him, or anybody else. I can say this, quite certainly. Any experienced member of the British diplomatic service, any experienced foreign correspondent, could have told Mr. Chamberlain, months and years before, exactly what Hitler wanted, exactly what he would threaten.

For my part I wrote it in a book which was published six months before that day, and in dispatches and private reports years before. I was one of scores who had been saying this for years. Then why did Mr. Chamberlain not know what was coming, why was he always surprised? I have already given the answer. If you are a tailor you cannot expect to make boots, you must order them from a bootmaker. If you want to deal in foreign affairs you must learn them.

But, for that matter, read what Chamberlain said — Chamberlain! — more than two years earlier, on April 1st, 1936:

What attitude shall we take if Austrian independence be threatened or destroyed, whether by an attack from outside or by a revolution fostered and supported from outside, like

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that which caused the death of Dollfuss? If we mean anything at all by the declaration that our policy is founded on the League and that we shall fulfil our obligations, possibilities of this kind must give food for thought to every British citizen. For we may have to intervene at any moment. The independence of Austria is a key position. If Austria perishes, Czechoslovakia becomes indefensible. Then the whole of the Balkans will be submitted to a gigantic new influence. Then the old German dream of a Central Europe ruled by and subject to Berlin will become reality from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, with incalculable consequences not only for our country but for our whole Empire.

Could you have clearer foresight than that? Is there any possible justification for being unready, for being taken by surprise, when you see things so clearly and so far in advance?

Not Neville Chamberlain said that, but Austen, his half-brother, who had studied in Germany in his youth, knew the Germans, knew Germany, knew foreign affairs, warned his father Joseph what to expect. Did he not warn Neville? Did Neville think he knew better? Or was it his opinion that Czechoslovakia was not worth saving? If so, why was Benesh not told, Benesh who had asked often enough for a clear lead, Benesh who could have made honourable terms with Germany.

Read what that other Chamberlain, who knew Germany, said on July 27th, 1936:

I know of no parallel case of a government which expresses the wish for peace and friendly relations with another government and nevertheless displays so complete a contempt for friendly relations. That is a bad omen for these new negotiations. The more conciliatory we are the more does Germany bluster. The more we show our readiness to give, the greater become her demands. Is it not better, especially when you have to do with a government with such a past, clearly to say what you mean? I venture to put it to the House and the Government thus: negotiations cannot be brought to success by the encouragement of vague, elastic, expansive hopes. The point

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is this: to know yourself how far you are ready to go, and to let the other man know that you are ready to do everything possible within these limits, but not to overstep them . . . It has never been my experience that negotiations are promoted by the encouragement of unrealizable hopes and for my part I am not only of the opinion that we have no right to give our mandated territories to any other than their inhabitants, so soon as they are capable of defending and governing themselves. I go further and say that I could not take it on myself to place other human beings under a Government which in its own country refuses the rights of citizenship to its own people and makes slaves of them.

But now Mr. Chamberlain, surprised, flew back to London to confer, as he said, with his colleagues, and especially with Lord Runciman.

The annals of foreign affairs make relatively few references to Lord Runciman in the twenty-five years before he appeared in Prague, there to recommend, after studying for some weeks one of the most ancient problems in Europe, the cession of the Sudeten German territory, and therewith of Czechoslovakia's ability to maintain her real independence, to Germany. But such references as I find suggest that Lord Runciman was one of the earliest members of the Fair Dealers.

Lord D'Abernon in his memoirs describes an interview with Mr. Lloyd George at Genoa in 1921, in which he reports Mr. Lloyd George as saying that he had during the World War found nearly all economic theories to be wrong, that Lord Cunliffe had rightly said, 'It was a blessing for England that during the war two men were responsible for English finances who understood nothing of finance, Lloyd George and myself', that Mr. McKenna repeatedly produced proofs that England could not financially stand more than three years of war, that Mr. Runciman agreed with Mr. McKenna, but Mr. Lloyd George and the others, who understood nothing of finance, believed him to be wrong and proved it.

In 1916, when Mr. Asquith's Government was overthrown, Mr. Runciman went with his chief into opposition and joined the

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'Lansdowne Group', which was for early negotiations to end the war.

In February 1918, says Prince Max of Baden, 'Mr. Runciman again advocated negotiations during the debate', and the then German Chancellor, Count Hertling, speaking in the Reichstag on February 25th, 1918, also approvingly quoted 'a Liberal member of the English House of Commons and former Minister, Mr. Walter Runciman', as expressing the opinion that 'we should be nearer to peace if accredited and responsible representatives of the belligerent powers would get together in a small circle for a mutual exchange of views . . . For the present it does not appear that this suggestion of the English parliamentarian has prospect of realization'.

You know what happened when Mr. Chamberlain returned to London. Lord Runciman reported his proposal that the Sudeten German areas should be ceded to Germany; the French Government agreed on condition that the new frontier should be fixed by an international body and guaranteed by France and Britain; Czechoslovakia was presented with these proposals, by France and England, and told that neither her sworn ally nor the ally of her sworn ally would help her if she refused; in Prague Dr. Hodza's Government accepted under 'unbelievable pressure' and resigned. The British Government had presented to Prague, in imperative form, on September 19th, the proposals which it had officially disowned when they were first ventilated by *The Times* on September 7th. On September 22nd Mr. Chamberlain was again with Hitler — at Godesberg of sinister renown.

In Prague, in the early hours of that day, men and women were laughing and weeping in the streets. The laughter was hysterical. 'Look at this,' cried a man, waving in the air a copy of a special edition with the flaring headline 'Absolutely Forsaken', 'now we're all alone, with the Germans, Poles and Hungarians against us, and not a soul with us.' A roar of laughter went up.

In a club two Czech women sat with an Englishman. When the news came, of the Franco-British ultimatum and its acceptance, they exchanged comments about faithless friends and began to

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laugh, and laugh, and went on laughing, they couldn't stop, until the tears ran down. The Englishman squirmed in his chair. These had been the happiest people in Europe until a few hours before.

In the streets, in the houses, others were weeping. An old woman, a flower-seller, wept at her stall as *The Times* correspondent passed her: 'I had two sons killed in Italy fighting for Czechoslovakia,' she said. 'I don't know what it all means, but I am sure we didn't deserve this. What have we done?' Everywhere you saw crowds, aughing, shouting, arguing, crying, gesticulating.

'Our allies and friends have dictated to us sacrifices without parallel in history,' said the Propaganda Minister, Vavrecka, into the microphone. The crowds surged through the streets, bewildered, shouting, 'Long live Benesh', 'Down with Benesh', 'Long live the army', 'Down with the Jews', 'No, no, don't sacrifice Czechoslovakia'. In all history there was nothing to compare with such a transfer of territory from a country not defeated in war. Far into the small hours the tumult of despair and faith betrayed resounded over the city that with a calm spirit had faced its great ordeal.

The agony of Prague was still at its height when Mr. Chamberlain, at midday, reached Cologne. He had expected a shorter journey. Actually, by the time he had travelled by car to the Petersberg, hurriedly lunched there, then travelled by car to the Rhine, and then by ferry to the hotel where Hitler had been comfortably resting, it was as hard a journey as the first one.

Mr. Chamberlain, whose chief companion was again the Chief Economic Adviser, was again surprised. What he found, once more, was entirely different from his expectations.

I do not want honourable members to think Herr Hitler was deliberately deceiving me. I do not think so for one moment, but, for my part, I expected that when I got back to Godesberg I had only to discuss quietly with him the proposals that I had brought with me and it was a profound shock to me when I was told at the beginning of the conversation that these proposals were not acceptable and that they were to be

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replaced by other proposals of a kind which I had not contemplated at all . . . Honourable members will realize the perplexity in which I found myself faced with this totally unexpected situation.

Ah me, these surprises, these expectations, these 'profound shocks', this perplexity. Not even the Chief Economic Adviser could foresee them. We foresaw them, the little group of Englishmen who had lived abroad and heard that one about 'sparing an old man' on the radio. We knew that the British Prime Minister was due to get a severe jolt when he paid his second visit. We knew the method — don't give your opponent a second's rest, get him groggy, pile blow on blow, bewilder him, drive him into his corner so that he can't duck under your arm. Any one of your specialists, any single Englishman who has lived for a number of years in Germany, could have told you what to expect. But you will not listen, you know better.

So Mr. Chamberlain found, instead of a quiet chat about the manner of carrying out the surrender of territory which had already been forced on Prague, 'an ultimatum' going far beyond those proposals, demanding the evacuation and occupation of the whole area forthwith. He thought it would 'profoundly shock public opinion in neutral countries', he 'bitterly reproached the Chancellor for his failure to respond in any way to the efforts I had made to secure peace'. On the other hand, he was informed 'with great earnestness that this was the last of Herr Hitler's territorial ambitions in Europe, and that he had no wish to include in the Reich people of other races than Germans'. He had 'no hesitation' in saying that 'after the personal contact I established with Herr Hitler' — through an interpreter — 'I believe he means what he says when he states that'.

Is it worth while repeating, once again, all the things that have been said, all the things that have been without hesitation believed? Perhaps it is. Here goes.

On May 21st, 1935, Hitler said:

The German Government will scrupulously respect every treaty voluntarily signed, even if concluded before its entry

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into power. It will therefore in particular respect and fulfil all obligations arising from the Locarno Pact so long as the other signatories are ready to stand by this pact.

The Locarno Treaty was torn up on March 7th, 1936.

On May 21st, 1935, Hitler said:

The German Government will unconditionally respect all other clauses of the Versailles Treaty affecting the mutual relations of the nations, including the territorial clauses . . .

On March 7th, 1936, Hitler said:

We have no territorial claims in Europe.

On January 30th, 1934, Hitler said:

The assertion that the German Reich intends to overpower the Austrian state is absurd and can by no means be proved or substantiated . . . I must most sharply refute the further assertion of the Austrian Government that any attack against the Austrian state will be undertaken or is even contemplated.

On May 21st, 1935, Hitler said:

Germany has neither the intention nor the will to interfere in domestic Austrian affairs, to annex Austria, or to unite Austria with the Reich.

On March 11th, 1936, Hitler said:

My offer of non-aggression pacts in the east and west was made without any exceptions. It holds good therefore for Austria also.

On May 1st, 1936, Hitler said:

Once again lies are being spread about, that Germany will fall upon Austria to-morrow or the day after to-morrow.

On July 11th, 1936, Hitler signed the German-Austrian treaty acknowledging:

the full sovereignty of the Federal Austrian State [and declaring that] the question of Austrian National Socialism is a domestic Austrian affair which the German Government will neither directly nor indirectly seek to influence.

On March 7th and March 11th, 1936, Hitler stated that he was

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ready to conclude a pact of non-aggression with Czechoslovakia.

On March 14th, 1938, in the House of Commons, Mr. Chamberlain stated that, among a number of other cockle-warming assurances:

the German Government has assured the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin that Germany considers herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak arbitration treaty of October 25th.

(When the Czechoslovak Government in September, confronted by the Franco-British ultimatum, said, 'What about the German-Czechoslovak arbitration treaty?', its question fell on deaf ears.)

As a result of the unpleasant surprise at Godesberg, not completely sweetened by the assurances, the British and French Ministers in Prague were instructed to inform the Czechoslovak Government that their countries could no longer take the responsibility for advising Czechoslovakia not to mobilize, and on Friday night, September 24th, 1938, the mobilization order of President Benesh was broadcast to the nation, in Czech, German, Hungarian, Slovak, Ruthenian, Polish and Finnish.

Citizens [it said] the decisive moment has arrived. Keep calm, be brave and faithful. Your struggle is for justice and your Fatherland. Long live free Czechoslovakia.

This was the most inspiring moment in post-war history, even more inspiring than England's call, so soon denied, to the world to rally against the aggressor in Abyssinia. The Czechs were born again. At the last moment, they thought they were going to be allowed to fight, that they would have good friends at their side. They knew that half of them would perish, but thought that the remnant of the nation would rise again, free men in a free world.

The world never heard the full story of that magnificent mobilization, of a small nation doomed to the sacrifice and exulting in its fate. Czechoslovakia was already isolated, the telephones and cables and posts and trains had already ceased to function, and, for that matter, a good many newspapers in the outer world were already censoring anything that could arouse too much sympathy for the Czechs.

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Europe has probably never seen the like of that midnight mobilization. As the radio broadcast the order waiters in the cafés and restaurants calmly peeled off their white jackets, put on their street clothes, shook hands with the guests and went. Men who were already in bed got up and quickly dressed, and their womenfolk and elder male relatives accompanied them in pyjamas and dressing-gowns to the stations and tramcars.

Guests in the wineshops called gleefully for a bottle of champagne to celebrate this great occasion, toasted each other quickly and hastened off to report. The great crowds in the streets melted away as the men dashed home to collect their belongings. Taxicabs and motor cars, requisitioned, disappeared as if by magic. In no time at all lorries full of soldiers in uniform or civilians bound for the depots were careering through the streets, wildly cheered. Even the weeping women were proud, happy in the regained gladness of their men. 'Better die than decay,' said one group of soldiers to *The Times* correspondent, 'but we shall win. We shall not be left alone.'

For many, many years to come Czechs, when they meet together, will speak of that night. When they speak to you about it to-day the bitter gloom leaves their eyes, their faces light up. 'We've only had one happy day in two months,' said one of them to me, weeks afterwards, 'and that was the day of the mobilization.'

Another, a Legionary, a homeless and destitute refugee when I saw him, was like a man re-born when he told me of that night. 'We only wanted to fight', he said, 'we only wanted to fight', and then the light left his eyes, and he looked round him at the bare room, with the palliasses, in which he was existing, and his shoulders slumped and he closed his mouth and shrugged, bitterly.

As far as I can remember there is no example in history of a small nation that was not only ready, but clamorously eager, to fight one far mightier than itself for an ideal going beyond frontiers, deliberately to sacrifice itself in the greater cause of a greater humanity. The Czechoslovak army was, in proportion to its size, the finest in Europe, its morale far better than that even of the

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German army. To have cast away this ally is worse than a crime — the crime, if any, was a French crime — it was a gigantic mistake.

So Mr. Chamberlain and the Chief Economic Adviser flew back to London, with the unpleasant surprise in Mr. Chamberlain's pocket, and the world prepared for war.

By this time I was sure that we were not going to have war, for I happened to be listening to the radio on that Saturday, September 24th, and heard that Signor Mussolini in a speech had stated that Herr Hitler had given until October 1st for his terms to be accepted. Now that was a full week, in which the Czechs might improve their defences, and as soon as I heard that I felt convinced that the fate of Czechoslovakia was already in the bag and that an enormous bluff was in progress. For Hitler, if and when he makes war, will strike like lightning. He will not declare it eight days in advance. He may give you six hours, not more.

Therefore I watched the great world crisis of the following days with a certain scepticism, which I still retain. It was increased by two passages in that national broadcast of Mr. Chamberlain's on the evening on Tuesday, September 27th, a broadcast calculated so to wring the withers of the British people that they could only be the more hilarious and grateful the next day, when they heard that Mr. Chamberlain was to fly yet again.

. . . a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing.

I would not hesitate to pay even a third visit to Germany if I thought it would do any good.

Comparing these two significant utterances with Signor Mussolini's announcement that Herr Hitler had given eight days for the matter to be arranged, I felt strongly of opinion that Czechoslovakia was doomed, that there would be no war, and that the real aim of the manœuvring, in the minds of Hitler and Mussolini, already assured of victory, was that it should be achieved with the maximum of triumph for themselves, with the maximum of humiliation for the others, and, beyond all possible doubt, as the result of the threat of war, and not as the fruit of friendly negotiation.

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Meanwhile England was getting ready for another world war and another class war. Trenches were being dug in the parks, and children were being sent away from London, and the people to whom they were being sent were writing to Whitehall, as Sir Samuel Hoare later stated, to complain about 'dirty little children from the London schools being billeted in our houses'.

Everybody was trying to get hold of a gas mask, and this is the most lunatic thing of all, and inexplicable to me when I think how many men must be alive in England to-day who were in the last war and who know that if you take the numeral 1 as your chance of being gassed in an air raid your chance of being hit by a bomb is 1000.

Give me a bomb-proof shelter and you may keep your gas mask. But in England there were only gas masks, and not many of those, but no bomb-proof shelters, though in your underground railways you have the finest raw material for bomb-proof shelters, if anybody would take the trouble to have them adapted for that purpose, of any city in the world. You could put hundreds of thousands of people in them in perfect safety, you could have food and water and everything you needed down there, if you ever could be moved to do anything about anything, but muddling through is awfully jolly and British, and how too British we British are, aren't we?

What an incredible scene of confusion and chaos that was, after six years of constant warnings. On the outskirts of London, Aircraftmen struggling to get a few balloons into the air, many of which broke away, as who should say, 'Include me out of this farce, will you?', and drifted off into the blue. Somebody making a deal of money from transactions in sandbags. In the parks, anti-aircraft guns from the last war — the last war! — being brought into position. Gas masks being distributed that lacked essential parts.

In the city with the most money and the most people in the world, after six years of warnings!

We are not prepared; we have hardly begun to prepare; we do not know how all the failures that occurred during the crisis can be avoided next time.

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What do you think of that, after six years of warnings? Mr. Early, of the Home Office, speaking, about those passive measures of defence against air-raids (as distinct from air-fighting), default in which means, according to the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, that '2,000,000 or 3,000,000 people will be blown to pieces in London alone'. These passive measures comprise gas masks, trenches, bomb-proof shelters, evacuation.

The more important measures are the active ones — anti-aircraft guns, fighting aircraft. Do you think we were readier in these things? On November 4th your Secretary of State for War confirmed some of the worst fears that had been expressed about useless anti-aircraft guns, deficient transport, wrong ammunition. But not the Government was at fault, the culprits were the people who had been crying for years to have these things remedied, for the Government to fulfil its own promises. His anxiety had been 'not lest the full equipment should come, but about those who kept stressing the lack of full equipment'.

Indeed, these people, who only pressed for the Government to do what it had declared to be necessary, courted unpopularity and even persecution. Duncan Sandys, M.P., from the day he joined the Anti-Aircraft Brigade in April 1937 'never ceased to hear complaints and expressions of alarm and anxiety at the shortage of guns of any type and of reliable up-to-date instruments'. He was dismayed when a speech of the War Minister seemed to indicate that Mr. Hore-Belisha was under the impression that the anti-aircraft units had their full recruitment of guns, his fellow officers and their men 'were astonished at the War Minister's speeches and parliamentary answers to questions'. When Duncan Sandys, M.P., prepared a question to put to the War Minister he was threatened with a court martial.

You see how democracy works, under such leaders. Three and a half years had passed since the Government announced its resolution to make the country's armaments adequate for its own protection and for the fulfilment of its obligations. This was no sudden, new, unexpected emergency. Ever since 1936 the nation had been called on for 'sacrifices', for 'intensive efforts'. There had

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been shadow factories, recruiting drives, a huge air programme, a Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, income tax at 5s. and 5s. 6d. in the pound. For years and years before 1936 we had spent more than £100,000,000 a year on armaments.

What happened in all those months and years? Where did the money go? What waste, and what undue profit, was there on contracts? Why were Ministers who allowed this chaos to develop not dismissed? Why were Ministers who were responsible for this appalling mess allowed to rise, serene and unruffled, in their places, and indict as the villains of the piece those who had called for these evils and abuses to be remedied? They were the cause of all our troubles, of all the Gadarene deterioration in the state of world affairs, of the standards of humanity, justice and decency; they left a red trail behind them leading from Manchuria and Abyssinia to Spain and Czechoslovakia.

In 1933 all its experts in Europe had warned the Government what was coming. In 1936, on paper, British rearmament at last got under way. Is it really under way now, in 1939? Why was it not begun in 1933, in 1934? Stanley Baldwin, answering this charge that the Government failed to make preparations in 1934, said in November 1936 that 'from my point of view' it would have made 'the loss of the election certain to tell the country "Germany is rearming and we must rearm".' By waiting until 1935, 'We won the election with a large majority'.

Now you know the stuff that elections are made of. In 1935 you were told, again by Baldwin, that Germany was not approaching equality with you in the air, that in 1936 you would still be twice as strong as Germany in the air, in Europe. In 1936 you were told, again by Baldwin, that the aim of British air policy was to maintain an air force as strong as the strongest within jumping distance of British shores. In November 1938 your Air Minister gave figures in Parliament which mean that the relative strength of the British and German air forces is as one to three. You cannot make good this gap; simultaneously you have sacrificed allies who would have helped to make it good.

Germany at this September crisis, when you thought that war

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was coming in a few days, had an enormous air force, perfectly equipped, an air raid defence organization without its like in the world, which only needs the pressing of a button for every man, woman and child in the country to go to an appointed place, she had the biggest and best-equipped army in the world.

In England, to quote a good judge, Lieutenant Commander R. Fletcher, M.P., writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, you had the advantage only in one arm — the Navy. The Navy was our stay in ages past. Perhaps it will be again. You cannot bank on this. It is a thing that has not been tried out since the development of gigantic modern air navies.

In everything else — in the mechanization of the Army, in air raid precautions, in anti-aircraft defence, in fighting aircraft, in your balloon barrage, in food storage, in merchant shipping, in arrangements for the switch-over of industry from peace to war production, you were so far behind that you were barely perceptible.

You now have only two possibilities of saving yourself, and as these were very well put by Commander Fletcher, I quote him:

A national effort can be made by orders imposed from above upon a nation deprived of all freedom, i.e. upon a slave population.

We do not want this in England; it is not necessary; and I am not sure that Hitler would now permit it, he may already be strong enough to veto it.

Or [the second alternative] a national effort can be made under the guidance of a Government truly interpreting the national will, especially in foreign policy, caring equally for all sections of the population, demanding proportionate sacrifices from all in the attainment of security and attacking our internal discontents — bad housing, under-nutrition, unemployment, social insecurity, derelict areas — as resolutely as our external dangers.

That is what you want. But your Governments will not do it. They do not 'care equally for all sections of the population', they

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are inspired by feelings of class antagonism and in the last analysis their actions, both in home and in foreign policy, can only be explained by the grim resolve to perpetuate class barriers and the evils they bring. They have announced as many programmes to mend bad housing, under-nutrition, unemployment, social insecurity, and derelict areas as they have announced programmes for rearmament — and they have lagged as far behind in the one as in the other.

Now you must be constantly on the watch for a new attempt to misuse your longing, the longing of the masses of English people, for these things to be remedied. You must be on the watch for a new, inspiring call for a 'national effort' — as in the case of Abyssinia — which will be used to storm your humane feelings and your patriotic sentiments, snap an overwhelming majority at a quick election — and then institute some form of class dictatorship or semi-dictatorship the real aim of which would be to restrict your liberties, muzzle criticism of past mistakes and prolong those very evils which you would, in your millions, vote to abolish.

For my part, the exposed plight of my native city, London, to air attack in 1938, in spite of repeated warnings since 1933, made me shudder when I was there in the spring of 1938. In my case, too, I found that, for some reason which I begin to find sinister, I only courted unpopularity and rebuffs by telling people in high places in London of the mortal danger that overlay London and urging that drastic measures be taken, at long last, to put our defences in order.

After the invasion of Austria, where I saw the new German army and air force in actual movement for the first time, I wrote from Zürich three urgent letters, one to the editor of a London newspaper, one to a man socially well placed whom I thought possibly able to bring influence to bear, one to a high Government official, telling them: 'Now you must at all costs do two things, and you only have a very little time left to do them: get your factories at work day and night on the production of aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, and munitions; get your anti-air-raid organization, especially your bomb-proof shelter and evacuation arrangements, into per-

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fect order.' I had one answer, which urged me to go into the country and take a long rest.

So that was the picture of England when Mr. Chamberlain, Monsieur j'aime Berlin, the man with the umbrella, flew for the third time, to swastika-bedecked Munich, to the meeting of the Four Just Men at the Sign of the Double Cross, to the surgical operation on the small country far away where people quarrel about whom we know nothing.

What a gathering. I don't know what the moron history will say about it, but I know what I think about it. Adolf Hitler; Benito Mussolini; Edouard Daladier; Neville Chamberlain. It was perfectly true, none of them knew anything about Czechoslovakia — none of them had ever been there. Czechoslovakia, which had rejected the Godesberg demands, which Chamberlain himself had found impossible of acceptance, was not present; Czechoslovak 'observers' had asked if they might, please, attend, and were waiting somewhere, ignored, in an ante-room. Of the four men round the table three represented countries for whom and with whom the Czechs, now jubilantly preparing to go into battle, had fought. One, France, had declared four days before that if Czechoslovakia were attacked France would come to her aid; England had simultaneously declared that she would support France if hostilities broke out.

Among the men gathered to dismember the small country they knew nothing about was one, Benito Mussolini, who had been making speech after speech in Italy about Czechoslovakia, always with the text 'Crucifix Czechoslovakia'.

Benito Mussolini possibly did know just a little about Czechoslovakia, and about the crucifixion of Czechs. For in the year 1918 an Englishman, one Oliffe Richmond, who afterwards described this experience in *The Times*, was 'shown, by Italian officers, through binoculars from a mountain above Lake Garda, a crucifix in a field within the Austrian lines, on which the body of a Czech soldier had been left to hang'. Italy, added Mr. Richmond, 'was as deeply interested then as were any of the other Allies in the birth of a free Republic and had as much responsi-

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bility as the rest for the drawing of a natural frontier for it'.

The Czechoslovak Republic, Mr. Richmond proceeded, with truth, 'has not used coercion upon its minorities in any degree so harsh as that practised by Italy upon the Tirolese Germans and the Slovenes', and he asked 'all Italians who may chance to read this to recall that symbolic morning at Padua not yet twenty years ago and to ask themselves by what conceivable right they can condone action which is designed to go beyond all claims of self-determination to the crucifixion once again of the whole Czech nation that they helped to free'. The symbolic morning at Padua to which he referred was one in December 1918, when he saw 'two divisions of the new-born Czech Army parade before King Victor Emanuel and his generals in the Piazza dell' Arena at Padua'.

But since Czechoslovakia is, or was, a small country that you know nothing about, I should like to tell you something of it, as it was until September 1938.

It was the last free Republic, the last people's state, the last country where democracy had any meaning, in Europe east of the Rhine. In twenty years, after centuries of alien domination, they had accomplished marvellous things. They did not want to leave the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they did not 'break up' the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as you are so often told, it broke up within itself, and when they saw it collapse they formed their own state.

They took part of the land, against compensation, from the great and wealthy nobles, and gave it to the peasants. They built roads and schools and hospitals and sanatoriums, and children's homes. They created the finest army, and the best-equipped, of any small state in Europe; militarily, they were a Great Power. This was the only army in Europe in which the fiery ideal of 1918 still burned, it panted to be at an enemy that ten times outnumbered it.

In this state every field was farmed to the last inch; a thriving industry grew and prospered. The ditches, the hedges, the trees, the woods were tended to the last blade and twig; here there were

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no keep-out boards, the land was the people's and you could go where you liked. The bulk of the population clung to that state with a burning love; an English Minister, seeking to vindicate Munich, said that when the state was dismembered it was already breaking up from within. He, too, knew nothing about this small country — and he never said a more arrantly foolish thing in his life. The people in this state felt that it was theirs, they had not much money, but they had a small-holding or a small job, and felt themselves freemen in a free land, after centuries of serfdom.

You can see the things they did to-day. Drive from Prague to Brünn, from Prague to Reichenberg, from Prague to Saaz, compare these rich fields, these tidy factories, these well-tended towns with your own land. When a part of this land was surrendered to Hungary, an immediate crisis broke out there, because in the regained lands men owned their farms and had been cared for by the state, while in Hungary the peasant was poverty-stricken and landless, gendarme-fodder. In this land all minorities had seats in Parliament — members in the Government, if they wished — in exact proportion to their numbers; budget expenditure was apportioned on the same plan. The Sudeten Germans had a free press and could say what they liked about the Government.

The people felt that this state belonged to them, not they to the state. This was the land that was destroyed, cast once more in chains.

You know what was done at Munich. Peace with honour. Peace in our time. The peace that passeth my understanding.

You were bluffed again. You were told that, when a strip of Czechoslovakia, containing the defences, had been torn off, as you might tear the perforated counterfoil from a cheque, a right little, tight little Czechoslovakia would remain, guaranteed by England and France. What's wrong with that? you thought. What could be fairer than that? Mr. Chamberlain explained in the House that this guarantee was one of the respects in which Munich was so much better than Godesberg. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in the other place, said the guarantee 'made an immense difference'.

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You were told that four safeguards for Czechoslovakia were gained at Munich, and it was probably because of these four 'pledges' or 'guarantees' or 'assurances' or whatever you like to call them — none of them meant a thing — that you were so stupendously relieved, that you mafficked in Whitehall, that you believed a real peace with honour had been achieved.

I have been living in Czechoslovakia, a country I know something about, since the dismemberment. I can tell you that the guarantee means nothing at all, that it is an illusion, that it cannot be enforced. I do not believe it was ever seriously meant. I cannot conceive that any politician could be so ill-informed as to believe that it could be made effective.

Indeed, by November 1st you learned that it was no guarantee, for Mr. Chamberlain said:

In speaking of a guaranteed frontier the right honourable gentleman is mistaken. We never guaranteed the frontiers as they existed. What we did was to guarantee against unprovoked aggression — quite a different thing. That did not mean that we gave our seal to the existence of frontiers as they were then or at any other time. Our guarantee was against unprovoked aggression and not the crystallization of frontiers. The right honourable gentleman alternates between violent indignation and insuppressible amusement, but I do not think my answer could give rise to either of those expressions.

Moderate your indignation. Suppress your amusement. If you know what has been guaranteed, write and tell me, because I should like to know that one. As I write, in a Prague hotel bedroom, the German frontier is within an hour of Prague, by road, two or three minutes by aeroplane. What would you do if Germany suddenly pocketed Prague, pocketed what remains of Czechoslovakia? Debate whether the aggression had been provoked? Marvellous.

But it will not be necessary for Hitler, unless he is less clever than he seems, to do this. For, a few weeks after Munich, the Czechs were required to sign on the dotted line the gift-deed of a strip of

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territory, forty miles long and eighty yards wide, running clean across Czechoslovakia, for a great strategic and trade thoroughfare, German-built, German-owned, German-operated, German-controlled. It is a strip of Germany laid across Czechoslovakia, reducing Czechoslovakia to a German-guarded compound. It is completely extra-territorial. If a German commits any crime or offence in that zone he has to be tried by German, not by Czechoslovak, courts.

Czech labour is building it. It is a Great Wall of China running across Czechoslovakia. There are no Czechoslovak frontiers to crystallize, to guarantee. The Czech lands are part of the Reich. I wrote in *Insanity Fair* that the Czechs would soon be subjects of the Reich, that they would be making arms for Germany in peace, and in war either bearing them for Germany or digging trenches for her — at all events, helping in some form to prosecute that war. In constructing that great road, clean across their own land, they are already labour-soldiers of the Reich. The most they can hope for is home-rule in their own lands. Hitler has said that he does not want Czechs to be conscribed for military service, and this is a very astute move, if he abides by his word. It means that, though they will have to perform every manner of other task for Germany, they will not be required actually to fight in the front line.

So much for the guaranteed frontiers. Then you were told of a plebiscite. That is a word that always makes appeal to Englishmen. You saw the British Legion, in their blue suits and peaked caps, marching in the roads about Olympia. They, you thought, would see fair play.

There was, of course, no plebiscite. But that is not the point. The point is that any plebiscite would have been a farce. What do you expect from a plebiscite, from a British Legion who go to see fair play? It is not the fear of being assaulted at the polling-booths that makes people vote this way or that, it is the fear of what is going to happen to them afterwards, of losing their jobs, of being marked men. A million men of the British Legion cannot protect them against that.

But nevertheless I regret that the British Legion did not

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come to Czechoslovakia. They might have found time to come on to Prague and visit the British Legion there. It had about sixty members, Private Czech of the Essex and Lieutenant Czech of the Anzacs, Corporal Czech of the Buffs and Sergeant Czech of the R.A.S.C., and they have been meeting once a month for some years, at a little inn, and singing the old songs: 'Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag', 'It's a long way to Tipperary', and the like. In a drawer at the British Legation you might of late even have seen some British war medals, some Distinguished Conduct Medals and Military Medals, returned to sender.

Then there was the third achievement of Munich, that Hitler, instead of occupying all the territory he claimed by October 1st, took it in stages between October 1st and 10th. You probably know what came of that. The last zone was taken on November 24th, the total territory occupied was much larger than that even demanded at Godesberg, and about a million Czechs, in the name of self-extinction, now live under German rule. The other achievement of Munich was the 'right of option', for Czechs left in the German areas, for Germans left in rump Czechoslovakia. By the time you read this book you will probably have been able to decide for yourself how this has worked out. There is a 'right' for the Czechs, at whatever loss to themselves, to migrate to the Czech territory, nothing else.

So Munich came to its triumphant end, with the bells pealing in Berlin, Paris, London and Rome, with weeping and dumbfounded crowds in Prague. I do not need to describe this in my own words. I will let a man speak who was there, waiting in an ante-room for the sentence, one of the two Czechoslovak 'observers' who had been allowed to come and learn the fate of their country, Dr. Hubert Masarjik, of the Foreign Office in Prague.

Dr. Masarjik reached Munich soon after 4 o'clock in the afternoon of September 29th — when Hitler's eight days had nearly run their course — went to the Regina-Palast Hotel, 'had difficulty in establishing contact with the British and French delegations', but at 7 p.m. did contrive to see Mr. Gwatkin, a member of the British delegation.

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Mr. Gwatkin was 'agitated and very silent' but from his reluctant indications Dr. Masarjik 'gathered that a plan was already prepared in broad outline and was much worse than the Franco-British proposals'. Dr. Masarjik directed Mr. Gwatkin's attention to the 'domestic, economic and financial consequences of such a plan'. Mr. Gwatkin thought that Dr. Masarjik did not realize 'the difficult position of the Western Powers' and the difficulties of negotiating with Hitler. He then returned to the conference.

At 10 p.m. Dr. Masarjik and his companion, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, Dr. Mastny, were led to the room occupied by the Chief Economic Adviser. There, 'in the presence of Mr. Gwatkin and at the wish of Mr. Chamberlain', Sir Horace Wilson handed them a map on which the areas were outlined which were immediately to be occupied. To Dr. Masarjik's objections 'he replied twice, formally, that he had nothing to add to his statements. He paid no attention to our remarks about towns and districts that were important for us. He then left the room.'

Dr. Masarjik and Dr. Mastny continued to plead and argue with Mr. Gwatkin.

As he again began to speak of the difficulties which had revealed themselves in negotiating with Hitler I said that all depended on the readiness of the Western Powers. Mr. Gwatkin answered in a solemn tone: 'If you do not accept you will have to settle your affairs with Germany quite alone. Perhaps the French will tell you this in a pleasanter form, but believe me they share our wish . . . they disinterest themselves.'

At 1.30 a.m., Dr. Masarjik and Dr. Mastny were led into the conference room, where Chamberlain, Daladier, Wilson, Léger and Gwatkin awaited them.

The atmosphere was oppressive. The verdict was to be pronounced. The Frenchmen, visibly agitated, seemed to be thinking about the effect on French prestige. Mr. Chamberlain, in a long introduction, mentioned the agreement that was to be reached and handed Dr. Mastny the text, so that he might read it aloud . . . Mr. Chamberlain showed that he

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expected the execution of the proposals to be accepted by us. While Dr. Mastny discussed secondary matters with Mr. Chamberlain (who yawned uninterruptedly and without embarrassment) I asked MM. Daladier and Léger if they expected an utterance about or an answer to the agreement from our Government. Daladier, visibly agitated, did not answer. Léger on the other hand answered that the four statesmen had not much time. He added hurriedly that no answer on our part was expected, as they regarded the plan as having been accepted, and that our Government on the same day, and at the latest by 5 p.m., must send its representative to Berlin to the sitting of the International Commission . . . He spoke to us in a sufficiently ruthless manner; this was a Frenchman who delivered a verdict without the right of appeal or possibility of alteration. Mr. Chamberlain no longer concealed his fatigue. After the perusal of the text we were given a second map, with small corrections. The Czechoslovak Republic, as defined by the treaties of 1918, had ceased to exist. They were finished with us and we might go.

To add any word of mine to that would be time wasted.

The Dictators and Prime Ministers departed, after posing for the photographers, the tumult and the shouting of rejoicing rose in Berlin, Rome, London and Paris. Prague? Let us draw a veil over Prague.

I can understand that pandemonium of relief in Paris and London. In both countries inefficient governments had for years failed to put the defences of their countries in such a state that this crisis could have been faced with calm and confidence, this monstrous crime prevented. Now, the populations knew that they were delivered up to massacre. They had been ready for it, they would have fought and triumphed, but now the relief, after that nervous strain, was too great. They thought it was an honourable peace, perhaps, and they mafficked.

I have those pictures by me now, of the crowds in Downing Street and Whitehall, their faces big with smiles, their mouths big with cheering. Obscene, when you compare it with the truth,

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but still, understandable. In one of those pictures, taken in Downing Street, is a figure that interests me very much. The Prime Minister is leaning out of the window, smiling and waving. Ministers are climbing on the railings of Number Ten the better to see the fun. All around hysterical people. In the centre, near the doorway of Number Ten, stands a single man apart from the tumult, his hat on his head, his face set and grim, his eyes turned without emotion on the Prime Minister, his hands in his pockets, unmoved, unresponsive, critical. He looks like a man of about my age. Perhaps he was in the war. Perhaps he saw this thing clearly even on that hilarious night, the maddest and merriest night that London had known since Mafeking or the Armistice. Look back on Mafeking and the Armistice now.

Prayers of thanksgiving were offered, as prayers had been offered for peace.

You do not need to pray for peace if you are prepared, at the eleventh hour, to force a small and gallant country to its knees, compel it to surrender. You can have peace. You cannot have allies, when your turn comes.

The Archbishop of Canterbury called Mr. Chamberlain the Happy Warrior. The Poet Laureate compared him with Priam, King of Troy. Mr. Burgin, immoderate in his transports, called him 'the greatest character in the world'. From The Hague a large floral tribute was sent by air. A correspondent of *The Times* suggested that 2,000,000 souvenir stamps should be printed and the proceeds, £50,000, presented to him. General Smuts said, 'We are grateful to the four leaders of Europe . . . A great champion has appeared in the lists, God bless him'. In France a subscription was opened to buy Mr. Chamberlain a château. Somebody suggested that the Nobel Peace Prize, which consists of I don't know how many pieces of silver, should be divided among the Four Men of Munich. The Swiss Canton of Neuchâtel decided to send a gold chronometer. A Lisbon newspaper opened a subscription for a monument to commemorate Mr. Chamberlain's 'heroic action in defence of peace'. *The Times* said, 'No conqueror returning from the battlefield has ever come back with nobler

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laurels'. Herr Hitler, eloquently thanking Germany's 'only real friend', that great man Benito Mussolini, casually threw in a word of appreciation for 'the other two statesmen' who made this agreement possible. Mr. Chamberlain received over 20,000 telegrams of thanks, wagonloads of flowers.

*The Times* also said that at Munich Mr. Chamberlain had given the first example of the Führerprinzip — the theory of personal leadership, untrammelled by popular control — as applied to British policy.

The first example in history of the Führerprinzip was on a famous Gadarene occasion, when one ran before and many others ran after. I found it sinister that during this crisis people in England were served out with besnouted masks.

This was not the first occasion on which the Führerprinzip had been put into practice in England. In your alleged democracy, where the people are supposed to exercise, by free discussion and the vote, control over the major actions of the State, action has actually been taken in every crisis either without reference to the people or in the opposite direction to the course of action which the people had approved. In the Abyssinian crisis your Government, having one intention in mind, obtained an overwhelming vote from the country in support of the opposite course, and then followed the one it had predetermined. After a brief tempest of protest the people lethargically concurred; all that happened was that one Minister resigned, for a short while; he is likely to be your next Prime Minister. The abdication of a King was effected without any consultation of the people; the people subsequently approved it. In the Czechoslovak crisis the country solidly supported the Government in the course it had proclaimed; when, without any reference to the people, it took a completely different course in the summit of the crisis, the country, bamboozled by the manner in which the thing was presented to it, fell into line behind.

Your Government has repeatedly rallied the country on the cry of resisting the grab-dictatorships, and has consistently yielded to them. The signs that your Government privately sympathized with them are becoming too many to resist. Your Government

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has repeatedly appealed to the country for support in vast programmes of rearmament to enable it to withstand the grab-dictatorships; they have obtained the support, they have not rearmed, the grab-dictatorships have always had their way.

What is the answer?

On this Munich occasion, a few still small voices, in small countries, were raised on a note disharmonious in that great chorus of rejoicing.

In Yugoslavia, *Samouprava* said that 'the small countries had had a cruel lesson'.

In Denmark, which was beginning to thank its stars that it had at least abstained from the vote in that League of Nations Council meeting at Geneva in 1935 when Germany was condemned as a treaty-breaker, the *National Tidende* said:

That state which England and France formed and drew the borders of is now learning from the same powers that they have signed its death warrant without even asking it — in order to save peace. But it is difficult to imagine a more effective appeal to lesser states to seek safety in agreement with Germany than the acquiescence of France and England to Herr Hitler's ultimatum.

In Norway the Speaker of the Storting, C. J. Hambro, said:

A British Foreign Minister, Sir Austen Chamberlain, did more than any other man to consolidate the political prestige of the League of Nations and to create confidence in the goodwill of the Great Powers. His brother Neville Chamberlain has done more than any other to undermine that prestige and destroy that goodwill.

His policy in the last month has dismayed the small democratic states and aroused the worst fears for their future. Not the solution of the Czechoslovak question, but the manner of its solving must be described as an act of violence without its like in civilized history. England and France created Czechoslovakia, Benesh was the pioneer of their policy; they urged him on and praised him at every opportunity — and now they sacrifice his country by selling it behind his back.

It is comprehensible that during the last League Assembly in

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Geneva people were saying, 'There will be no war as long as a small state remains that the Great Powers can sacrifice'. Now we know where we stand. My country is so small that England would not even waste the cost of an aeroplane passage on a flight to Berlin to save us. Among all the small powers the fear is now growing that they will one day be dismembered, without being asked, if this suits the book of the Great Powers. A certain progress, however, is perceptible: Poland was partitioned in the eighteenth century by its worst enemies, Czechoslovakia in the twentieth century by its best friends.

Which is right? Was it noble, heroic, splendid? Was it contemptible, craven, base?

Why was that noble and good on September 29th which was disclaimed on September 8th? If this action was noble and heroic, why was it not taken long before? Why was not Benesh told? I have shown you earlier in this book the question he asked for months and years: tell me, if you don't want me, if you will not support me, if you want me to make terms with Germany. Why was it noble and heroic to leave him in doubt and then at the last moment to dismember his country, under the ruthless threat of desertion, without even asking him?

To me it seems that at that table in Munich there sat on the one side a cold cynicism, on the other a ruthless ferocity, that make men lose their last vestige of faith in their contemporary world. Hodza received in May 1937, through the mediation of Yugoslavia, which had long foreseen the worst and had no faith in France, an invitation to discuss matters with Hitler. If Benesh had accepted this invitation, if he had done what Poland did, the entire French Press would have been at him like a pack of hounds, yelping 'Traitor'. In complete loyalty he informed his ally, and the friend of his ally, of the offer and of its refusal.

Why was it heroic and noble on September 29th to force this small state to its knees, which on September 23rd you had promised to succour?

*The Times* on October 1st, the day after the triumph, said:

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The loss of the Sudeten territories had long been unavoidable, nor was it desirable that it should be avoided.

This, apparently, was the view of the British Government, since the British Government acted in this spirit. Then why was the suggestion officially repudiated on September 7th, when it was first launched by *The Times*? Why was Benesh persistently misled?

If you search for motives, after all that has happened, you are driven to suspect depths of callous cynicism hitherto beyond imagination.

I am not proud of Munich, nor of the part that England played there. But France! France, who was strictly bound by treaty, whose darling child was Czechoslovakia, who would have foamed at the mouth if Czechoslovakia had made a bid for Hitler's favour!

No words can fit the betrayal. When I lived in Prague, in that grey and discontented winter that followed Munich, I saw Czech playgoers break into loud applause when, on the stage, a German peasant in one of Romain Rolland's plays called his French captors 'You swine'. I heard Czech soldiers singing bitter songs about the trollop, Francie, who betrayed them when they marched off to war. The officers of the French Military Mission, which had been in Czechoslovakia for twenty years, since the birth of the Republic, were folding their tents and stealing away as silently as any Arabs. The French Legation was receiving sackfuls of trinkets with green-red and green-yellow ribbons — Croix de Guerre, Médailles Militaires.

Where is your French tact? [wrote Pavel Vilémský in *Přítomnost*] Keep your hollow compliments. We Czechs are no bushmen. We do not need your polite confirmation of the fact that we behaved as civilized people. Not one French Minister resigned, not one French patriot rose in Parliament to speak for us save de Kerillis. Your Paris *Soir*, a newspaper with a circulation of 2,000,000 copies, has opened a subscription for 'a national gift to the creator of the peace'. Our 'holy sacrifice' has not been worth 250,000 francs to France. There is only intoxicated enthusiasm for the

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gentleman with the umbrella. From England we expect such things. 'Quiet breakfast, quiet lunch and quiet sleep' — that is England's programme, as one of Chamberlain's newspapers wrote in the first days of October. But France!

As for England, the bitter resentment of the Czechs was tempered by the fact that one British Minister resigned, and he a man who had never particularly pleaded the cause of Czechoslovakia, a man from whom Czechoslovakia had no reason to expect anything. They remembered, too, that England had no treaty with them. They put it to England's credit that England contributed towards a large tip for Czechoslovakia, before proceeding to business as usual.

For England the thing was finished, as I wrote some months before that it would be, with a debate in the House, enlivened with jolly little pieces of repartee here and Shakespearean quotations there. Mr. Chamberlain spoke of plucking the flower safety from the nettle danger; Mr. Greenwood retaliated with another quotation from the same speech in which the excruciating words 'Ho, Chamberlain!' occurred; Mr. Butler, as a promising junior Minister, came back with one about 'Under the Greenwood tree', and it was all very matey.

The best one of all came from Mr. Burgin, who they say is Minister of Transport, and who found a perfectly delightful metaphor, on October 5th, for Czechoslovakia, ordered to be dismembered on September 29th. 'If there had been a war,' he said, 'and Czechoslovakia had been overrun, you could never have put humpty-dumpty up again.'

I think that's awfully funny, don't you?, and I do hope Mr. Burgin will remember that one when England's turn comes to be confronted with the threat of overwhelming force, because I always think that a really good one stands telling just twice.

For my part, I was in Belgrade when the news of Munich came through, in a gathering of Serbs, who had all long since foreseen it and said things about France and England that made my ears sting, and laughed and said, 'Our turn next'. But one of them said a thing that shook all my ideas to their roots and that has

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been disturbing me ever since. I have continually thought of it, and never found an answer.

He was a stout fellow, a patriotic Serb, which means a very great deal; he had fought in the war and left his health there, had been partly educated in England, retained much affection for England and did his best to promote feeling for England among Serbs, detested France because French soldiers, when he was a young Serb soldier flying through Albania from the enemy, found him hidden in a lifeboat, in which he hoped to stow away as far as Marseilles and then fight for France, lifted him out, and dropped him in a barge, so that he nearly broke a leg.

'If you ask me,' he said, 'I would sell any country, even this country, for peace.'

I looked at him speechless. You have to know Serbs to understand just what that means, from a Serb. I am still not sure if he really meant it. He seemed to. I have been puzzling over it ever since.

## CHAPTER 19

### BLOCK MARKS AND BALKAN MARKETS

I CLIMBED one day to the top of Mount Avala, which lies about ten miles from Belgrade, and on the summit the Serb conscripts were finishing Ivan Mestrovitch's black marble tomb for the Yugoslav Unknown Soldier. In the grandeur of its design and in its situation, this is the finest of all the war monuments I have ever seen, and one of the finest of all monuments that I know.

Reflect that you have to come to the Balkans to see it and you will revise your ideas about the Balkans, if you still think of them as lands hopelessly backward, the home of the analphabetic peasant, the haunt of the friendly flea. They are putting that behind them fast.

They have a lot of ground to make up. You still will not find in all Belgrade a moving picture temple in the style of ancient Babylon, a milk bar, a greyhound racecourse, a dirt track, a public house that closes during the morning, the afternoon, and the late evening, a queue waiting for theatre seats, a coronet at the opening of parliament, a case of night starvation, a publication given to the humour of the double bed and the double meaning, a family that has found wealth and happiness in the use of Soapo, a woman with purple hair, a title, or an old school tie.

I suppose these things will come, but for the nonce Belgrade is backward. Yet you have to come to Belgrade to see Ivan Mestrovitch's monument to the Yugoslav Unknown Soldier.

The site was there, but the choice of it, and the design of the temple to surmount it, where the bare summit rises from the tree-clad slopes, were genius. In immeasurable vista Serbia lies spread before you, with the roofs of Belgrade in the middle distance. Here, in this lofty loneliness that somehow is not lonely, a soldier who knew that he was going to die so that his country might be free would be glad to rest. A remarkable thing about this remark-

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able monument is that conscript soldiers hewed every block of stone, save for those that came from Ivan Mestrovitch's own workshop, assembled them, built the steps, wired the torches, planted the groves of young firs round about. Mestrovitch himself, incidentally, is a Croat, and a most Croat-conscious Croat at that.

I love that hilltop and that tomb, and only hope that it will retain its meaning, that Yugoslavia will continue free and peaceful and become a land where all its citizens will happily live, so that the grave on Mount Avala can become a place of glad pilgrimage for all Yugoslavs. I should be sorry if this lovely temple, which in some way contrives to express the courage of men and the sorrow of women and sacrifice and triumph, were ever to become an empty symbol, like the grave of the Czechoslovak Unknown Warrior, like the grave of another unknown warrior I know, like the Palace of the League of Nations at Geneva, shells from which the soul has fled.

On November 11th, 1938, when I was once more far away from England, I thought of the ceremony at the Cenotaph in Whitehall. In 1937 I had been in London on that day and, with the knowledge in my mind of the things I knew to be coming in Europe, I could feel no response in my heart whatever to that ceremony that once had moved me, nothing but cynicism. In 1938, when some of those things had already begun to happen, I found it almost blasphemous. I was glad to see that some English newspapers had begun to give voice to this feeling, that the blah about the fluttering of pigeons' wings in the silence and the muffled sobbing of women was giving way to a more honest and less humbugging kind of account, in which the suggestion peeped through that, as conditions are in 1938, we should best express respect to the million British dead by abolishing this commemoration of 1918.

In the early summer of 1938 there was an earthquake somewhere in Belgium, I believe. In my opinion it was caused by those British dead, all turning in their graves.

Back to Avala. When I had finished with the monument and the view I went down to the little hotel and on to the terrace, for

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it was a warm early autumn day, and there you could sit in the sun and take your midday meal and still divide your gaze between the temple on the summit and the great panorama below.

At the hotel the German flag was flying. Nowadays I met it everywhere — on Danubian barges, on the rudders of aeroplanes flying over Balkan cities, on hotels where German envoys were staying.

That strangely disquieting, Asiatic-looking swastika flag! I thought of my early days in Germany, when it was forbidden, of later days when it was permitted but scarcely ever seen; it was then the emblem of an insignificant group of adventurers, and then later still, during elections in Berlin, you saw one here or there among the masses of Republican and Monarchist tricolours, and then there were more and more, and one day there were only these swastika flags, a few in every street, and large gaps where the Republican and Monarchist colours had formerly flown, and then these gaps were filled and every house, every hut, every flat, every villa and mansion and palace and museum and ministry in Germany flew that flag, and now I saw it everywhere I went in Danubian and Balkan countries, more and more and more swastika flags, and in the course of the next year or two that flag is going to be planted in places which you thought yesterday, perhaps still think to-day, to be far beyond its reach.

Now I found it on Mount Avala, and wondered in whose honour it was flying, as I ordered my meal and turned to enjoy the view. To find it here, at this tomb of a man who twenty years before had fought with British and French comrades to put an end to militarism and despotism in Europe, was disturbing; its fluttering ruffled the silence of that eyrie, its angry red broke up the peaceful harmony of the sky, the autumn foliage, the hushed black temple on the hilltop, the warm brown plain below.

Up the hill, tramp, tramp, tramp, came the sound of marching men, and a company of Serb soldiers emerged from the trees, halted in the car-park beneath the terrace where I sat, and stood at ease. Some of the finest fighting-men in Europe. I thought sadly, as I looked at them, that no more would these men fight

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with and for us. 'To Hell with Serbia', shouted the obese swindler Bottomley in 1914. 'To Hell with Czechoslovakia', shouted men of the same fry in 1938. Well, they were having their way, these prophets. The Czechs were finished — for us. The Serbs were finished — for us.

Ten years before, an Englishman, at this spot, would have been an honoured and fêted guest. To-day, the red carpet was run out for the Germans. How many Englishmen have been to Mount Avala, to pay their respect to the Yugoslav Unknown Soldier?

Leaning against the wall, near me, was an enormous wreath, beribboned with the German colours and the swastika.

Down on the plain, far away, I saw a long procession of motor cars, like tiny insects, creeping along the road from Belgrade. They passed out of sight behind the shoulder of the hill. A few minutes more of waiting, and you heard them approach. The Serb officer called his men to attention. One after another the sleek and shining limousines, flying the German and Yugoslav colours, came out of the trees. They stopped. The Serb officer shouted a command, the bayonets flashed in the sun as the soldiers presented arms. A man in a morning coat got out of the leading car, raised his arm in the Hitler salute, passed along the ranks. Behind him a deferential morning-coated and top-hatted throng, German diplomats, Yugoslav Ministers, officials, officers.

He was a bejewelled man of a fair corpulence. Walther Funk, Hitler's Minister of Economics. I had first known him six years before, when he was a little-known journalist on the staff of a Berlin financial newspaper strongly Nationalist in politics. When Hitler came to power he was suddenly a big man, head of the Reich Government's Press Department. Rundfunk, we had been wont to call him, in honour of his contours, as we had called Sahm, the gigantic Mayor of Berlin, Langsahm, in honour of his height.

Now he was a very great man. Everywhere he went in the Balkans, at Belgrade, at Sofia, at Athens, at Ankara, they turned out the guard for him, paid him the honour due to the representative of the mighty Reich that was daily extending its domains and its power.

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Trade follows the flag? No, that one is old. The flag, the swastika flag, follows trade. In Germany they have found an entirely new system of doing business, a system which makes German foreign trade the handmaiden of German foreign policy, trained to promote its aim of expanding the German Empire. First make the small states dependent on you for their livelihoods, and their political dependence follows, stage by stage, as you tighten your hold.

He was a buyer and seller on a colossal scale, this Walther Funk. He could buy up a whole harvest, a whole series of harvests, and give you in exchange — cash? No. Squadrons of aeroplanes, battalions of tanks, a factory, a strategic road. You always had the uneasy feeling, at the back of your mind, that there was a catch in this somewhere, that in the last analysis you were promoting German interests more than your own, mortgaging your house to your supplier. And you were right.

The magnitude of German aims, and the way in which political policy, economic policy and strategic policy are all co-ordinated, like the several parts of a gigantic but smoothly-running machine, to serve this dominant purpose, is magnificent and terrifying. You cannot understand it by taking up your newspaper at the breakfast table and reading, one day, that Germany has pocketed more territory, the next, that she has made a trade agreement with a Balkan state, the next, that she is going to build a road through one of these states. You have to study it as a whole, with a big map before you, some understanding for military strategy, and some information about German needs and trade. Then you will gain a picture of men who are thinking in terms of continents and who, by perfect planning and timing, are realizing their aims with meticulous precision.

Take the military and strategic position of Germany first. Eight years ago the outline of Germany was that of a ruined fortress, with great breaches in the walls through which the enemy could at any time give battle to the garrison. The largest breach was in the west; a foreign army of occupation stood on German soil in the Rhineland, where a part of German territory was by treaty debarred from fortification. Another breach in the western

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wall was the Saar, which was under League of Nations administration. In the south was a great breach where Austria, a land inhabited predominantly by men of German blood, lay under a Government potentially hostile to the Reich. In the south-east, a very big breach, the western half of Czechoslovakia bit deep into the fortress.

By 1938 every one of those breaches had been repaired. The Rhineland had been evacuated, the demilitarized Rhineland zone had been reoccupied, the Saar had been regained, Austria had been annexed, the German fringe of Czechoslovakia seized, the western front had been made impregnable by great fortifications, built by men working day and night whom you just took from their normal occupations and used to serve your paramount aims; there great rows of concrete teeth ran from northern to southern frontier, ready to rip open the bellies of tanks, deep marshy pits, covered with a layer of innocent-looking grass, waited to drown them.

One breach remained. The western half even of rump Czechoslovakia still bit deep into the fortress. By agreement with the now submissive Czechoslovak Government, whose part in the agreement was to sign on the dotted line, you began to build a German road clean across Czechoslovakia from Breslau to Vienna. You calmly prolonged the frontier of the Reich across the country whose frontiers you had undertaken to guarantee, making the western half of that country a province within the Reich. You remember how Germany wailed for years about the 'Polish Corridor', the bleeding wound in Germany's side? Consider the German corridor through Czechoslovakia.

Now look at your map, after the last of those operations, and see how the first part of the great strategic scheme has been completed, with time-table punctuality. Your Reich is now a fortress without any gaps, its frontiers — its walls — are practically square at all points of the compass. The last chink in her armour has been closed, she is impregnable within those mended, four-square walls.

The time for the sortie approaches, for the conquest of the land lying outside those invulnerable walls. The countries around fear

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that sortie. Especially the small countries lying to the east, who know that they have all the things Germany cannot grow within her fortress walls, the things she needs to be in certain possession of before she approaches the greatest aim of all, the subjugation of her greater rivals, the paramount powers in the world.

Hungary and Poland, while she was carving up the western half of Czechoslovakia, tried to close ranks, to divide the eastern half between them, to put a barrier against her eastward drive. They failed. She kept a narrow corridor of land open there, pointing south-eastward. There is the sally port, from which she may reduce Poland, Hungary and Rumania to submission, and Rumania has the thing she wants most of all — oil. Motor fuel for her tanks, her aeroplanes, her mechanized batteries, her lorries. Relatively few are the Germans in Rumania; she can hardly invoke the call of the blood, the need to liberate them. But oil is thicker than blood, a quite especial juice.

Consider this brief outline of events, with a map, and you will see history taking shape before you, not as a thing of sudden and baffling and recurrent surprises in your morning newspaper, but as the organic development of a great plan, stupendous in its conception and as yet superb in its execution. You can do a great deal when you have the power, by pressing a button, to take a million men from their daily occupations and put them to building fortifications, when you can press another button and have thousands of newspapers, thousands of radio speakers, thousands of picture-theatres, all shouting the same thing, when you can by pressing a third button divert millions of pounds of trade to some particular country which you wish to make dependent on you.

Yet it is entirely wrong to think that you can only do these things under a dictatorship, and not under a democracy. The greatness of Hitler is not his own greatness, it is the sum of the littleness of the men who have opposed him.

In England, under democracy, you do not put experts in charge of your affairs, but distribute your favours among men of a small class without especial qualification for the posts they receive. This is the misuse of democracy in the interest of a class, the betrayal

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of democracy, and it is the cause of our woes, past, present and to come. The enthusiasm, the energy and the ability are there, but you do not use them, you delude and misuse them.

Dictatorship is not necessary to choose for urgent national tasks men who are especially competent to achieve them. In Germany every major post is occupied by an expert. Goering knows a great deal about soldiering and aeroplanes; he was perfectly equipped to fulfil Hitler's order to 'build me the greatest air force of all time'.

Todt, the Reich Inspector-General for Road-Construction, is the Vauban of National Socialist Germany; as a great expert he was perfectly qualified to build the great network of motor-roads which are the arteries of Germany's strategic plans, to supervise and carry out that stupendous operation of 1938, the building of the western fortifications.

Goebbels knows more about propaganda than any man living; he believes that Germany lost the last war through maladroit propaganda, is determined this time to outshout the others in the accusations of atrocities, of women-rape and nigger-beating, of Hunnishness and Vandalism. He has already achieved this: that British journalists are working under censorship while German journalists can write the most scurrilous things they choose about England, that the German Press at this moment is carrying on the most violent campaign of vilification against England that has ever been known, while British Ministers try little niggling dodges to placate him, like telephoning to the American Minister to have Wickham Steed and A. J. Cummings deleted from a newsreel film.

Robert Ley was a workman and knows the mind of workmen perfectly; what Conservative Minister ever came from Shore-ditch or worked in a factory?, what old-school-tie politician could have built up anything to compare with that great leisure-time and holiday organization for workers, Kraft durch Freude, which is the achievement of Ley?

You do not need dictatorship to do these things. That is the politician's get-out, and the get-out of the politician who fears public resentment of the mistakes that have been made, but has no will to mend them.

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You need the will, and a feeling for the poorest of your fellow-men, and determination to improve their lot. How can you ever get anything done if the primary qualification for office is membership of the peerage, education at this school or that university, inter-relationship and the established privileges of a small class?

This system is the rape of democracy, not its honouring.

But now consider the third handmaiden of German policy. The first two are military strength and foreign policy. The third is economic policy, and another expert, Walther Funk, is in charge of it.

The Reich, shorn of gold, shunned by foreign lenders and investors, cannot earn enough foreign money through the sale of its goods and services abroad to pay cash for the things it needs abroad, and has in great part gone over from cash-trading to barter. That, at least, is the theory of the economists, and for all I know it may be true.

The inference is that the process was not intentional, but unavoidable, and I wonder, in view of the vast political importance for the Reich of this barter system, whether this is so. I am certain that the Reich has a gold reserve somewhere, 'for an emergency', as they say in England, and in Germany, however distressing the state of the country to a distant economist buried in columns of statistics, money seems to flow more freely for urgently necessary things than in many other countries.

'Sound finance', as I have seen it operate in England, Austria, Hungary and other countries, is a thing to be regarded with the deepest distrust. Wherever I have seen it, it meant a beautiful paper budget, with a balance that warmed your heart, stacks of gold buried deep in the vaults of the national bank, cash passing freely to and fro across the frontiers (especially in 'emergencies', when some of it passes backwards and forwards between London and New York and Zürich and Paris and Amsterdam with the speed of a hunted fox seeking safety), millions of unemployed, beggars in the streets, and slums.

The finances of the Reich, I believe, are deplorably unsound; they can't even afford the beggars, the slums and the unemployed.

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This again is not the fault or virtue of democracy or dictatorship. It lies with the men who rule, who have grown up in a tradition that they are too old, too indolent or too callous to change. In Switzerland and Holland, in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, under democracy, you have well-ordered and well-balanced communities, a decent standard of living, good housing and public health organizations.

Do you really imagine that democratic and parliamentary England would rise as one man and rush to the barricades to overthrow a Government that asked for authority to take gigantic measures against unemployment, under-nourishment, lack of air and sunshine, the slums and derelict areas, public ill-health, bad teeth, adenoids, the disfigurement of the countryside, and British institutions generally?

But I mean gigantic measures. Not, for God's sake, another committee.

The economic policy of the Reich is to make certain that Germany, in a future war, cannot be defeated on her home front, that is, by inability to obtain the essential things she needs to prosecute the war. The theory of Hitler, the theory that has now found acceptance in Germany, is that the Reich was not defeated in the field in the last war, but through starvation in foodstuffs and raw materials which she could only get from abroad and which were intercepted from reaching her by the British naval blockade. She is determined that that shall not happen again. She began, immediately after that war, to increase the area under grain, and has become almost self-supporting in some of the things she needs.

But she can never produce, within those fortress walls, all the things she needs if she is not to be starved out. The countries east and south-east of her have them nearly all — oil, grain, animal fats, livestock, ores, raw materials. That is why German foreign, military and economic policy all bear, for the present, towards Danubian and Balkan Europe.

Early in the process of transition from cash to barter she turned towards these countries, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey. She began to buy vast quantities of their

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products. She did not pay cash for them, or for more than a small part of them. The purchase price remained in Berlin, in blocked marks which could only be used to buy German manufactures.

Finance Ministers in all these countries grew nervous as the frozen balances in Berlin swelled and swelled. They introduced import licence systems. Their importers might import nothing from abroad without a licence, and the licence, more and more, was granted only for German manufactures, so that the Finance Minister might have a respite from the thought of that alarmingly large balance of blocked marks in Berlin. But Germany increased and increased her purchases. The Finance Ministers had to increase and increase the number of licences for imports from Germany which they distributed, and correspondingly to reduce and reduce the number of licences for imports from other countries.

The Danubian and Balkan countries did not much care for this system. They would have preferred to receive cash, which they could use as they wished — for instance, to finance new industries, for all these countries pine to catch up with the West, get away from field-tilling and make their own machines, their own bathtubs, their own bicycles, their own silk stockings.

But they had no choice. They were already the prisoners of a most astute economic scheme. They were being forced to remain peasant countries, to grow food for Germany and to take from Germany, in exchange, the things that German workmen made. They were already moving again on the road to alien domination, to political dependence, to vassalage. Their lands were to serve as granaries and larders and fuel-tanks for the mighty militarist Reich, their sons as hewers of wood and drawers of water for her. The Treaty of Bucharest, which would have given the Rumanians that status in perpetuity, but that Germany was afterwards defeated, loomed up again on the horizon.

Thus began that beautiful process which you can see in operation to-day anywhere you choose to go on the Danube — at Vienna, at Budapest, at Belgrade, anywhere. Upstream labour the barge convoys, laden to the waterline with grain for Germany, the swastika flag fluttering at the mast. Downstream come more

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swiftly the other barge convoys, laden with German tractors and machinery for the Danubian and Balkan states. On the quayside you will see the German motor cars and lorries and manufactures of all kinds, unloaded from the barges, waiting to be delivered to the German agent.

It is, say the Germans, the most natural and perfect process in the world. Germany is one of the greatest manufacturing countries in the world, the Danubian and Balkan states are predominantly agricultural, the blue Danube links them all on its journey between the Black Forest and the Black Sea, each can supply what the other needs, each wants what the other can supply. It is the reconstruction of that almost perfect economic unit, the Austro-Hungarian Empire — save that Austria is now Germany.

A difficult argument to refute! But at the end of the process lies, once more, political dependence, the loss of national freedom, for the small states, the destruction of the last gain of the World War.

When I saw Walther Funk that day, followed by the obsequious throng, Yugoslavia was taking about fifty per cent of all her imports from Germany and sending about thirty-five per cent of all her exports to Germany. Approximately similar figures, with a small margin either way, hold good for Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey; Rumania has lagged a little but will soon be brought into line.

These proportions will increase until Germany holds almost a monopoly of Danubian and Balkan trade. A great give-and-take economic unit is being built within which customs barriers, ultimately, will inevitably fall. You will have your great German Customs Empire, and this will become a Political and Military Empire. The power of applying pressure that Germany has is becoming irresistible.

Soon the whole Danube will be under German rule. At present it is an international river, navigation on it controlled by an International Commission which is one of the last wan children of the Peace Treaty. Before the subjugation of Czechoslovakia Germany proposed to the Danubian states — Czechoslovakia,

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Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania — that they should leave the International Commission and form, with her, a 'purely Danubian Commission'. This meant that England and France would have their seats on it deftly taken from beneath them, that in effect a 'purely German Commission' would reign on the Danube, since the small Danubian states, with Germany at the head of the table, would have no other function than to sign their names on the dotted line. At that time Czechoslovakia, besieged but unsubdued, refused, and that let out the other Danubian states, which much preferred the International Commission. Came Munich, and they can refuse no longer.

In the background looms that other gigantic scheme, which defeated Charlemagne and Napoleon but which the Hitlerist Reich is quickly accomplishing — the Rhine-Danube canal. Germany will be master of a great waterway reaching from the North Sea to the Black Sea.

Already the note of authority may be heard in Germany's injunctions to the Danubian states. In the summer of 1938 England, in the usual belated effort to catch the disappearing bus, set up the usual committee to study means of increasing trade with the Danubian and Balkan states. In all the Danubian and Balkan capitals German Ministers appeared at the Foreign Offices and stated trenchantly that any ostentatious diversion of trade to England would be considered an unfriendly act towards Germany. Nothing more was heard of the committee. In London, by the autumn, the official voice was proclaiming benignly that England had no wish to bolt the door against German trade in Danubian Europe.

Bolt the door? Just you try bolting that door. Of all the fatuous phrases. This is the kind of talk with which the great British public is continually and continually bamboozled. How can you bolt the Danubian door against a country which already holds half or more than half of Danubian trade in its hands? The point is, that you should try to prevent the door from being bolted against yourself, that you should try and keep what little trade you have there, that you should not allow yourself to be quite

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squeezed out. What, in the name of import and export, does your Prime Minister mean when he says, 'We have no wish to exclude Germany from these countries or economically to encircle her'.

This is as if the man who owns the little sweet-shop near Selfridge's were to say to Mr. Gordon Selfridge, 'Sir, be of good cheer, I have no wish to exclude you or economically to encircle you'.

The point is that British traders cannot compete in the Danubian and Balkan countries, can no longer get the small share of trade they used to have, because the methods used by Germany make competition impossible. Not German trade, but British trade, is being squeezed out. It is not very big, but it all tells. Just as the British newspaper correspondents are having to give up the contest, so are British business men in these countries wondering where they can move to next, so are the Commercial Secretaries at British Legations shaking despondent heads and making despondent reports, so are the British representatives on international commissions casting about for a new career, like the League officials at Geneva. These are all Englishmen, and this is only the beginning of a process.

One day, in the House of Commons, Mr. R. S. Hudson, of your Department of Overseas Trade, said:

Germany was not discriminating against British goods in Germany. Our complaint was that Germany was by her methods destroying trade throughout the world.

That is much nearer to the truth than:

We have no wish to bolt the door against German trade.

Proceeding, Mr. Hudson said:

It is difficult to get exact information of the way things are done, but in Central and South-Eastern Europe the basis of Germany's hold is that they pay to the producer much more than the world price. They obviously do that at the expense of their own people. It is a matter for the German Government how they treat their own people, but it does affect us.

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Germans, in their country, are not less well cared for than English people in theirs, but better.

The Germans, said Mr. Hudson, were paying over £10 a ton for wheat at a time when Manitoba wheat, No. 1, was selling at £7 on the London market. The same thing applied to barley, eggs, wool, cotton, hides meat, poultry, oilseeds and cereals. Owing to this action the exports of mohair from Turkey to England had decreased from £190,000 to £24,000. The Rumanian or Bulgarian peasant received more for his sales to Germany than he would receive as a result of his sales on the world market.

That is true, and the Rumanian or Bulgarian peasant is indifferent whether he receives his ley or levas direct from the foreign buyer or from his own Government, whether the ultimate result is that his Government becomes politically subordinate to Germany. He has more cash in his pocket.

Germany, said Mr. Hudson, had contracted to buy Polish harvests 'for nine years' — for *nine years*, in advance — at well above world prices. Poland obtained her goods on credit and paid a low rate of interest.

By these methods Germany is obtaining an economic stranglehold on these various countries at the cost of her own people, raising the cost of living of her own people, and exporting her goods at less than cost price.

'An economic stranglehold over these countries.'

That is true. The remainder of the sentence is of debatable truth. It depends on your basis of comparison. Germany has few unemployed, no slums in our understanding of the word, no need for an 'Access to Mountains Bill', no chronic under-nutrition of children. Germany may be raising 'the cost of living' for her people by 'these methods', but what of the standard of living, in the things that really matter? That is the point.

Not the price that the people have to pay for a suit of clothes or a joint of meat is decisive, or not alone that. Can they have health, and good houses, and sunshine and light and air, and access to the countryside? These are the essential things.

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Then, Mr. Hudson asked, what was the solution, what should England do about it?

No one wants to introduce similar methods. We do not want to see the cost of bread increased in England because we buy in competition with Germany wheat from Rumania at over the world price. But clearly we have to meet this competition in the case of Poland, and the Government has made a survey of all the possible methods. The only way the Government sees is by organizing our industries in such a way that they will be able to speak as units with their opposite numbers in Germany and say, 'Unless you are prepared to put an end to this form of competition and come to an agreement on market prices which represent a reasonable return, then we will fight you and beat you at your own game'.

That is not an answer, unless you improve the conditions of your workpeople. It is not enough to say that you will at all costs defend the profits of your manufacturers — unless you are simultaneously prepared to raise the standard of living of your workpeople.

Clearly [said Mr. Hudson] this country is infinitely stronger than, I was going to say, any country, but certainly Germany. Therefore we have a great advantage, which would result in our winning the fight.

At last, at long last, and after so many years of warnings, the danger seems to have been realized. But you will have to gird your loins as you never did before, if you are really going to win this fight. You are faced with a country immensely strong in arms and immensely strong in real wealth — not gold bars in the vault of the national bank, but industry, agriculture, the thrift and energy of the workpeople, and the conditions of life they enjoy.

In Germany now they have a mighty organization, equipped with full powers, for improving the lot of the workpeople in factories and workshops. Their engineers and social workers and artists go into the factories and see what needs to be done. They say that a shower-room, a recreation room, a restaurant, a medical

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clinic, a dental clinic, is needed — and these are provided. They have a civic sense, a social conscience, a feeling of the community of German mankind — in spite of their bestial concentration camps — which you lack.

I have just been reading how Dr. Goebbels one November day made a tour of the meanest streets in Berlin, those streets in East Berlin which lie round what used to be called the Bülow Platz and is now the Horst Wessel Platz. Here you have the nearest approach to an English slum or derelict area, mean houses with two or three courtyards, and the dwellings become progressively dirtier and darker as you go from courtyard to courtyard.

Here he went from one poor home to another. In one he found damp and mildewed walls and said things about house owners which will set the house owners in that district painting and repairing as quickly as they can. In another he ordered that a new dwelling should immediately be provided for a man, his wife, and three children who were living in three rooms, and so on.

It is propaganda. Dr. Goebbels is not beloved in Germany. But this is good propaganda. You do not even need a dictatorship to do it. Any British Minister with energy could do it, could direct public attention to housing conditions in a manner that would compel bad landlords to make the places they let habitable for man.

The note of authority was distinct to hear in some remarks of Walther Funk at that time in Belgrade.

It is important that the strengthening of German-Yugoslav economic relations should allow the increase of Yugoslav production, especially when Yugoslavia has completed the construction of her network of modern roads. Our economic relations will make possible not only the construction of these modern roads but the intensive exploitation of your mineral riches.

That means:

I came down here by car and your roads are really terrible and it's about time that our Inspector General of Road-Construction,

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Todt, who has a clear strategic mind, was called in to give you some tips about road-building — he's going to build one in Czechoslovakia soon — and after that we shall be glad to mine your ores for you.

My visit to Yugoslavia [said Walther Funk that day] has no political ends. But one thing is clear — that economic policy cannot be separated from general policy. On the contrary, economic policy must adapt itself to general policy. Our economic programme comprises the augmentation of Yugoslav production and of that of all the countries of south-eastern Europe. These countries constitute the best market for German products. The economic structure of Germany and of these countries complement each other . . . We can guarantee good prices for the agricultural products of these countries. What is the use of *devisen* — [cash in payment, instead of blocked marks] — what is the use of buying power if the peasant cannot place his products? . . . We do not wish to force our ideas on the world, but we wish to give it a useful example. I am convinced that other countries will apply our methods and that general pacification in this part of Europe will thus be facilitated . . . World crises do not affect our commerce. We have freed ourselves from the influence of world economy, we are independent. We don't take much account of *devisen*, money and credit. If labour and production are well organized, the prosperity of the people is assured.

Your job is to increase your agricultural production. We will take it from you, build roads for you in exchange, exploit your mineral resources. Don't pine after cash, you know your peasant only wants dinars, and doesn't mind whether he gets them from his own Government or from Germany, if only the price is good. It is your job to make your importers take as many of our manufactures as possible, so that you can quickly and smoothly pay your peasant exporters. Your best course would be to introduce our methods. Then you will have tranquillity in these parts and all will be well. We are your biggest customers, and the biggest customer always has a word to say in the running of the concern.

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The note of authority!

Walther Funk went down the hill again, while the soldiers presented arms. A few days later I went to seek solitude on Mount Avala once more. Again the German flag was flying there. Again the beribboned wreath lay waiting. Again the procession of motor-cars.

Robert Ley got out, greeted and saluted, went up the steps, with the deferential throng behind him, to pay homage to the Yugoslav Unknown Soldier. He had a large staff of specialists with him: he was on his way to Sofia to tell the Bulgars all about Kraft durch Freude.

I went down the hill pining for somebody in authority in England to awaken to the existence of the Balkans. But here, too, I fear we have lost too much ground.

## CHAPTER 20

### NATURE OF THE BEAST

ONE day, just before the annexation of Austria, I walked through the Minoritenplatz in Vienna and saw Dettlevsohn, of whom I have already spoken, standing on the pavement. He did not see me and I did not attract his attention. I wanted to study him, quietly.

He seemed bigger, broader, burlier, as if he had been puffed out with a bicycle pump. He had, indeed, put on weight, but that was not the only reason for the change. His inner man had grown in girth and stature. He felt himself, Dettlevsohn the German, to belong to the strong, who inherit the earth. His chest was expanding, his manner becoming more arrogant, his voice louder. As a German, in Vienna, soon to welcome Hitler, he was lord of all he surveyed, and his whole bearing proclaimed this.

This change of spirit has been general among Germans in the last two or three years, but Dettlevsohn is a particularly interesting example of it and I have chosen him because, in contemplating him, you will see and understand that inner transformation, which is so important for yourself, more clearly.

Dettlevsohn had known many ups and downs in his life; not long before, he had even been a fugitive, always looking over his shoulder; he had never expected in 1938 to find himself back on the summit of German self-esteem and self-confidence, filling his lungs with the good air that is there. I marvelled as I watched him standing there in the Minoritenplatz in his new overcoat and hat, broad-chested, prosperous, pugnacious, restored, at peace with the world.

He is a very witty and intelligent fellow, and I had always liked him for these qualities, but when the Potsdam tone began to appear again in his careful English, the boastful and arrogant note, I felt a gulf widening between us.

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Before the World War Dettlevsohn had lived for many years in the East, say in India, among Englishmen, and had prospered exceedingly. He had learned to speak English perfectly and could pass as an Englishman. He seemed, when I first knew him, even to have acquired the ways and manners of Englishmen; only later did I perceive that he had not acquired them but only put them on.

When the war broke out he was interned, his property confiscated. After the war he returned to a chaotic Germany. He got into politics, and on June 30th, 1934, the day of the great clean-up, was just on the wrong side, so that he narrowly escaped with his life, and for long enough lived in Vienna, looking always over his shoulder. Then, somehow, he made his peace with the pursuers. Now he was able to await the coming of Hitler to Austria with a quiet mind and the triumphant feelings of an average German.

Just before Austria fell he described to me, in words that I shall never forget, the changes that had taken place in him in those twenty-five years. 'Before the war, in India,' he said, 'I used to wonder whether I wouldn't become a naturalized Englishman. After the war, when Germany was defeated and I had lost everything, I bitterly regretted that I hadn't done this. Now, I'm proud to be a German, proud to be a German.'

And well he might be, I thought, and what would an Englishman say to himself, if he looked back along those twenty-five years?

This same transformation I meet to-day everywhere, among Germans whom I knew in Berlin or elsewhere between 1928 and 1935. Men who then were friendly, modest and plaintive, envious but respectful towards England and Englishmen, are to-day cock-a-hoop, self-confident, brisker and louder-voiced, contemptuous of England. They may still be friendly, but already patronage is in their bearing. So it was true after all, they think, what Hitler always told us and what we never dared to believe, that strength is the one argument that England understands. Still almost incredulous, they contemplate the muddle and social backwardness in England, victorious, mighty and rich, and the

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thought grows in their minds: 'And this country thinks it can rule the world?' Their chests expand.

In the Danubian and Balkan countries, in Prague and Budapest and Belgrade and Bucharest and Sofia and Athens, the change is astonishing. The German Legation, the German Travel Bureau, are the suns around which the social life of these cities revolves, the sources from which all blessings flow. Packed with councillors and secretaries and military attachés and air attachés and naval attachés, they are hives of bee-like activity.

They spend money like water on entertainment, on exhibitions, on lectures, on propaganda in all its forms. German business men throng the hotels. The local Führer, the head of the Nazi organization, is one of the biggest men in the place. German Ministers, German specialists, continually come and go. The native officials spend half their time at or telephoning to the German Legation. The local Fascist parties regard it as their spiritual home. Support is always available for local friends of National Socialism.

The British Legations, and the French, have become quiet and cloistered retreats with few visitors and little to do. Kings and Prime Ministers used to go to them for advice, they used to be better informed than any other. Now they often hunger vainly for information, they have to learn from the radio or the newspapers that the Prime Minister has suddenly gone by aeroplane to discuss affairs of State with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden, the Bavarian ch<sup>^</sup>teau from which Danubian Europe is ruled to-day.

The numbers of British business men and the volume of business they do continually diminish. They will diminish still further. The German method, of buying ever-increasing quantities of foodstuffs and minerals from these states and liberating the Reichsmarks they earn only for the purchase of German manufactures, freezes the British exporter out. The process will continue.

For British trade, in my view, this is an injury far greater than on paper it appears to be when the relatively small volume of British business with these countries is considered, for these are young and rapidly growing markets, hungry for foreign manu-

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factures, and in a freely trading world their appetite for British goods would be very great.

My own profession, which I know best, gives a good example of the trend. In all the Balkan countries there are not more than two or three professional British newspaper correspondents. They cannot work there. There should be several of these men in each capital, but they cannot work. If they wish to stay, they must transmit only official hand-outs. The slightest attempt freely to depict for-and-against currents in the domestic or foreign policy of that particular country brings expulsion. They can count on no support from the British Government or any other quarter.

Without any specific charge whatever, their livelihoods can be wrecked, their homes broken up at a moment's notice. Just 'out you go, within forty-eight hours', and that's that. They may be given an official report which describes a protest meeting of bishops, priests and churchgoers as 'a Communist demonstration'. If they suggest, in their dispatches, that this is a wrong description, out they go.

This process began in Germany, under National Socialism, and has now extended to many other countries. In all these years, if I remember rightly, while one British correspondent after another was being expelled from Germany, only one real German correspondent, the London representative of the Nazi *Völkischer Beobachter*, was expelled from England, and unless the initials that appear under some of the London messages in that newspaper to-day are misleading, he has been allowed to return.

But in each of the Balkan capitals there are ten, twenty or thirty professional German newspaper correspondents. They are well-paid and well-situated men, closely organized in their local association, which in its turn works in the closest collaboration with the German Legation; they write freely and do not hesitate to criticize the local government if tendencies unsympathetic to Germany reveal themselves. None of the Balkan Governments would dare, save in some very serious case, to expel any of these German newspaper correspondents. The German Minister would be at the local Foreign Office in five minutes if they did.

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British newspaper correspondents, lacking all support from home, are in effect coming to feel themselves, as I wrote once before, in the position of spies — people you must have, but from whom you turn your face if they are in trouble.

You cannot expect men to go out to remote countries, as Englishmen used to do, to establish themselves there and apply themselves for years to the study of the country, its people, its policy, its customs and its language, for meagre pay in such conditions.

A classic instance was the expulsion from Belgrade of Hubert Harrison, after many years of residence there and after the recent award of a Yugoslav order, on the general ground that his reporting was unsympathetic to the government of the day.

Here you have some of the reasons for the decline of British prestige in these distant countries, which may be small and poor but are strategically, politically and economically of importance.

But while John Smith packs his bags, gives up his flat, and casts about for a new livelihood somewhere else, Johann Schmidt, busy, efficient, important, with the whole might of the Reich at his back, arrives at the station and takes possession.

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SUDDENLY, one day, I cabled my resignation to *The Times*. I had been slowly forming this intention for long enough, but sometimes my mind delays in making itself up, and in this case a big decision was at stake and extraneous things happened to complicate the issue.

When I was writing *Insanity Fair* in 1937 I foresaw that it might alter my future, that instead of sitting tight on a comfortable post, acquired by many years of hard work, and looking forward to a pension, I might have to start again. On the other hand, a small possibility existed that the book would bring me substantial earnings which would partly compensate me for this risk.

I wrote the book, which I felt I had to write, and the things I said in it came true, and it was read by many people and seemed to stir some. A clergyman, as one reader wrote to tell me, enjoined his congregation from the pulpit to read it, and that left me thinking *que diable fais-je dans cette galère?* As a warning it was either too late, or no warning can avail, or no warning is needed. A policy of ostrichism continued to be pursued which left London, in the autumn of 1938, an almost defenceless city of eight million people faced with the greatest catastrophe in European history; on the Continental mainland a vitally important small nation was thrown to the wolves; the process of deterioration in the standards of justice and humanity and decency continued at an accelerated pace, and England herself moved nearer to the loss of territory, probably under humiliating conditions.

From that point of view, I might as well not have written the book. But, from the other point of view, that of earning enough money to keep me going for some little time if I had to start again from scratch, it promised well, when a stroke of bad luck befell me, something outside all the risk-calculations I had made. In America, where it was also finding favour, the publisher went

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bankrupt, and it seemed that, while my earnings receded into the distance, I was still bound to him for future books.

Eventually that tangle was cleared up, but it took a long time, and this delayed me from doing what I wanted to do. As soon as I could see my way a little clear I took the plunge.

It was a plunge, for I had been seventeen years with *The Times*, fourteen of them a member of the editorial staff, eleven years a correspondent in many parts of Europe. I had to live. There was even, for those who set store by such things, the consideration of pension rights.

It was all one to me. The review of *Insanity Fair* in *The Times* treated a correspondent of long experience in Continental Europe as an overwrought babbler, found truth in the statement, in another book, that the idea of Hitler's annexation of Austria was 'a boggy of the English imagination', and recommended me to retire to the country and read it, and from that moment I felt that I ought to leave *The Times* and was determined at the first opportunity to do so. That bankruptcy delayed me.

Now, when I took from the hotel porter in Belgrade the letter containing the acceptance of my resignation, I felt like a man reborn. I was free to start again. With the hilarious feeling that new adventures and new struggles lay before me I went out and spent a happy evening in the restaurants and cafés of Belgrade.

Don't be the slave of that Job. When you feel it to be an intolerable servitude, give it up. The future will be full of disasters, but they will never happen. You will be the better for a change. You will be better still if you break free from jobs altogether and work for yourself. Far too many Englishmen work for other people and not for themselves. The strength of the Jews is that they realize that you can never find riches by working for other people. There are other things, more valuable than riches, that you can only find when you work for yourself.

You ought at all costs to set up on your own, somehow. I was slow enough to realize this, and see now that I missed many earlier opportunities. I cannot regret it, because I contrived nevertheless to have a great time, but I do see how vitally important it is.

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It is appalling to think of the millions of slaves confined in the great galley London, all pulling monotonously on the oars of the job, coming into town each day to make entries in books that are the counterparts of other entries that other men make in other books, working long hours for a pittance which could not be much less, however bad the luck, if they were to try something on their own.

A man feels quite different when he's his own master; if he could only be his own mistress as well, life would be quite perfect.

This dependence on the job saps men's self-esteem. It would be different if you had rigid laws of employment, of dismissal, of pension, fixed by the State and binding for the employer. It is intolerable in the free-fox-in-the-free-henroost system, which binds men in servitude to the detested job from fear of that awful thing, the Sack. I can't imagine why we set such store on the Empire, and don't want anyone else to have it, when we are apparently incapable of curing these conditions in England.

But these are random ruminations, marginal notes. I was speaking of *The Times*.

Before the Great War *The Times* did what really seems, in the light of subsequent events, to have been a national service by continually focusing English attention on the war spirit that was being fostered in Germany and by calling for the necessary measures of self-defence to be taken in England. The then Berlin correspondent of *The Times*, Valentine Chirol, and his assistant Saunders, were men of great experience and knowledge and saw what was coming with a clear eye. After the war Chirol had the satisfaction of finding in a book of official German documents, I think, a pre-war memorandum saying that the men who were dangerous to Germany were the men 'who really know us, like Chirol'.

The moles were always at work against Chirol, just as twenty-five years later they worked against Norman Ebbutt. Kaiser Wilhelm, if I remember rightly, hinted to King Edward VII that Chirol's removal from Berlin would be welcome. In those days British Governments protected British citizens abroad. Twenty-

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five years later the Berlin correspondent of *The Times*, Ebbutt, could be thrown out like a dog, without any charge being made against him, and all that happened was that 'a deplorable impression' was said to have been made on the British Government.

Since then British Governments have spent much time deploring this and that, especially in deploring 'the methods used' in Abyssinia and China and Spain and Austria and Czechoslovakia, indeed so much deploring is done that I should think a Wailing Wall might be built for the purpose in Whitehall, but all this deploring doesn't help either British correspondents abroad or small nations, and if these tears are inevitable I should think you might employ a tame crocodile to shed them.

The consistency of *The Times*, before the last war, in calling attention to the danger that threatened England from Germany possibly did not do a great deal of good, for England was as unready as she could be when the war broke out and only survived destruction in it by the skin of her teeth. But this, as it seems to me, was due to the system of government in England, by which the sweets of office continually circulate among a very small class of people who have no outstanding qualifications but have a claim to high employment through membership of a sort of intangible but exclusive club, the conditions for admittance to which are not merit, but birth, money, inter-relationship, common interest, titles, and education at one of a few ring-fenced schools and universities.

You cannot exclude the masses of the people from the government of the country and still have government in the interests of all; you cannot expect from such a system energy and a social conscience, but only indolence and decay, and the English scene to-day, with nearly two millions of unemployed, with slums and derelict areas that for soul-killing squalor have hardly their like in the world, is the proof of this.

The lessons of the war, of the Somme and Passchendaele, have been forgotten. The opening of Parliament, to judge from your picture papers, is a kind of mannequin parade of diademed dowagers; where, in these weird pageants, are the masses of

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England? Now that a new world war seems to be threatening, you are beginning it with a class war. The Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service, one of those home-front formations which you are organizing 'for an emergency', is to be officered almost exclusively by women from the exclusive club, on the principle that 'the right type of girl will more readily enlist under a woman of social position than one, however capable, of middle class or working-class origin'.

Do you hear it? Do you remember its forerunner: 'The British soldier will follow a Public School Man into hell, but not a ranker wallah'. Do you remember Raymond Asquith, writing from the trenches in the last war: 'If you look at the honours lists it is always the same story: the Dukes have proved to be the bravest men of all, and after them the Marquesses'.

'However capable!' Out upon your capable middle-class women, your capable working-class women. Gangway for the Duchesses! Of the sixty County Commandants of your Women Territorials, the petticoat generals, twenty-six are titled, many others are from titled families. You can imagine where this force will stand if Fascism is coming in England.

But back to *The Times*. Before the last war *The Times* did this great service of informing its readers about the motives and aims of Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany. In those days it was owned by the John Walters, the family of professional newspaper publishers which had founded the paper nearly 150 years before and had built its unique renown. During a period of financial stress the majority of the shares passed into the hands of Lord Northcliffe and *The Times* became, with nearly all other English newspapers, the mouthpiece of a millionaire. Afterwards the controlling interest passed to Major J. J. Astor, whose brother, Lord Astor, controls the leading Sunday political organ, the *Observer*.

The power of the Press is a most debatable quality. I myself am in doubt about the power it wields. Its power in Germany is very great, not because of what it reveals, but because of what it conceals. In England, apart from the deification of the white tie, the diadem, the Mayfair wedding, the debutante, and the studious

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overlooking of the slums, which seem to be common to nearly all newspapers, you get every point of view presented to you, and I should imagine the clamour for and against cancels itself out and leaves the average man free to make up his own mind.

But *The Times* is an exception. Relatively little read in England, it holds a unique position among the newspapers of the world. It is more attentively studied in foreign countries than any other newspaper. It is, in its own assertion, an independent Conservative organ. This means that it is not the submissive mouthpiece of Conservative Governments.

It is not that. In my experience, it is something more important. In the last six years, since Hitler came to power, the foreign policy it has advocated has often been different from the official foreign policy of Conservative (or, if you take the word seriously, National) Governments.

But in the event the Conservative Government has always done the things *The Times* advocated. Either Conservative Governments deliberately mislead you about foreign policy, feeling that you will not give them support if you are openly told what the real intention is and that in a moment of crisis you can, by playing the three card trick with your nerves, your fears and your emotions, be induced thankfully to accept some major action in international affairs entirely contrary to that professed, official foreign policy. Or *The Times* sees farther than the Government and knows that when the crisis comes the Government will be forced to do the things *The Times* has advocated.

So read *The Times* if you wish to know what is actually going to happen, what a Conservative Government will do when the crisis comes.

I can give you two good examples, in recent history, affecting the fate of Austria and of Czechoslovakia.

In November 1937 Lord Halifax, British Foreign Minister, went to Berlin to see Hitler. Official British foreign policy, as stated in the House of Commons, was that 'the continued independence and integrity of Austria' were 'an interest of British foreign policy'.

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On November 29th *The Times* published a leading article which, in reference to the relationship between Germany and Austria, then looming up as the next crisis-point in European affairs, carefully launched the suggestion that Austria's destiny lay in union with Germany.

At that moment, this was completely contrary to official British foreign policy. The article caused a minor panic in the Ballhausplatz, and a despondent official said to me, 'After this I can't imagine why Germany doesn't march in'. Schuschnigg, a few days later, told me that the official news he had had from London about the Hitler-Halifax meeting was that 'there had been no change in British policy about Central Europe' and that England 'would not permit any change in the *status quo* in these parts'. The Ballhausplatz officials became a little calmer after receipt of this news from London. When Schuschnigg, in February, went to Berchtesgaden, Hitler told him that Lord Halifax was in full agreement with anything he, Hitler, might do about Austria or Czechoslovakia. On March 11th Hitler marched in. Official British policy 'deplored the methods used'.

In this case the policy indicated by *The Times* was followed, not 'official British policy'. But what was official British policy? If it had made up its mind that nothing could prevent Hitler's annexation of Austria, why was Schuschnigg not told? He could have made good terms. He would not be at this moment, as I write, a nervous wreck in captivity in the Hotel Metropole in Vienna. The Negus of Abyssinia has a right to ask the same question.

I have before me as I write a book giving an authoritative Czechoslovak opinion of the Hitler-Halifax meeting, at the time it happened.

Lord Halifax's visit to Berlin [says this book] was the subject of much speculation in the world Press, but no authoritative statement of results was published in Berlin or London. Observers saw two possible outcomes: one, an arrangement on the question of colonies, and the other a side-tracking of the demand for colonies by giving a free hand to Germany in Central and South-Eastern Europe. The latter seemed an

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utterly preposterous suggestion as coming from England, who had reason enough to beware of Pan-Germanism in a push to the south-east of Europe; yet it was known to have some support in the Cabinet itself and in not unimportant English newspapers.

'Utterly preposterous'! But if Schuschnigg had assumed the utterly preposterous to be the truth he would be a free man to-day. If Benesh had accepted the utterly preposterous as the actual fact he might to-day be the honoured ally of Hitler, sitting in Prague instead of Putney.

Was Benesh misinformed about official British foreign policy? I find that I wrote in January 1937, fourteen months before the annexation of Austria and twenty months before the subjugation of Czechoslovakia, after a talk with him in Prague:

He puts, or claims to put, entire faith in the determination of France, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Russia (of which countries only one seems to have even the physical possibility of rendering quick help, even if the will to help were present) to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia against an attack and is confident that England would do the same. This is the point where he seems to me, and most other people, to be almost unintelligibly optimistic, but this is his calculation.

But was not Benesh, too, justified in his misjudgment, was he not persistently misled about the intentions of official British policy? He would have been wiser, if he wished to know what British foreign policy would actually do, to read *The Times*. This brings me to my second example.

The official British foreign policy in respect of Czechoslovakia was that the 'integrity and independence' of this state must not be sacrificed to aggression or the threat of it. When that memorable Czechoslovak mobilization was carried out, against this very threat, in May 1938, the British Ambassador in Berlin, as Prague was officially informed and as official Prague informed me, was instructed most solemnly to tell the German Foreign Minister that England could not guarantee in all circumstances to remain neutral in a European conflict arising from the Czecho-

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slovak dispute. The French Government declared its unequivocal determination to rally to the aid of Czechoslovakia against aggression, and Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons announced that full agreement to collaborate in all emergencies existed between the French and British Governments.

What could Benesh think, as the head of the one small nation in Europe which was prepared to impale itself to the last man on German bayonets rather than yield its historic frontiers, if only its sworn friends remained at its side? When Lord Runciman was sent to Prague his mission, officially, was still to seek a solution of the German-Czech dispute which would leave the integrity of those frontiers and the independence of the nation within them undiminished.

Yet the German Foreign Minister on August 31st, a month before the Munich meeting, was able to tell the British Ambassador through his Secretary of State, that he was absolutely certain that neither England nor France would raise a finger to succour Czechoslovakia.

Herr von Ribbentrop was right. At that moment official British foreign policy, as expounded to the British masses, was quite different. Even well-informed men in the British diplomatic service thought that Herr von Ribbentrop was completely off the rails, that he was a dangerous man who from misunderstanding of British foreign policy and the British people was leading Europe into war.

But he was triumphantly right. His advice to Herr Hitler was the best that any Foreign Minister could have given. Being 'absolutely certain', he was able to prepare and execute a vigorous and triumphant *coup*.

On September 7th, three weeks before Munich, *The Times* in a leading article launched a proposal for the cession of the 'fringe of alien populations' in Czechoslovakia to the Reich. More cautious suggestions in the same direction, but without mention of the actual word 'cession' or 'secession', had been made on August 29th and August 31st.

British opinion, on September 7th, was not ready for the deed

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of September 19th. The suggestion produced a flood of protests. More important still, it produced in London the next day 'the official statement that the suggestion in *The Times* leading article yesterday that the Czechoslovak Government might consider, as an alternative to their present proposals, the secession of the fringe of alien populations in their territory in no way represents the views of the British Government'.

On September 8th! What could Benesh think? After all, it was his duty to believe what he was officially told to be the views and intentions of the British Government. Was information available to Herr von Ribbentrop that was not available to him?

On September 18th a British ultimatum was presented to Prague in the sense of *The Times* suggestion of September 7th.

If there are any more Beneshes and Schuschniggs in Europe they would do well to read *The Times*. It is not the organ of official British foreign policy, but it seems to tell you what will actually happen.

I do not know where or how the foreign policy of *The Times* is born. I did not serve that paper before the war, but always gathered, from men I talked to, that its foreign policy in those days was the sum of the knowledge and experience of its correspondents abroad, as collated in London, and attuned to the paramount aim of British interests, by a Foreign Editor of even greater personal knowledge and experience of European problems.

Such a man was Harold Williams, who died some eight or nine years ago. Since his death there has been no Foreign Editor. Correspondents abroad have in many cases, as I know from experience, felt the lack of one, of a man who personally knew Continental Europe, its peoples, its problems and its languages. They would have felt happier to have in London a man with whom they could discuss these things on the common ground of intimate knowledge.

Foreign affairs, in my view, are a trade, just like making boots. You need to know your leather, how to cut and stitch it; you may order a pair of boots from your grocer, but he won't make good ones. The idea, so prevalent in England, that any man can be an

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expert about foreign affairs seems to me to be fallacious. The consequences of some action in the field of foreign affairs may affect the lives and happiness of millions of people. It seemed to me extraordinary that at the Munich Meeting, the scene of a most momentous and remarkable piece of map-making, England should be represented by a Prime Minister who has no personal knowledge or experience at all of the manifold problems of Central Europe and who at his dissection of a country 'which we know nothing about' was supported by — the 'Chief Economic Adviser' to his Cabinet!

I think the foreign policy of *The Times* is one which has been wrong in the past and must continue to be wrong if pursued in the future. The devil of it is that to put England's foreign policy right now is a thing of almost superhuman difficulty. My own feeling is, though I am not quite sure of this, that it is too late, and that we shall pay the bill.

If *The Times*, with its enormous authority, had insisted from the day, at the beginning of 1933, when this became indispensable for England's safety that England must not allow Germany to outarm her, all would have been well.

To say, as successive Governments have said, as *The Times* has said, that there must be no yielding to force when force is repeatedly yielded to, while that superior force grows continually stronger, seems to me to be vain. In 1933 I would have been for putting our former German colonies into a common pool of appeasement. Only on that basis would we have had the moral right to demand the sacrifice of territory from Czechoslovakia. But even that should only have been done within the framework of a completely watertight organization for mutual action against any peacebreaker, backed by the firm intention to rearm, gun for gun and aeroplane for aeroplane, as fast as the mightiest of the potential peacebreakers. Then you would have had no armaments race, no sudden realization, in 1938, that you have been so far outstripped in arms that you cannot pursue a foreign policy at all, even if you now have the determination.

Always to plead for conciliation when you are being rapidly

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outarmed, when others openly express their contempt for conciliation and their belief in force, is vain, and leads to one humiliation after another, to an appallingly rapid deterioration on the European mainland in all the standards of decency and humanity to which men must cling if they are to retain any faith in their world at all.

Why were these things done? Is the 'utterly preposterous' the real truth? Has the real intention of British policy — not the proclaimed official foreign policy — been the coldly cynical desire to divert the dynamic energy of the clamant militarist Reich south-eastward, at the cost of no matter how many small states in between, and ultimately to let Germany use up her strength in a conflict with Russia?

If that was the calculation, I do not think the sum will tot up like that. England, not Russia, is the real enemy. Is the statement true, which appeared in the *Montreal Daily Star*, which Sir Archibald Sinclair asserted in the House of Commons to be the gist of one made by Mr. Chamberlain in May to twelve or fourteen American and Canadian journalists, that the real aim of British policy is a Four Power Pact, a working arrangement between England, Germany, France and Italy 'to keep the peace of Europe' to the exclusion of Soviet Russia? What was Munich but that? But if that is the truth, why was the British public misled? Why were the Negus and Schuschnigg and Benesh misled?

This seems to be the actual policy which a small group of very rich and influential people have been pursuing ever since 1933. It has never been the admitted aim of British foreign policy; indeed, official British foreign policy has been consistently proclaimed to be quite different. But actually the wishes of this group have, in the event, always prevailed.

The League lies dying, Austria and Czechoslovakia are finished, the other Danubian and Balkan countries are becoming German vassals, the road to the golden Ukraine — and the hoped-for antagonism with Russia — lies open to Germany. I do not know what are the motives of these people. I think ultimately they are moved by fear of social unrest, a reawakening clamour for social

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reforms, the dread that one day they might only have one million pounds instead of two, and the wish, for these reasons, to see the zone of Fascist doctrine and methods spread as wide as possible, even to England.

This foreign policy, actually pursued though never admitted, seems to me to have one mortal weakness — it is not foreign policy. For what is foreign policy? It is the adjustment of your relations with other states in such a way as to ensure the prosperity of your state in peace and its safety in war.

But the policy that has, in actual practice, been pursued seems to me not to be dictated by those paramount British interests — but by class antagonism and property sense.

There is, somewhere in the world, a state that has tampered with the laws of class and property. There is another state, there are two or three other states, which are or appear to be antagonistic to that state. Therefore you support them and do everything you can to make them great and weaken that third, outcast state.

That is not foreign policy, but an old and familiar domestic policy. But where does it lead if you happen to be much weaker in arms than those states that you are supporting, and if you happen to possess the very things they want — pride of place in the world, colonies and dominions, control of the seas?

It leads you to the point where, as you have abandoned your potential allies to them, you will not be strong enough to resist their demand for these things, when you must surrender these possessions to them, and co-ordinate your home politics with their wishes. Then you will have reached your heart's desire, you will have been able to suppress all those people in your own country by whom you fear to be disturbed in your own private possession of wealth and privilege, in your game of shut-eye to housing and health conditions in England. But that is not foreign policy; it is home policy. In the outer world you will have sacrificed your place and your territory to your hatred and fear of any awakening of the social conscience at home. You will have made England safe for slums, derelict areas, two million unemployed. But other people will be managing your overseas possessions for you.

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These are the things I feared from the foreign policy which British Governments have actually pursued, though never admitted, in the six years since Hitler came to power. I fear them still if this policy is further pursued — and why should it not be further pursued? Spain is next on the list, Czechoslovakia, by the time you read this book, will be in complete vassalage, new patients, Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, will be assembling in the dentist's waiting-room.

In England the same group of people who have fathered this policy seem to be preparing the way for its inevitable child — some form of disguised Fascism in England. They will be telling you that 'democracy has failed'. It has not failed. They have let you down. They have failed you.

If England had been told the facts, a national response to any summons would have been forthcoming. You saw this — in the Abyssinian episode. There the call was uttered, the nation-wide response came, immediately. A few days later the whole thing proved to have been an election-winning trick, and the spirit of England collapsed like a pricked balloon.

The same trick has been played again and again. First, for years, you were never told the truth about German and Italian rearmament. The truth 'might have lost an election'. Then you were told of gigantic rearmament programmes, given stratospheric figures of their cost. When the crisis came there were no armaments. What has happened to that money?

Repeatedly you were told that the British Government held this view on that particular issue of foreign policy. When the crisis came a diametrically opposed course was taken, the particular issue was written off in the foreign policy ledger with the entry, 'We deplore the methods used'. Spain — 'strict impartiality', 'non-intervention' and the like. Now you are told 'Signor Mussolini has always made it clear that he is not prepared to tolerate the defeat of General Franco', and, in the same breath, 'Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini assured us at Munich that they had no intention of setting up a Fascist state in Spain'.

Do you believe even this one?

## OUT OF JOINT

The Labour Party, since its leaders, in another of those bluff-crises, went over to The Old Firm, has been in an inextricable tangle and cannot rally the public opinion of England to that effort which would have compelled governments to change these methods.

The only other force which could have achieved this was *The Times*, with the great power that it wields. As one of its correspondents abroad I felt for long that it was a disaster for England that *The Times* did not make a strong stand against this policy. Europe to-day would offer quite a different spectacle if it had.

In the years before Hitler came to power *The Times*, as you will find if you look through its files, published a steady stream of articles, in the right-hand column of its leader page, from its correspondents in the main Continental capitals. These articles were regarded in all countries as the best and most authoritative accounts of what was happening and forecasts of what would happen that were to be found anywhere. They were always accurate and politicians everywhere used to read them for guidance.

In recent years the number of these articles from its own correspondents in the main European capitals which *The Times* publishes in that 'turnover' column has steadily diminished, until nowadays they are relatively rare. But in the correspondence columns of *The Times* masses of letters about foreign policy are published from all sorts of people — bishops, professors, retired ambassadors, peers, and so on.

The bulk of these people are not experts on foreign affairs, and some of those letters, read in retrospect, give a comic picture of their qualifications to express an opinion or advocate a policy. In the famous 'turnover' column the place of the article contributed by the newspaper's own correspondent is now increasingly taken by articles from a variety of authors whose views seem to be presented as authoritative, but whose qualifications are open to many questions. Probably very few newspaper readers realize the difference between the article written by the man who knows the country thoroughly and the other kind — but it is a very big and important difference.

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For instance, on the morrow of the most important event in foreign affairs in recent times — the Munich meeting — *The Times* published, on October 3rd and 4th, two articles, entitled 'A Picture of Germany', from a correspondent who was not named but who was described as 'A detached and experienced observer who was travelling throughout Germany during the recent crisis'. The anonymous author claimed 'to consider the present currents of German feeling and the conditions, on either side, of a permanent understanding'.

These articles contained statements about Germany which an experienced resident correspondent, in my view, would not have made, for either in their content or the way they were put they were bound to lead the poor old British public up the same old garden path — only be nice to Germany, be understanding, be magnanimous (why did no Englishman ever plead for magnanimity towards a small and defenceless state?), and all will be well. For instance, this statement:

A plebiscite for or against going to war to succour the Sudeten Germans would have resulted in a crushing defeat for war-makers.

I suppose this was meant to make readers believe that Germany would never have gone to war; I can't find any other meaning in it. In any case it is wrong, it is misleading, it is fatuous. If Hitler ever intends to make war, in any cause, he will not hold a plebiscite about it. If he were to, the result would be 99.9 per cent for war. There would be no other possibility. The question would be put in approximately this form:

Are you in favour of going to war to save your oppressed German brothers in the Sudeten lands, who are being mown down in swathes by the most inhuman brutes of all time, or are you in favour of going to war?

Take this statement:

The contrast in physique between Englishmen and Germans between the ages of 15 and 25 is amazingly in Germany's favour and will continue until there spreads again through England

## OUT OF JOINT

that spirit of willing personal discipline in pursuit of an ideal which is planted and cultivated with such supreme adroitness by Nazi propagandists.

Do you see the serpent's head? The first half of that sentence is completely true; the poison is in the second half. Not the rulers of England, not the ruling class, not the little exclusive governing coterie, are to blame for the slums, for two million unemployed, for derelict areas, for under-nourishment. No. NO! The unemployed, the under-nourished, the slum-livers, the derelicts are to blame — because they are not Nazi. Then do not pursue an adroitly planted ideal — oh queen of metaphors — in a spirit of willing personal discipline. Adroitly plant your ideal, get them pursuing it, and all will be well. You just put brown shirts on to the present ruling class, make labour conscripts of your derelicts. They, pursuing that stationary ideal, will presumably be where they were and you will be where you were.

Not we have failed, but the rulers. Let's kennel the under-dogs, in case they get snappy. The slums may stay, awful examples of the faults of democracy; it wasn't disciplined enough to make us do anything about unemployment.

But the writer is on his guard. It occurs to him that you might see through that one, so he produces another one:

It is well to remember [I always distrust phrases beginning like that and wonder whether 'it' really is 'well'] that Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Baldwin and men like them, had they been Germans, would have been excluded from public life since 1933, for they could not thinkably have acquiesced in Nazi morality.

Oh yeah? And just what does that one mean? I am ready to agree that in all probability Hitler would not have made either Mr. Chamberlain or Lord Baldwin, had they been Germans, Foreign Minister or War Minister in his Government. Nothing more unpleasant need have happened to them. As for that 'acquiescence in Nazi morality', did we acquiesce at Munich, or is there visions about?

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Here are two more which I should like you to store up in your minds and re-examine in a few years' time:

So long as the German people believe that Britain's greatest interest in Europe is to see justice done, her moral power beneath the surface in Germany is immeasurable.

Does that mean that we ought to do a Munich on somebody every six months?

Herr Hitler knows his people well when he says that Alsace and Lorraine are not coveted.

What does Herr Hitler himself think about Alsace and Lorraine? That is the important thing; whether his people covet them or not is less important.

Provided Britain will demonstrate a more continuous and intelligent interest in European difficulties and show that she is equally prepared to rebuke any of Germany's neighbours for wrongdoing as she is to rebuke Germany, she need not fear for her prestige in that country if she sets her moral and material strength against the methods of the bully; and in that way realization is likeliest to come that there are conditions to be fulfilled on the German side also if the two countries are fully to understand each other.

This sentence formed the conclusion of the two articles. It was the summing-up, the definition of policy to be pursued after the facts for and against Germany had been set down on paper and duly considered, the pointer showing the way you should go. Written, apparently, with the ink on the Munich agreement still wet. Read it again, and see if you now know what you ought to do about Germany. 'Set your moral and material strength against the methods of the bully'? On the morning after Munich, which the articles seemed fully to approve, that is an exceptionally good one.

A few days later *The Times* published two more pronouncements on foreign policy, one a letter and one a full-dress article, from the Aga Khan, who as far as I know is an oriental potentate, is indescribably rich, leads in Derby winners, and has a French

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consort, all very good things, but do they help in European affairs?

The Aga Khan, whose article was headed 'Peace or Truce: A look into the future; The bases for world security', began like this:

Peace prevails, thanks to the wisdom of the Prime Minister, and those who loyally supported him in the Cabinet and the country. What about the future? The foundation of world peace is an Anglo-French alliance by which all the resources of Great Britain would be placed at the disposal of France in the event of an unprovoked attack on that country and vice versa. One hears two opinions whether or not Germany and her Chancellor can be trusted to keep the peace. The question of trust is irrelevant. . . .

I think one might hear two opinions about that one, if one listened hard. But I, with my doubting mind, wondered whether the Aga Khan's voice in European affairs was one of the first authority, whether he really knew his Germany and his Germans, whether he had plumbed and knew to their depths the minds of the men who live in Shoreditch and Hoxton, in Jarrow and Durham, in Wapping, Wimbledon and Wandsworth. Because they, as it seemed to me, ought to have something to say, sometime, in the shaping of England's destiny.

I ought to quote briefly from a letter headed 'Blessings of the Aeroplane' which was published in *The Times* about this same period. It said:

May it not be that the sun rose upon a new era when Mr. Chamberlain took off from Heston? Thanks to the aeroplane, war has become so humanly intolerable that the hatred of it is everywhere becoming more powerful than the forces which promote it and all humanity is beginning to rise in revolt against its continuance. May it not be, again, that war has begun to commit suicide?

May it not? 'Alas,' added the writer, 'the bombs are still dropping in China and in Spain.'

Yes, the blessed aeroplane doesn't seem to have done much towards making war commit suicide there.

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*The Times*. A good newspaper, because in its foreign news columns — as distinct from the article, correspondence and leader columns, which I have previously discussed — it gives adequate and well-apportioned space to the reporting of events, a thing due to the long tradition that has come down to those real arbiters of a newspaper's fate, the sub-editors.

I was for many years happy to write for *The Times* because I felt that on that particular paper you could more than earn a living, you could render your countrymen valuable service by outlining for them the shape of things to come in Europe. In the course of time I lost some of this feeling, and with it much of the pleasure in my work, and for these reasons I was in the end glad to get that letter in Belgrade, accepting my resignation, and to start out on a new career.

## CHAPTER 22

### THE LITTLE ROCKET

It came into my life in the summer of 1933, that eventful first summer of Hitler's reign over Germany. I stood waiting on the pavement of the Halmstrasse with the first car I had ever had, an ancient Fiat which I had bought second-hand and in which I had travelled long distances (most of them at the end of a tow rope), and it came round the corner with two young men in it and they got out and shook hands and took over the ancient Fiat and drove it away and I was left alone with The Little Rocket.

I looked at it with disfavour, at first, and after the ancient Fiat with sadness in my heart, for it was my first car and, bad as it was, I loved it. I did not like this little new thing, with its funny gear, like the handle of a door, and its two puny cylinders. I wondered why I had bought it. Well, it had only cost £100, and £20 off that for the old Fiat.

I little knew then what places we should visit and what things we should do together: 40,000 miles, in five years, I travelled in that car, in Germany, in Austria, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, in Yugoslavia. I drove it into deep snowdrifts on Thuringian mountain tops and had to be hauled out by a woodman and his patient horse. I drove it into deep sand in Mecklenburg, while trying one day to follow up the local volunteer fire brigade, a fine but weirdly dressed body of men, to a lonely farm that had been struck by lightning, and thence I had to be hauled out by about fifty hilarious village boys.

I drove it, having a little drink taken, into the back of an omnibus in the Kurfürstendamm, and it looked like a concertina. You would have thought that car had finished its career, but no, I had it hauled to the workshop and there two strong men took hold of it and pulled and it came out straight again, almost as good as new. It was one of those cars you put on, instead of getting into.

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I hated it and loved it by turns. For years I did not know what the initials on its bonnet stood for. One day I asked. They meant The Little Rocket.

From that day on it was The Little Rocket for me. Sometimes, when it sputtered and hissed and slowed down on a Balkan road fifty miles from anywhere, I called it a little something else, but sooner or later, somehow or other, I always managed to get it moving again, and when I felt it pulling I relented and thought of it affectionately as my Little Rocket.

If anything is indispensable in this world, a car of some sort is indispensable to a foreign newspaper correspondent. Without it he is just a resident of a foreign city, and never gets below the skin of the country he lives in at all. To get outside the city, to get to know the people, mean long time-wasting and energy-consuming journeys by bus or tram or train, and in the end he gives it up and just jogs to and fro between Unter den Linden and his flat in Berlin West.

But if he has a car he can use every free half-hour to get outside the city, to explore in an ever-widening circle the countryside around it, to visit the distant cities and provinces, the hills and valleys. By that means he can in three months learn more of the country than in three years without a car.

So, through The Little Rocket, I came to know, not only Berlin and Vienna and Prague and Budapest, but Germany and Austria and Czechoslovakia and Hungary. It was the ideal car for town use, quick as a whippet and almost as small. I could rush in where Rolls-Royces hadn't a chance. I saved, I should think, months of time in the innumerable daily journeys a newspaper man has to make in a town, from office to legation, from ministry to coffee house, from dwelling to office.

On longer journeys The Little Rocket was not so good. It was not made for some of those roads, and I, though I had a good seat and hands, never had the least idea of what went on beneath the bonnet of The Little Rocket. I never knew what was in its mind. I had scraped through my examination for a German driver's licence because I had learned, parrot-wise, the answers

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to the few routine questions on the guts of a motor car that the examiner was wont to ask. Also, I never had any tools. I frequently had no spare wheel. I drove off into the blue with an airy nonchalance that I can no longer understand, and I am amazed when I think how often I got through, how seldom I was irretrievably stuck.

When The Little Rocket began to hiccough and stagger I changed the plugs. If that didn't work I was done. This was the limit of my mechanical knowledge. After four years, and on the advice of a friend, I did buy a spanner and a pump to clear petrol stoppages; I had thrice been left sitting on a country road through the sudden failure of the petrol supply.

But The Little Rocket had a chronic complaint that was beyond me. When I had two or three hundred miles before me and had already travelled too far to turn back, it would begin to cough. The needle would waver, the coughing would stop, the needle would steady up, then the coughing would begin again, more violently, the needle would go back, the coughing would get worse, the needle would sink to twenty and fifteen and ten kilometres an hour, and eventually I would labour up to a blacksmith-mechanic in some remote village and he would look at The Little Rocket and shake his head, and I always knew what he was going to say. Ach, die IGNITION!

A dread word. Pronounce it Ig-nits-ee-yone. My heart always sank when The Little Rocket had one of its attacks of Ig-nits-ee-yone. I never could learn what you did about that, and mechanics who knew how to cure it were rare too. Many of them put it right for long enough to get me another twenty kilometres, and then it began again. There was one man, and one only, a marvellous mechanic in a mean street somewhere in Vienna, who once put it right for a whole year, when I came back from that nightmare ride to Budapest that I told about in *Insanity Fair*, but as soon as I left Vienna it began again and I never found another man who could cure it for long.

Yet, somehow, I travelled over large areas of Europe with The Little Rocket. An extraordinary car. I grew to think of it as a

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living being, as a queer sort of friend, whom you couldn't help liking in spite of, or perhaps because of, his strange ways.

There was the time, for instance, when The Little Rocket would only start when it was cold, not when it was warm. I left it standing in the street every night of the winter of 1936-37, and some of those nights were pretty cold in Vienna, but when I came down the next morning I had only to tread lightly on the starter and The Little Rocket was off like a greyhound. But if I then drove ten miles and by mischance stopped the engine The Little Rocket wouldn't start again and I had to wait an hour until it froze, then it started at once.

Then there was the time, on top of the Semmering, when the wheels wouldn't go round and I had to stay the night there, and I don't to this day know what on earth was the cause of that. By this time I had begun to suspect The Little Rocket of human intelligence and was careful what I said when it was within hearing. I think it wanted to stay on the Semmering that night. I was glad, afterwards, that it did, because that was the loveliest night I ever saw, with the moon rising into a crystal sky above the sawlike edges of the firs.

But the next day, haring down the hill to get quickly to Vienna, two urchins with a sledge shot across the road just in front of me, and I trod on the brake with all my weight and felt the wheels slithering on the icy road and thought, "This is the end", and the next thing I knew was a great bump and The Little Rocket, with me in it, was lying on its side in a field.

I climbed out, like a sailor climbing through the conning tower of a submarine, felt myself all over and found I was all there, and prepared to say a last farewell to The Little Rocket. But then two lads on bicycles came by and dismounted, and we all gave a heave and the next moment The Little Rocket was back on the road and I trod, without hope, on the starter and the engine responded and I drove carefully a few yards and that was all right and eventually I found that the only damage was to the tail-light, the glass of which was smashed. A foot of snow in that field had saved us.

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I treated that car badly and it was right to get its own back on me. I see that now. But I did resent, and still resent, the period when the horn began to go off on its own at odd moments and nobody could find what caused it. Waiting in a traffic block at a crossing, with the red lights holding us back, it would suddenly start, and policemen would look sternly round and taxi-drivers would make the remarks that taxi-drivers make and lady drivers would get hysterical and go into reverse when they wanted to go forward, and altogether it was most unpleasant.

There is a limit, and this was a scurvy trick of The Little Rocket. But even worse was when it did this in the middle of the night, as I was driving home, and policemen would stop me and ask what I meant by it, and I would try to explain that I couldn't prevent it and at that a knowing look would come over their faces and they would say, 'Oh yes, I've heard that tale before', and would produce a large book from some hind pocket.

In Vienna, too, I had to learn to drive The Little Rocket again. For two years I drove it with an international licence that had expired, and this was the sort of thing you could do in that easy-going Vienna, but one day the authorities remonstrated and said, look here, you really must take out an Austrian driving licence now. The next few days I spent going from this department to that department, and filling in forms, and then one morning, about the crack of dawn, I had to present myself for a medical examination.

This was another strange experience which I owed to The Little Rocket. I was ushered into a cubicle, told to strip naked, and given a glass vase. I thought for a moment that I had got into the wrong medical examination. Perhaps I should emerge from this room, I thought, a soldier in the Austrian Army, or something of that sort, one of those historical figures the mystery of whose disappearance is never really cleared up, like Kitchener or Gustav Hamel or Johann Orth. Afterwards I re-entered the room to find myself one of a large company of gentlemen all naked and all holding glass vases. However, it was all right, I passed easily, they seemed to think I had the stuff in me to make a motorist of the first water.

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Then came the awful ordeal — the technical examination. This time I was stumped; I had not learned the answers parrot-wise. As soon as the examiner began I saw there was only one thing for it — to pretend ignorance of German. Once he got me pinned down to differentials and carburettors I was done. So I looked blank and wrinkled my forehead and shook my head and in the end he gave it up and said, 'Let's go out and drive a bit', and then all was well, because in actual driving I understood The Little Rocket perfectly, and I got my ticket.

The Little Rocket and I, we had our great moments, when we held the public gaze. We appeared in print and in pictures, on the occasion when the brakes failed and I rammed another car from behind. But even more public notoriety came our way one unforgettable day in the Ringstrasse, Vienna's main thoroughfare.

A day or two before, while I was driving a friend about, I backed into a parking place without noticing that a lamp-post was there and hit it a fairly good thwack. But I thought no more about it and did not notice that the trunk built on The Little Rocket behind was badly damaged.

Then, driving down the Ringstrasse that famous day, I heard strange noises and saw grinning faces and gesticulating people and turned round to find that the trunk had fallen off and had strewn its contents along the Ringstrasse for about a hundred yards. It was midday, when the Ringstrasse is most crowded.

The contents of that trunk were, on a large scale, like the contents of a schoolboy's pocket. There were odd tools, old newspapers, an empty petrol can, an ancient raincoat, two candles, rusty snow-chains which I had once bought but never used, some long-forgotten sandwiches, and a bottle, now broken. They lay in a long line along the Ringstrasse, with the oncoming traffic playing in-and-out with them, policemen putting on their what's-all-this-'ere-about faces. The collection of these things was one of the most unpleasant tasks I ever had.

The Little Rocket now looked in a very bad way. It had a fabric-covered body, and this is not good for a car that has to go

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through what The Little Rocket had been through. The covering had long since begun to come off and reveal the skeletons in The Little Rocket's cupboards. With increasing wear and tear more and more of it came away, until The Little Rocket looked like a half-peeled banana. Now, with that ragged and yawning hole behind where the trunk used to be, it was the shabbiest hobbledehoy of a car you ever saw. The evil day could be put off no longer. I realized that I should have to buy The Little Rocket a new suit.

So we drove out on a day to a pleasant yard somewhere in the backwoods of Vienna, a yard where men once had made broughams and victorias for the daily parade in the Prater and where there was now a good honest smell of shavings and petrol.

When The Little Rocket came back I hardly recognized it.

It was better than new. It was green and glistened. I used to stand at the window of my room and admire it, waiting for me there in the street outside. A new and better time began. I now honoured all my responsibilities to The Little Rocket, kept it clean and warm, and it was duly grateful and behaved perfectly. This was a happy time, good to look back on, a part of that almost ideally happy period in my life that was so short. A new relationship arose between us, one based on mutual affection and esteem. The three of us, we explored all the Wienerwald. We seemed likely to live happily ever after.

Alas. In Insanity Fair neither I nor The Little Rocket were to find that peace we craved for. Hitler came marching into Austria and I, for the reason which I have not yet told and which nobody else knows, went marching out of Austria. The Little Rocket, by a tragic mischance, was having a massage and manicure and I had to leave it behind.

That was in March. All through the spring and summer, when I was in Zurich and London and Bognor and Prague, I thought sadly of my Little Rocket. At last I was able to make arrangements to have it sent to me. I came home one hot day in Budapest and there, its honest face shining with the joy of reunion, stood The Little Rocket.

But it was never the same again, after the Anschluss. Who

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knows what it had been through, during those few months? Any odd cars that were going were wont in those days to be confiscated by young men in jackboots. The Little Rocket had a few thousand more miles under its bonnet than when I saw it last. One door handle had been torn off. There was a hole in the roof, which looked to me as if somebody with a bayonet had been sitting on it. Worst of all, The Little Rocket was seriously ill with its old complaint, Ig-nits-ee-yone. The doctors doubted whether they could save it.

I did what I could for it. The covering of the seats was mouldy and gangrened, and small mushrooms were trying to sprout in the cracks. I cleaned them and had new green covers made, to match the bodywork. The Little Rocket looked almost young again. But its constitution had been undermined beyond hope by the strain of those four months in Austria after the Anschluss. Its Ig-nits-ee-yone got worse and worse. But it had the heart of a lion and bore up bravely. Panting and puffing, it took me all over Hungary. When I had to go to Belgrade I thought compassionately of having it put out of its misery, but it looked at me so reproachfully that my heart failed me. It carried me there, it carried me for many miles into the Serbian countryside, over roads that made my heart ache for it. Then came the day when I set my face again towards Budapest and Prague. Would The Little Rocket stay the course?

I looked at it. It looked gamely back at me. I put it on.

I had not gone fifty miles when I knew that I must expect the worst. I had two hundred and fifty miles of some of the worst roads in Europe before me and The Little Rocket was mortally ill. It was coughing its life out. Ig-nits-ee-yone was claiming its prey.

I staggered into Novi Sad and found a doctor who shook his head gravely but thought he could physic The Little Rocket, laden down with luggage, so that it would reach Budapest. He did what he could. In the late afternoon, nursing The Little Rocket as best I could, sparing it as far as was possible, I reached the frontier, breathing thanks, for beyond it the road was better. Perhaps, I thought, The Little Rocket would make it.

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We passed through Szeged and fate dealt us another blow. That nice level main road was closed, a man with a red flag directed us along a miserable by-pass, little more than a field track. I had travelled the main road not long before and knew that it was perfectly good; this meant, not road repairs, but fortification-building, which was the fashion on all frontiers at the moment. But for my Little Rocket it meant toiling along a rutty and unmade track for twenty kilometres.

When we reached the good main road again The Little Rocket was coughing once more. The needle went back and back, to forty, to thirty, to twenty, to fifteen kilometres an hour. Would we at least reach Kecskemet, I thought desperately, where I should have a chance of getting The Little Rocket doped again?

It was dark. We coughed and coughed along. Suddenly an enormous sow lumbered out of the roadside ditch and waddled across the road dead before us. The Little Rocket hit her broadside on. With a shriek she fell over, scrambled to her feet, and lumbered off into the night, unhurt. I breathed again.

But the Little Rocket was finished. It lay there all lopsided. This last blow was too much. That axle had gone at last.

To die there like that, on the Budapest road, in the dark night, I thought, as I looked at it. It gave me a last look of recognition and devotion and then its lights went out.

Perhaps it was better so, I thought. Better this sudden end than to cough and cough and peter out miserably, coughing. With a heavy heart I turned and went in search of a peasant.

## CHAPTER 23

### HOW ODD OF GOD<sup>1</sup>

WHEN I was in London in the spring of 1938 I went one day to see a high official in Whitehall. As I arrived half an hour too soon I went into a teashop, the only thing you can do in London when you arrive anywhere half an hour too soon, and ordered a cup of the wet, brown and warm stuff which they call coffee, and then I heard a voice call 'Reed' and turned round, and corpulent as ever, in a corner, was my acquaintance whom we will call Blumenlevy.

I knew him first in Berlin, some years before Hitler came to power. Then he was well-to-do and important, and nobody, least of all himself, seemed to recall he was not a German. He was part of Berlin and looked likely to end his days there. But then came Hitler, and Blumenlevy moved to Vienna and suddenly he was Austrian-born and a great Austrian patriot and was all for defending Austrian independence to the last drop of anybody else's blood and fervently admired Mussolini, a dictator, true, but not then an anti-Semitic one, because he had mobilized troops on the Brenner when Dollfuss was murdered and had declared he would not tolerate the rape of Austria. 'Why do you English quarrel with this great man?' Blumenlevy asked me. 'It is madness.'

But then Mussolini became Hitler's friend and Blumenlevy, all at once, was a red-hot Austrian monarchist and was for bringing young Otto back to Vienna forthwith, for only so could Austrian patriots count on the continued independence of Austria.

A few days before Hitler marched into Austria, and sent his telegram to Rome, 'Mussolini, I shall never forget what you have done for me to-day', I ran into Blumenlevy in a coffee house. He had been to see an Austrian monarchist leader, A, he said, and had urged him to arm the monarchists, but A was a feeble fellow and hadn't felt equal to it. 'I would do it,' said Blumenlevy, 'Ich bin ein Draufgänger — I'm a stick-at-nothing chap.'

<sup>1</sup> to choose the Jews. (*W. N. Ewer*)

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I looked at him, fat, wheezy, and aged. Oh yeah, I thought.

Now Austria was finished, and here he was in London, already waiting on an appointment with somebody in a high place, already half-way to becoming an Englishman, naturalization papers looming ahead, and soon he would be urging the British to go and fight Germany. We shall probably have to do it anyway, but I thought, as I contemplated<sup>1</sup> Blumenlevy, that the Jews, if they want to fight Germany, should urge others less and enlist more.

That is one picture, painted without malice. Look at this one.

I stood, in the heat of that September crisis, in a newspaper office in Budapest and talked with a young Jewish journalist. 'I am for war,' he said loudly, 'this is the moment to stop Germany.' 'You,' I said, 'but what would you do in this war?' 'Oh,' he said airily, 'I intend to survive it.' 'Then why call for war, if you are not going to fight?' I asked. 'What can I do?' he said, 'I am a Hungarian subject, that would mean fighting for Germany.' 'Why not go to Republican Spain and fight there,' I answered, 'or to Czechoslovakia, and fight with the Czechs?' 'That would be difficult,' he said, fidgeting. He too was thinking of a war between Gentiles for the purpose of exterminating anti-Semitism. •

Look at this picture.

I sat, during that eventful and fear-laden summer, in a coffee-house in Prague, and a Jewess came in whom I had known in Vienna. She had always laid stress on her Austrian patriotism, on her love for Vienna. She was the daughter, she repeatedly told you, of an officer in the old Imperial Austrian Army, and she longed to see the Kaiser back.

Now she came and sat by me. 'Are you homesick for Austria?' she said. 'Yes, I am,' I answered, 'and I shall always be.' 'I'm not,' she said gleefully, 'not a little bit. I hate it. I have no feeling left for it at all. I feel myself reborn to be away.'

I considered her. I could understand perfectly what she felt. Yet I knew that if I, an Englishman and a Gentile, had been born an Austrian and a Gentile and had had to fly from Austria, when Hitler came, for this reason or that, I should nevertheless have loved and longed for Austria until my last day.

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There was a difference, deep, eternal, ineradicable.

These are three portraits from the gallery of 1938. I could show you a hundred others.

I belong to those cads who put loyalty among the human virtues, and I have not forgotten Jews whom I knew in the British Army during the war. Those Jews, long-established in England, were all right; but the great mass of new Jewish immigrants that we are getting now are mortally dangerous to us.

I, with all the horror I have of National Socialism and the dread I have of Germany under National Socialism, shall say some hard things about the Jews. I have watched and studied them now, all over Europe, for many years and know my subject.

In England the fashion is to profess complete incomprehension of the movements in progress in Europe to restrict the influence of the Jews. This attitude towards the Jews is the sheet anchor, in their continual claim to be humane, of those English people who put a screen of self-complacency between themselves and everything that is wrong or needs changing: how can the foreigner be right in saying we are perfidious or arrogant or class-ridden or inhumane when we have this tolerant and magnanimous feeling about the Jews? We feel 'a generous indignation' about the treatment of the Jews. We may not care a fig about Spanish women and children being blown to bits by German and Italian bombs. But our British love of fair play is revolted by the treatment of the Jews.

For us, these people say, there is no Jewish problem. For them, the favoured followers of the God-of-things-as-they-are, on whose own corns the Jewish problem does not tread, there is similarly no slum problem. There are, somewhere, slums, about which you occasionally feel a generous indignation. Is there a Derelict Areas problem? No, there are Derelict Areas. Is there a German problem? No, there is Germany.

There is a Jewish problem. Like the slum problem and the German problem you will leave it until it devours you.

I wrote various incidental passages about Jews in *Insanity Fair*. Because many people either could not understand or did

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not accept the things I said, I am going to make myself crystal clear this time.

One British newspaper and two American ones spoke reproachfully of my anti-Semitism. If you discuss this question at all the welkin immediately rings with the yelping of 'Anti-Semite', often from people who have nothing more than a languid indifference about it, but like using phrases of this sort because Englishmen always play cricket, don't you know, and hang it, play the game, sir.

I had a letter from a reader in Palestine who said, 'You have written a good book, save for your appallingly ignorant and callous attitude towards the Jews'. This did not convince me, because many people said similar things about *Insanity Fair*. The Communists thought it was good save for the part about Soviet Russia, the Fascists liked it apart from its references to Germany and Italy, the Old School Tie Brigade thought it would have been a good book but for its allusions to the public school system in England, and these, as the literary critic of a journal mainly devoted to pushing the sale of women's underclothes wrote, indicated 'a regrettable tendency towards Left ideas'. The close connection between the manufacture and sale of camisoles and true-blue, die-in-the-last-ditch, backs-up and chins-to-the-wall, down-with-the-Reds, up-with-the-good-old-flag-Blimpery is a thing I shall investigate one day.

I had two letters which made me think, long and carefully, which made me take out my knowledge and feelings and convictions about the Jews, put them under the microscope, scrutinize them meticulously for the microbes of prejudice or ignorance. After that long examination I was satisfied. I decided to take these letters as my text when I came to write again about the Jews.

The first was from a young American Jew, an earnest request for information. He had read *Insanity Fair* twice, with great interest, he said, and it had left his mind simmering with questions about the Jews, to which he could not find the answer himself, so that, rather pathetically, he wanted it from me. What did I really think about them? I seemed to think their troubles to some extent

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were of their own making. Did I believe that? He thought the Jews were just buffeted about. For his own part he had lost all feeling of Jewish cohesion.

I do think this. But I do not believe there is any Jew, anywhere, who has lost all feeling of Jewish cohesion. Many wish they could, but none do.

The second letter came from a Jewess in South Africa. She wrote in deep distress about events in *Insanity Fair*. Up to the last, she wrote, she believed that England had something up her sleeve, but now, 'the strong arm that England used to wield lay withered beneath the poppies in Flanders fields'. But the book had been a comfort to her in this mental agony that so many people are experiencing in our time: it was, she said, in a shell-burst of superlatives, magnificent, gallant, terrible. Then she asked, 'You write repeatedly of your Jewish "acquaintances". Have you never had a Jewish friend? What have you in your heart for the Jews? Is it pity?'

Stimulating sentences, that acted on me like the cue that prompts an actor to his lines.

The word 'acquaintances' was carefully chosen. I have never had a Jewish friend. I never shall. I could, if Jews were Jews, subjects of a Jew state, avowedly foreigners in other lands, not professedly Germans, Englishmen, Hungarians, Austrians, Poles.

I have sharpened my wits on the conversation of Jews, I admire their quick-wittedness. If there were a Jewish nation I would make it an ally of England because I believe that, for their own cause, the Jews would fight like lions. I know that many of them fought in the armies of Germany and France and England, I know that each of these Jews wanted his side to win. But I also know that they had less to fear if their side lost, that they prosper in defeat and chaos. I saw this in Germany and Austria and Hungary.

I distrust the fiction that these Jews are Germans or Frenchmen or Englishmen, when I know that they are in all countries closely welded communities working, first and foremost, for the Jewish cause. Walk any Saturday evening along Oxford Street or

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Regent Street, contemplate those thousands of hatless young men, of carefully dressed and arm-linked young women coming up from the east to go to the great film theatres round Piccadilly and Marble Arch, to invade the chocolate-sundae corner palaces. Do you believe these are English people? Do they?

Will they help us to re-make England into a sturdy and well-found land of craftsmen and farmers and sailors? Do they not rather stand for cheap and tawdry frocks, and their corollary, sweated labour (if you have the energy, go down into the East End and visit the people who cut and sew those frocks), for gaudy Babylonian film temples, for your blasted Glamour Girls, for trashy imitation jewellery, for spurious marble halls at the sign of the fish-and-chip?

But that is another question. No penny-in-the-slot machine could produce its response more quickly than that question brings the answer from me. I know the answer.

‘What have you in your heart for the Jews? Is it pity?’

The answer is: ‘What have you in your heart for Gentiles?’

That brings you at a stroke to the root of the matter. Not anti-Semitism was first, but anti-Gentilism. You have heard a lot in recent years about Hitler’s Nuremberg anti-Jewish laws, with their ban on intermarriage, which the Germans call race-defilement.

A most intelligent and cultured and open-minded Jew in Budapest said to me, ‘After all, the Nuremberg laws are only the translation into German of our own Mosaic laws, with their ban on intermarriage with Gentiles’.

Race-antagonism began, not with the Gentiles, but with the Jews. Their religion is based on it. This racial lunacy which you detest in the Germans has possessed the Jews for thousands of years. When they become powerful, they practise it; as they consolidate their position in one trade after another, in one profession or another, the squeeze-out of Gentiles begins. That was why you found, in Berlin and Vienna and Budapest and Prague and Bucharest, newspapers with hardly a Gentile on the editorial staff, theatres owned and managed by Jews presenting Jewish actors and actresses in Jewish plays praised by the Jewish critics

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of Jewish newspapers, whole streets with hardly a non-Jewish shop in them, whole branches of retail trade monopolized by Jews.

Jews, if you know them well enough and understand these things enough for them to talk openly with you, will admit this. They cannot deny it.

In the beginning was anti-Gentilism. This, not the perfidy of the Gentiles, prevents the assimilation of the Jews. This prevents them from ever becoming Germans or Poles or Italians. This keeps them welded together as alien communities in foreign lands, communities ultimately hostile to the Gentile.

It is their religion? Good, but it is the reason why they cannot be assimilated.

In the defeated countries the Jews did not use the great power they achieved to promote and accelerate assimilation. They used it to increase the power and wealth of the Jews, and their intensive mutual collaboration, in that era, to oust non-Jews from professions, trades and callings, was the outward and visible sign that anti-Gentilism remained within them. The race barriers that had existed against the Jews were broken down, every path was open; but the race-barrier within themselves still existed, and thus you had the misuse of this freedom and those grave signs of its abuse, the exploitation of cheap labour and of young non-Jewish womanhood, which were so repugnant a feature of life in Berlin and Vienna, and still are seen to-day, as I write, in Budapest and Prague.

These are grave things, which need to be understood.

The inner knowledge of this seemingly unbridgable gulf causes many Jews to take on protective colouring, to change their names, to outdo their Gentile neighbours in vocal patriotism, to obscure the fact that they are Jews. Some, a few, marry Gentiles; to the main body of Jews they are renegades who have 'married outside the faith'. Some, a few, have themselves baptized; but they remain Jews.

In three Central European capitals that I know the baptism of Jews, since the annexation of Austria, has become an industry. The step is taken in all cynicism, as a business proposition, a means

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of getting into countries which have banned the admission of Jews, a device to tide over the years until the anti-Semitic wave subsides again. The Jews joke about it among themselves, and the Jews I know, who talk frankly with me because they know that I understand the racket, joke about it with me. One Jew, discussing it with me, told me of an acquaintance who, to his annoyance, found that he had to pass through a period of instruction in the faith he was about to acquire before he received the coveted baptismal certificate, and how he cut short the priest's explanation of the immaculate conception with the words, 'Schaun S', ich glaube Ihnen sämtliche Sachen' (Look here, I believe everything). This was thought very funny and sent a roar of laughter round the table. In one of the capitals I speak of, several hundred Jews were baptized as Church of England Christians in the summer of 1938, and by a trick they succeeded in pre-dating the baptismal certificates, so that the reason for the conversion should not be too apparent. The convert is usually re-converted to the Hebraic faith when the anti-Semitic period passes.

These baptized Jews, who have no belief whatever in Christianity, join the community of 'non-Aryan Christians' for whom your Church leaders constantly appeal.

An industry has also grown up around the very distress of the Jews, namely, the industry of marriages bought and sold. All English readers have seen reports of cases where foreign Jewesses have paid foreigners to marry them in order to acquire another nationality and be beyond the reach of immigration bans and business hindrances. The most coveted of all passports — the passport, not the nationality or the husband, is the coveted thing — is the British. I was told by a Jew in Prague, 'Any young Englishman could earn a million Kronen by marrying a Jewess from here'. His table neighbour commented, 'He wouldn't need to be young', and much laughter followed.

As I write, the Prague newspaper which makes a speciality of brothel advertisements is earning a large revenue each day by publishing the announcements of emigrant Jews who have their papers in order and offer to take a wife with them, if she has

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a sufficient dowry; of Jewesses who seek a foreigner or a passage-booked emigrant as a husband and offer large financial inducements; and of foreigners who offer to marry Jewesses, and give them the benefits of another nationality, at a high price. These are some of the advertisements in current issues: 'American is prepared to marry Jewess'; 'I seek, for my brother, who is about to emigrate to South America, a wife, Jewess; not over 24, dowry essential'; 'Marriage of convenience offered by respectable Yugoslav'; 'Distinguished Englishman offers name-marriage to Jewess'.

No Jew ever mistakes the man he is dealing with. He knows at once whether the other man is a Jew or a Gentile; it is the first question he asks himself.

How many Gentiles know when they have to do with a Jew? How often have you heard, 'Is he really a Jew? The thought never occurred to me. He doesn't look like one'.

The feeling towards Gentiles that is given the Jew when he comes into the world and is fostered in him within his family circle, is that the Gentiles are people, more stupid than the Jews, who can be used to bring profit and advantage to the Jews.

It is a fundamentally hostile attitude, the strength of which is that the Gentiles, by and large, do not realize its existence. All the means of protective colouring are used to further it. Outside that family circle the Jew is a matey, hail-fellow-well-met brother citizen. That is not in his heart, nor in his eyes, if you look into them. You are a man against whom he has to pit his wits, to outdo his potential enemy. The basis of it lies in his religion. It is all very good if both sides realize what is afoot. But it makes assimilation impossible.

There are two bitterly antagonistic schools of Jewish thought. One is for assimilation, for ignoring that unbridgeable gulf fixed by the Jewish faith, for settling in the midst of the Christian communities and the various nations, and taking on their forms of life and characteristics.

If you have a young and sturdy race and set a low limit on the number of the Jews, this works fairly well — as for instance, in Serbia. The Serbs were too virile for the Jews to reach dis-

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proportionate influence among them — and there were not many Jews. But when a new influx of Jews begins, under the influence of wars or an anti-Semitic movement elsewhere, the trouble starts.

The other Jewish school of thought is for boldly accepting the truth, that Jews are Jews and unassimilable, for setting up a National Jewish state somewhere of which all Jews should be subjects.

It is, in my view, the solution and ought at all cost to be done. Then the native citizen of other countries would know with whom he had to deal and what motives he might expect in that citizen of a foreign state. It would put an end to the Jew who constantly steps across the frontiers and repeatedly changes his language, his nationality, and his professed allegiance, who is a German to-day, an Austrian to-morrow, a Hungarian the day after, and next week an Englishman, who claims a privileged place in the world that is open to no other race or faith, who, in the name of love for that particular country in which he happens at the moment to be, works bee-like for war against the anti-Semitic state that he has left.

Here you have the ruling idea of the *dummer Christ* again, the stupid Gentile who can be egged on to fight the other Gentiles in order to exterminate anti-Semitism. Organized international Jewry ought, in the name of dignity alone, to put a stop to this. Protest and fight against anti-Semitism as much as you like, but do not expect the nations to go to war about it.

I spent many years in Germany, both before and after Hitler came to power, and there had the opportunity to study the Jews in the heyday of their power. They were still almost debarred from the army, but apart from that might attain to any post in Germany. The period of opening freedom and opportunity which began in the eighteen hundreds had reached its golden climax. Every door was open.

How did they use this freedom? To work for Germany? From what I saw, I do not think so. No man's hand was against them, but they used it to increase and fortify Jewish power and wealth to the detriment of the non-Jewish community.

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The Jews are not cleverer than the Gentiles, if by clever you mean good at their jobs. They ruthlessly exploit the common feeling of Jews, first to get a foothold in a particular trade or calling, then to squeeze the non-Jews out of it. I have chosen journalism for my first example, because I know a deal about it.

It is not true that Jews are better journalists than Gentiles. They held all the posts on these Berlin newspapers because the proprietors and editors were Jewish. The opinions of these newspapers were quoted abroad as samples of German opinion. They represented the Jewish interest exclusively, in their attitude to both foreign and domestic affairs. If another country was friendly towards Jews, they were friendly towards that country: if it was anti-Jewish they attacked it.

I remember a case, when a Lord Mayor of Berlin was detected taking bribes from a Jewish contractor. His wife had received an expensive fur coat, of *Nerz*, which I think is mink, and the scandal stank to heaven, so that the street boys were singing a parody of a then popular song, 'Wenn du einmal dein Herz verschenkst, dann schenk' es mir'. They sang: 'Wenn du mal einen Nerz verschenkst, dann schenk' ihn mir'. I remember how the Jewish newspapers tried to whitewash that scandal, to divert attention from the fact that the firm of contractors was a Jewish one. I observed this same attitude, on the part of Jewish newspapers, towards an endless series of financial scandals and criminal trials in which Jews were concerned, in Berlin and in Vienna.

In Berlin, in those days, Jewish newspapers, which had their exact counterparts in Vienna, Budapest and Prague, gave daily space in their small advertisement columns to brothel announcements, blatant and unashamed, with address and telephone number. In Berlin and Vienna this has now been stopped. About Budapest I am not sure. In Prague one of them continues to do this to the very hour in which I write. I have to-day's issue before me. It has a dozen announcements of this kind:

Charming young Frenchwoman desires to let a beautifully furnished room to a well-to-do gentleman visiting Prague.

An attractive young lady has comfortably furnished rooms to let.

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Body culture. A strict young lady imparts instruction in the new crawling-gymnastics.

And so on, through the whole alphabet of procurement.

What journalism is this? Is this 'being cleverer than we are'? Of course you can make money like that, by publishing advertisements that other newspapers will not accept, but are you a better publisher, a better newspaper man for it? Or a less scrupulous one?

In Vienna, in 1937, it was even possible to read in one of these newspapers an advertisement for a virgin, the price offered being a holiday by the sea. The advertisement read:

Young man seeks the acquaintance, as the first friend [*Freund*, in this sense, means accepted lover] of her life of an attractive young girl, for a holiday in Italy together. He will pay all expenses. Three weeks in fairyland! Afterwards, loving friendship.

The only comment which this advertisement aroused, in the Vienna of that time, was a mild reproof, 'This is really going a bit far', from the Catholic *Reichspost*.

In the Berlin of yesteryear most of the theatres were Jewish-owned or Jewish-leased, most of the leading film and stage actors were Jews, the plays performed were often by German, Austrian or Hungarian Jews and were staged by Jewish producers, applauded by Jewish dramatic critics in Jewish newspapers.

Was superior talent the explanation for this Jewish predominance? In my view, it was not. It was due to *Protektion*, a word that opens every Jewish door between Hamburg and Constanza.

This is the system. You are a Jew, you encounter another Jew. He does you a small service or you do him one, usually something a little irregular by strict standards. On that basis an enormous superstructure of *Protektion*, of ramificatory and interlocking acquaintanceships and recommendations, is built up which reaches across all frontiers and unites the whole Jewish world.

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Do you think superior talent enables a Jewish actor or actress smoothly to step from leading parts in Berlin to leading parts in Vienna, when Hitler appears, and again from leading parts in Vienna, when Hitler appears there, to leading parts in London? Do you think non-Jewish talent would find the same open-armed reception from film and theatrical and operatic producers in London, in Paris and New York? Do you think it is a whim of nature that Jews from Poland, Russia, Galicia or Central Europe are needed to put English history on the screen, to portray famous figures of English history, a British officer, a Tudor prince? Do you imagine no Englishmen are available?

Some of these cases are simply fantastic. The Jew, in such a plight, has a long lead on the non-Jewish fugitive, who faces a world in which he has no single friend, in which he must begin again from scratch, in which his chances of even getting across the frontiers are infinitely worse than those of the Jew, because he has not that *Protektion* in the outer world.

In Berlin, one day, there was a Jewish journalist, a member of the staff of one of those snappy, sensational, bedtime-story sheets. Came Hitler, and he retired to Vienna, and joined a newspaper of the same sort there. Came Hitler, and he retired to Prague. Came Hitler, to the Sudeten German lands.

This man could by no stretch of imagination be called a German, an Austrian, or a Czech. He was a Jew, born in some place that once was Russia and now was Poland or Lithuania or Estonia or heaven knows what. He had supplied 'the German view' from Berlin, 'the Austrian view' from Vienna, 'the Czechoslovak view' from Prague.

Now I saw him, day by day, in hotel lounges, deep in conference with well-meaning but ill-informed English people who had come to 'help the Czechs'. He poured a heart-rending tale into their ears, threatened to commit suicide. This was no destitute fugitive, but a slick fellow who was always well-fed and well-dressed and stepped smoothly across the frontier into another land every time that anything happened to make him move on.

By these means, he was one of the first to get away. I don't

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think this was what English people meant by 'helping the Czechs' But within a few weeks he was in London. A week or two later he wrote to another Jew in Prague in this sense: 'I am having a wonderful time. I am staying in the household of an English lord, who is most kind to me. If you wish to send your wife to England, just let me know; I can arrange it immediately. I have good prospects of getting on to the English Press.'

Soon this man will be giving the world 'the English view', writing about the intense indignation that English people feel at the things that Germany does. It is fantastic. If England encourages this sort of thing, England is a lunatic asylum.

I was present when the contents of that letter were read out. Another Jew who was present said: 'The next letter you get will tell you that he is now the English lord, and that the English lord has been pushed out in the cold.' Followed a roar of laughter.

The admission of these people to England is a thing in the free gift of the Government, save for such checks as, for the nonce, public discussion, and such part of the Press as remains immune to Jewish influence, may put on it. Already a barrage of intimidation is touched off against any man who tries to expose the danger to England of this new Jewish immigration.

I have seen this same system at work in Berlin, in Vienna, in Prague, in Budapest. As soon as a man's name gets the label of anti-Semitism tagged on to it, the grape-vine gets to work, the moles get busy. Yet this is not anti-Semitism, but self-protection.

Mr. Herbert Metcalfe, the Old Street magistrate, who through the particular scope of his court has a great deal to do with Jewish immigrants, in dealing with a particularly bad case, said the way stateless Jews were pouring into England was an outrage, that the right policy would be to punish them sternly, not merely take them by the scruff of the neck and throw them out, and gave three of them six months hard labour apiece for having got into the country without permits.

I know this type of Jew, and in my view Mr. Metcalfe was about right. But immediately a drumfire of invective and recrimination against Mr. Metcalfe opened.

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Do you believe this campaign sprang from the Englishman's innate humanity, sympathy for the under-dog, love of fair play? No, it was partly the balm with which the Englishman of to-day soothes his conscience, mainly the result of Jewish instigation. How many Englishmen to-day would be prepared to admit five thousand non-Jewish, anti-Hitler Germans, skilled workers, men of peace and goodwill and democrats, with their wives and families, to England or the Dominions? No, they are Reds. They are not 'Germans' or 'Austrians', they are 'Reds'.

You Englishmen, who know how hard it is for an Englishman, without family influence, without money, without the Old School Tie to break through the iron ring of privilege, of preference, of nepotism, of wealth, of class-hatred, consider these things. Look at your Englishmen, in Durham, in Jarrow, in Shoreditch, in Hoxton. Do something about them first.

When I was last in London I saw many faces I knew, many people of a type that I knew, and was not cheered by what I saw, in the streets, in the picture pages of the Press, in the reports of criminal trials.

If you have eyes to see, take a look at this London of yours, the greatest city of the world, in 1939. Go, with open eyes, from Marble Arch to Hyde Park Corner, along Piccadilly to Leicester Square, down the Strand to Fleet Street and St. Paul's, from there to Holborn Viaduct and back along Oxford Street. It is as if a drag-net had been cast over Berlin and Vienna and Budapest and Prague and Naples and Paris and Warsaw and Cracow, and the catch dumped down here in this paradise of gilt, chromium, plush and neon-lighting, where Shakespeare once mustered his players, where Milton and Chaucer walked, whence Drake and Raleigh sailed in search of new worlds, where English craftsmen once, long ago, made gates of good wrought iron and chests of good oak, where Englishmen once served Englishmen with beef and beer, and where Englishmen now sit in imitation marble halls eating poached eggs and drinking coffee.

Put your heads through the doors of the restaurants, Petit Paris, Klein Berlin, Mañana's, Hoggenstein's, Posenovitch's, Umpsky's,

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and all the others, and see who is eating, who is serving, there. Stroll through the lounges, accursed word, of the cheap but splendiferous hotels round Piccadilly, the Strand and Marble Arch, and see what manner of people are reclining in those cushioned depths.

Take up your newspaper and read the small advertisements on the front page:

This is to certify that Ignacio François Wienerwaldski has applied for naturalization and that if any know just cause or impediment . . .

Or:

I, Aloysius Ibrahim Espagnolovitch, hereby give notice that I have changed my name to Arthur Etonharrow. . . .

Turn over the page and look at the 'Situations Required'.

Three Viennese sisters (Jewish), who do not wish to be separated, seek positions in an English household.

Young German (refugee) seeks post as tutor.

If you have any acquaintances who have engaged such applicants, ask them how long they remained in their employment after reaching England, how soon they left to set up a little business, whether they found a way to bring their sisters and brothers, sons and daughters to England too.

Your newspapers, if you read them diligently and with discernment, carefully study the names and the pictures, give you a good picture of your London. Consider the following items collected from *The Times*:

First, these, about two young Englishmen:

Albert Smith, a van boy, 18, of Forest Gate, was sent to prison for a month at West Ham Police Court yesterday when he was charged with stealing 1s. from a cash till of a shop in Forest Gate.

At Thames Police Court yesterday John Brown, 19, pleaded guilty to stealing ten shillings from his employer and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

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Now look at these items, all taken from *The Times* in that same month:

**A Financial Shark.** Bankrupt Dutchman sent to prison. Before Mr. Dummett, at Bow Street Police Court yesterday, —, a Dutch subject, was charged that he, being an undischarged bankrupt, was concerned in the management of a company without the leave of the Court by which he was adjudged bankrupt . . . In 1935 he was adjudicated bankrupt, with liabilities amounting to £3,549 and assets 10s. 11d. Mr. Dummett sentenced — to four months imprisonment. Notice of appeal was given.

**Woman's Wanderings through Europe.** Smuggled into Britain in Ship's Bunker. At Bow Street yesterday — . . . After the advent of Hitler, said defendant, she fled to Poland, then went to Antwerp, where a sailor said he would help her to get to England for £10 . . . On the third day the sailor came and said, 'You are safe now, you are in London' . . . The magistrate said this was one of those distressing cases. He would make a recommendation for deportation, but the chances were that nothing would be done . . . A nominal fine of 10s. was imposed.

**Foreign Criminals Imprisoned.** Three aliens, two men and a woman, were charged at Bow Street yesterday with landing in this country without the consent of the Immigration Officer. [I ought to explain to you that this means that they were smuggled in, against payment, and that only a few of those who do it are caught.] They were —, a Russian; —, a Russian; —, a Peruvian. Detective-Inspector Muscle, of the Flying Squad, said he saw and arrested the accused in Limehouse. The woman —, told him she had arrived in London an hour before, having landed in England at a port she did not know. She had paid a Greek sailor £5 and was put on board a boat she did not know. — had been convicted twice in this country and recommended for deportation, while in 1934 he was convicted in Detroit, U.S.A. — had no recorded convictions against her in this country, but the Berlin police stated that she was known to

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the Paris Police under another name. — had convictions against him dating from 1911 in Dresden, Vienna, Warsaw, Milan, Copenhagen and Zurich; he had been expelled from Denmark and Italy and deported from this country. Detective-Inspector Muscle described the accused as 'a gang of dangerous international criminals'. Sentence was passed. Detective-Inspector Muscle then stated that he had just received a telegram from the Paris police, who had identified — by fingerprints as a woman named —, who was sentenced for theft in Paris in 1934.

These in a few weeks. The drag-net has caught a few small fish from the shoals that are swimming about in London. Now go through the West End, for your edification, with an open eye, and see what you have in London. When I was there I sometimes thought I was back in the Kurfurstendamm, the Karntnerstrasse, the Andrassy Ut, the Wenceslas Platz. Here they were, neither toiling nor spinning, but flashing the diamond ring on their little fingers, occupying all the most prominent seats in the lounges of the cheap hotels, reading the papers in half a dozen languages, that pestiferous gang, with their well-manicured hands, their ever-roving eyes, their oiled hair, their natty suits, their aggressive manners, that I had seen in the main streets and cafés of half a dozen capitals.

I first had my attention called to these things when I came back to London after the annexation of Austria. I had not been there for many years, save for a day or two, and now I was staggered by the change for the worse. London seemed to have taken over the human bad debts of half Europe. I began then closely to study the publications on the bookstalls, the people in the cheap but gaudy hotels, in the restaurants around Piccadilly, in the film-theatres, in the bottle-parties, in the massage-and-manicure halls, the newspapers, the brass plates, for the things I knew I should find.

These people are the dregs of the emigration. Our police, as far as I can judge, cannot keep them out. They come in again and again, and when they are arrested in Whitechapel High Street

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they blandly protest that they have only just that moment arrived there, really don't know how they got there, have none but the best of intentions, are sentenced to a few weeks' imprisonment and deportation — and six months later they are there again. They have found a Greek sailor, a convict without a penny in his pockets.

Almost every day now in your newspapers you may read items like these:

German Refugee in Terror. A German dentist, —, who was smuggled into England by motor-boat from France, stated yesterday that he had been living in terror and pleaded not to be sent back to Germany. Constable Smith, of the Aliens Department, said, — paid a man in France 500 francs to bring him to England.

Refugee Imprisoned; Appeal to Press not to Publish Name. A watch dealer, —, described as of no nationality, was charged at Bow Street yesterday with having landed without the leave of an immigration officer. Police Constable Brown, of the Aliens Department, said the man arrived on Monday, having stowed away on a boat.

If you closely follow these items, which you will generally find in obscure corners of your newspapers, you will see that the names of defending counsel in them are generally Jewish. Jewish welfare officials attend the courts. Any magistrate who expresses concern about the evil is liable to be pilloried in the Press and in Parliament. What eventually happens to these people, no man knows. You usually read that 'the question of deportation will be carefully considered by the authorities' or 'a recommendation for deportation was made'. My own belief is that the majority of these people stay; you only have to look about you to see them.

As long as you have a stable number of Jews, restricted by law from attaining undue power, in any particular land you can in course of time make those Jews so nearly natives of that land that the difference doesn't matter.

But as soon as you take the restrictions off, open every door to

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them, keep no safeguards for yourself, allow unlimited immigration, the trouble begins.

You nearly had that state of affairs before the war; after the war you did have it; and that is the reason for all the trouble now. If you could stabilize the Jews in the world within the frontiers where they now live, and still build barriers against their disproportionate acquisition of wealth and power — for the Jews in prosperity are as ruthless as the Germans — all would be well. But you can't, because of that great flood of migration, surging hither and thither, and in England you should as quickly as possible build barriers against the formation of yet another privileged class.

That is what the Jews become, if they have full freedom. Held together by that cement of fellow-feeling, they are a compact and well-organized minority within the community, working with the co-ordinated rhythm of a great machine. I don't mean that it is a plot; that depends on what you understand by a plot. It is possibly just a feeling of common belonging-together, that the surest way of reaching the desired end is by close mutual collaboration.

But don't forget that the acquisition of wealth and worldly goods and the power they bring is for the Jew a sign of divine favour, a thing that entitles him to the respect of his fellow-Jews. For most of us, the rich man is, in our hearts, rather a creature of contempt. He, too, by his closed guilds, keeps us enslaved; we work for him, pay him tribute — but not respect. The very rich Jew is for the poor Jew an object of esteem and admiration.

I wrote that the Jews, when you give them full equality, use it to become a privileged group, not to become equals. A small example of the system at work was that case of the Jew newly arrived in Harley Street, who got his fellow-Jew in Berlin to write to a prospective English patient and warn her against the English doctors. That is how it begins — the squeeze-out. Imagine that in 1938, with one of the greatest countries in the world suppressing the Jews, with England taking its place as the haven where they fain would be! Imagine how it would work in a time when no anti-Semitic feeling existed, how it worked in Germany before

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anti-Semitism boiled up. Where is the feeling of gratitude to the country that has given you sanctuary?

I know a newspaper in a Central European capital where the entire editorial staff — the printers and packers and typists and porters and drivers and runabout-boys were mostly Gentiles — were Jews. When anti-Semitism began to loom nearer, a new editor was appointed — a Gentile. He was one of those charming Hungarians, that is to say, he was a Croat or Slovene or a Ruthene or a German or something by origin, but he was a great Hungarian patriot, and a Christian. He knew Jews perfectly, he said: all non-Jewish Hungarians think that, and that is why the Jews are stronger in Hungary than almost anywhere.

With a charming smile he told me that he knew exactly why he had been appointed and what his position was to be — the *Auslage Goy*, or shop-window Gentile. When the sun shines and you redress the window, you take that particular dummy away; it is old-fashioned. But why did that Jewish newspaper engage only Jewish journalists? Was this chance? Or was it anti-Gentilism?

In Berlin, in Vienna, as I knew them, this system of the squeeze-out was always at work, relentlessly. In the main shopping thoroughfares a non-Jewish shop was a rarity. Do you know that in the Regent Street of Berlin, the Kurfürstendamm, Jewish shops were in the riots of November 1938 in the overwhelming majority, that on that day you could count the unwrecked, that is, the non-Jewish shops, on the fingers of your hand? In some trades — the clothing trade, the leather trade, the fur trade, the gold and jewellery trade, the coal trade — a Jewish monopoly prevailed, in Vienna, and a Christian who tried to set foot in them would have had about as much chance as General Ludendorff at a Freemasons' meeting.

When times become bad that extraordinary grape-vine system of inter-recommendation continues. It is not confined, in so far as favours are asked, to Jews. The machine of Jewish wits is set to work to foster the sympathy, to enlist the help, of the Christians. The smallest service rendered is the soil in which that seed of *Pro-*

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*tektion* is planted, and once it takes root a beanstalk of betterment starts climbing to the skies, with Jack Jew shinning up it.

Hungary is a particularly good example of the country which produces the Jew who is a good Hungarian to-day, good Englishman to-morrow, good German next week, good Chinese next month, and which in my view still affords the best example to-day of a country where the Jew, by this method of squeeze-out collaboration, rises to heights of influence and affluence far beyond his deserts and his numbers.

Hungary produced the classic example of that kind of Jew — Trebitsch Lincoln. Consider Trebitsch Lincoln. He was born a Jew, in Hungary. His parents came from Poland or Russia or Lord knows where — from 'behind God's back', as the Magyar proverb says. You, if you had been writing a paragraph for your English newspapers, would in your objective, fair's-fair way have written 'A Hungarian has been born'.

In his early manhood, if I remember rightly, he was a priest of one of the Christian confessions, in Canada, I think! Here was your 'non-Aryan Christian'! A little later he was making a deep impression on those loving souls, the Quakers, in England. A little later still he was a good British patriot, a Member of the House of Commons.

A few more years passed, the World War broke out, and Trebitsch Lincoln proved to have been a spy — for Germany, a country to which he owed no allegiance. But to what country did he owe allegiance? If any, then, I should say, to England. But allegiance was not in him.

Oblivion for a few years, and then came the Kapp Putsch in Germany, the first of the Nationalist conspiracies to overthrow the democratic liberal regime that was so kind to the Jews, and reinstate the big business men, big landlords, monarchists, militarists, in the seats of the mighty in Germany. Who was a leading figure in this short-lived seizure of power? Trebitsch Lincoln, now a German die-hard. Among the other sympathizers was a relatively unknown man, one Adolf Hitler. Trebitsch Lincoln on the side of the anti-Semites? Of course, he was a Christian.

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Let me here interrupt my story of Trebitsch Lincoln for a moment to say that when the discomfited Kapp troops, after their brief reign, withdrew through the Brandenburger Tor at the top of Unter den Linden they fired, just from exuberant geniality, on the crowd, many people being killed and wounded, while others ran, and I saw a photograph of this incident which has never left my memory.

In the foreground, with the running, crouched or prostrate figures for a background, is an old woman with a child. The child huddles into her skirts. She holds it, her body between it and the bullets. When you look at that picture you can almost hear the rat-tat-tat of the machine-guns, the frightened crying of the child, the beating of the old woman's heart. Madonna, child and machine-gun, a pleasant symbolic picture for our post-war Europe. But nobody has bothered to paint it.

Back to Trebitsch Lincoln. Again a few years of oblivion and you heard of him in China, where men were fighting. By now he was either a good Russian Bolshevik or a good Chinese Nationalist, I forget which. Then, again, a few years of silence. Then, again, news that Trebitsch Lincoln was a Buddhist monk, and the tardy post brought pictures of him in his little silken cap, his silken tunic, his funny pants.

A man without truth, without honour, without faith, without loyalty? No, you are wrong. Now something happened that touched the one spot in Trebitsch Lincoln where you could find loyalty. In England he had a son, and this son was a soldier in the British Army, and if you can beat that one please write and tell me, because I should like to know. The son was convicted of murder, the date of execution set. In far Tibet, or wherever he was, Trebitsch Lincoln heard the news. He came speeding across the world to see his son before he died. Here was his one loyalty, the loyalty of the Jewish family. He arrived, at Southampton, I think, a few hours before the execution. He was not allowed to land. He steamed away again, resumed that endless journey. . . .

What a figure. I wish sometimes that I had another medium than words, those pale and empty sounds and symbols. I would

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like to tell a tale in acid, in poison, in vitriol, in fire and brimstone, a tale that would sear and singe and scorch and curl up the pages as you read them.

If you open wide the doors of opportunity to this kind of Jew you are asking for your house to be despoiled. Remember that he uses all the methods of protective colouring. Baptism. Me a Jew? No, I am a Christian, even a Christian priest. Language. What, Mr. Lincoln a foreigner? But he speaks perfect English. Name-changing. What, Mr. Lincoln a foreigner and a Jew? But he has a good English name, is a Member of Parliament, and his sentiments are irreproachable. You are mad. Out upon you.

There is no limit for this kind of Jew. If you doubt me, think of Trebitsch Lincoln leading the anti-Semites down the Wilhelmstrasse to the seat of power. But I can show you the modern counterpart of Trebitsch Lincoln, and I don't mean those pro-Hitler Jews who were said by rumour to have marched round Berlin in the early Nazi days carrying a banner with the legend 'Hinaus mit uns!' — 'Chuck us out!'

In Budapest, while Hitler, the Jew-killer, was conducting his siege of Czechoslovakia, was a newspaper conducted almost entirely by Jews. All the Jews on that newspaper were hoping that Hitler would fail, that Czechoslovakia, which had given liberal shelter to Jews from Germany and Austria, would survive, that Germany would be discomfited in peace or crushed in war. Otherwise the anti-Semitic Reich would advance a step nearer Hungary, the day of anti-Semitism in Hungary would loom nearer.

But rather than forfeit their posts or risk the suspension of their paper by the Government, which was anti-Czech, the Jews on that newspaper wrote the bitterest things about Czechoslovakia each day, called the Czechs tyrants and rogues and scum, applauded Germany's resolve to bring Czechoslovakia to her knees.

The problem is not simple.

Hungary is the most instructive country in Europe for the study of the Jews, because they are there more powerful than in any other country I know, and yet the innocent abroad never even

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suspects this when he spends his pleasant days and nights in Budapest and thinks he is getting to know the Magyars.

I once sat on a café terrace overlooking Budapest with a Jew, an exceptionally intelligent one. He looked reflectively over the city. 'Isn't it lovely?' he said. 'You know, this, and not Vienna, was the Jews' paradise.' I had never thought it out quite as far as that, but as soon as he said it I knew that he was right.

In Hungary you had, as that old Magyar nobleman said who I quoted to you earlier, a ruling class, the nobles and magnates, who chose to pretend that business was beneath them and used the Jews for all matters of buying and selling, banking and money-lending, accounting and manufacturing. By doing this, as they went out hunting or sat by the fireside and in a lordly way commanded the gipsies to make music for them, they delivered the country to the Jews and surrendered their own mastery of it to the Jews.

The Hungarians, the masses, the people who lived on and from the land, noticed little difference. It was a change of bondmasters. They remained plough-fodder and factory-fodder, but it was an age when the number of factories and chimneys, of which the noblemen understood nothing, was daily increasing, and the number of shops, fed by the factories, was increasing in like ratio, and the power of the Jews grew and grew, and even on the land, as the indolent noblemen, with their flashy phrases and their stupid acts, went bankrupt or signed more and more bills, the number of acres in Jewish ownership grew and grew likewise.

It was the age of the machine, and the Jews slipped slickly into that gap between the lords of the manor and the serfs and soon monopolized all the functions that neither understood: the one class because it was too arrogant and lazy, the other because it was too downtrodden and kept in ignorance and serfdom. It was a golden age for the Jews, and Hungary in that half century before the World War became, as my Jewish acquaintance said, the Jews' paradise.

Then came a thing you should remember when you read that lamentable outcry: What, oh what on earth is to become of the

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Jews, in ten years, at this rate? They will all have been exterminated.

There came a Communist regime, almost exclusively Jewish: a reactionary regime with a brief but fierce anti-Jewish period; and then — another period of glorious Jewish prosperity. This is what makes Hungary so very instructive, in studying the Jewish problem: it is the only country in Europe, save Germany, where you have had violent anti-Semitism since the war, and within a few months that was all forgotten and the Jews were as powerful and as comfortable as ever, and have remained so to this day, when the clouds are gathering again in the north-west.

This is the story. In 1919 a Red Republic was proclaimed in the land of the Magyars. Of the Government, of the twenty-six People's Commissars, eighteen were Jews! The Jews had untrammelled power in Hungary, and they packed the administration, so that the Jews, in that period, were not a powerful though camouflaged class, but overtly the ruling class.

They had a straw man, an *Auslage Goy*, as President, the good master-bricklayer Alexander Garbai, but he had nothing to say. Theirs was the Hungarian Kingdom, the power and the glory. Aaron Cohen (Béla Kun), Josef Pogany, Tibor Szamuely (Samuels) and the others reigned unchallenged, and did some very unpleasant things. Their fingers were no whit less quick on the trigger than those of Ad Hitler or Al Capone.

Many people are puzzled by the leading part that the Jews play in Communism. How can the Jews, who love money, be for a doctrine which denies the right of private property, the right to amass wealth?, they ask their little selves. The answer is that there is always money at the top, and at the top is a thing that attracts Jews more than money — power. Hungary had given the Jews everything they could desire. One Jew, Ludwig Hatvány, wrote:

The old Hungary gave me everything: wellbeing, security, rank and title. The university and the academy stood open to me.

He was of those who supported the Bolshevist regime and afterwards fled into exile.

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The Rumanians chased Béla Kun out of Hungary. He failed to do the one thing which could have given him any hold on the people — take land from the big landowners and give it to the landless peasants. Instead, he nationalized all the land. But to give land to the peasants was a thing not in the hearts of these men; they were as ruthless as any other tyrants. Hard on his heels came Admiral Horthy; quickly the old regime reinstated itself in power; Hungary after a world war was exactly as she had been before it.

Inevitably, there was a rabid anti-Jewish outbreak. Officers, with improvised detachments, rampaged the land and hanged some Jews, and were not always careful to choose the right ones.

That was in 1919. By 1920 anti-Jewish feeling was already dwindling, by 1921 it was dead, and the Jews were moving to another period of increasing influence and prosperity. A remarkable thing, when you think of the want that stalked Hungary, of the passions that had been aroused.

At first, to dissociate themselves from the Red regime and to escape the vengeance that seemed likely to follow it, masses of Jews had themselves baptized: in 1919, 7146; in 1920, 1925; in 1921 only 827, thereafter a very small number annually. The need for protective colouring was diminishing. The number of re-conversions, from Christianity to the Mosaic religion, rose steeply.

Seventeen years later, in 1938, the Jews in Hungary were richer and more powerfully established than ever before. The memory of the Béla Kun regime seemed completely to have faded; anti-Semitism, but for the ominous rumblings from the north-west, would have been a dead letter. On paper, as always, the proportion of the Jews to the population was very small — about 600,000, or 6.5 per cent of the total, including confessing Jews, baptized Jews, and half-Jews.

In this matter of the Jews, figures are great prevaricators, for the actual picture that Hungary presented to the human eye was a completely different one. It was a picture of Jewish predominance, in very many walks of life, out of all proportion to their

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numbers, even assuming that these were much greater than the statistics showed. They were — they are, as I write — a group with a standard of wellbeing and power far above any other in the country.

They owned 46 per cent of all industrial undertakings. They manned 70 per cent of the boards of all companies representing big business. On the boards of the leading banking houses their share was between 75 and 80 per cent; 67.2 per cent of private brokers and 36 per cent of banking clerks were Jews. They had even gained possession of 11.7 per cent of all land in Hungary — against the urgent warnings of a Zionist leader, who many years before had told them:

You are making a fatal mistake in acquiring landed property. You already own more than half of the immovable property in this land. The people cannot in the long run tolerate such a conquest. Only by force of arms can a minority, which is alien to the people and is not historically renowned like the old aristocracy, maintain its hold on such possessions.

Of the bigger estates, 17.6 per cent were in Jewish hands; 34.4 per cent of all doctors were Jews, 49.2 per cent of all lawyers, 31.6 per cent of all journalists. In Budapest, the capital, where between a quarter and a third of the entire population is Jewish, the proportion was much higher. The publishing and printing trades were almost exclusively Jewish, all privately-owned theatres were Jewish, and 40.5 per cent of film theatres.

To get a clearer picture of this almost monopolistic control take the boards of the twenty leading industrial undertakings in Hungary in 1934-35. Of 336 names 235 were Jewish; 290 of the biggest industrial concerns in Hungary were under the control of the ten biggest banks. Of 319 names on the boards 223 were Jewish.

In 1936, 19 newspapers in Budapest employed 418 editors, journalists and contributors; 306 were Jewish.

Now leave the figures and look at Budapest, at the retail trade, the mightiest of all the Jewish strongholds. Here the Jewish preponderance is clearest to the naked eye, because it is behind the

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counter, not upstairs in the board-room. In Budapest there are miles of streets where you may search vainly for a non-Jewish shop. It is very difficult, if you wish to buy anything, not to buy it from a Jew.

The contrast between this strongly entrenched Jewish community, all its units earning a good living, and the poverty of the workers in outer Budapest, of the peasants in many parts of the country, is striking and depressing. Most of the workers work for Jews and, when they get their meagre pay envelope, hand it to their wives, who trot along to the Jewish shopkeeper and give it back, and so the money, like the music, goes round and round and comes out — where? Nowhere where the worker or the peasant can get at it.

It is, in its way, a new tyranny, comparable with that of the nobles and the Church in the Middle Ages, the tyranny of money-power instead of the tyranny of inherited privilege, and it needs remedying just as much as those other tyrannies, which still linger on.

This is the problem that has to be solved, as it seems to me: that the Jews, given full equality of opportunity, use it to oust the others and acquire the status of a privileged class.

Come with me on a few journeys through the Hungarian countryside and watch the system at work there.

Come to Mezökövesd, where the tourists are taken on Sundays in charabancs, because on Sundays the peasants put on their pretty costumes and all go to church, and this delights the tourists, who feel they are really getting to know Hungary, lunch well at the restaurant round the corner, which is decorated in the Hungarian-operetta style and is especially put there for tourists and has about as much relation to life in Mezökövesd as the Berkeley Buttery has to the good old English life of Bethnal Green, and are whisked back to Budapest in their charabancs.

But we will go to Mezökövesd not on Sunday, but on Saturday afternoon. The peasants and villagers are at work; they are not wearing those picturesque costumes. They are at their daily grind, which lasts from dawn to dusk. They are bitterly poor.

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Money is a rare thing to them, even small coins. They think themselves lucky if they have enough to eat.

On all sides of you you will see these faces lined and wrinkled by toil and care and weather, these figures warped by heavy labour. But go a little farther and you come to the village square, a place where the church stands and the road widens and there are a few shops and women sit by piles of pumpkins — the village meeting-place. If Mezokovesd were London this would be Piccadilly Circus.

All those shops, every one of them, has a Jewish name above it. It is Saturday afternoon, and the owners are not working. They, too, stand about the market-place, or at any rate, the young men; the older men and the women sit in the shops, talking.

If you close your eyes to the market-place and only look at those young men, this *is* London, this *is* Piccadilly Circus. They are just the same Jews that you see there. They wear natty suits, close-fitting shoes, new hats on carefully-barbered heads. They are well-to-do. They are the lords of this remote little town, with its dusty and rutty road, with the geese running about, with oxen-hauled wagons passing to and fro.

The rest, the church, the lean and hungry peasants, the mean cottages, is just backcloth. On the long winter evenings those peasant women spend hours, by the dim light of a paraffin lamp, stitching and embroidering, stitching and embroidering, stitching and embroidering. Round the corner is a shop, where a well-dressed Jewish gentleman sits reading the *Pesti Naplo*. From him you may buy those attractive hand-worked bedspreads and tablecloths, the products of so many midwinter nights' work — at a price, a high one. The peasants sell them to him — at a low one. In Budapest there are many of these shops, all Jewish-owned, where the arts and crafts of Hungary fill the windows and the foreign tourists pause with little cries of pleasure at the pretty things they see.

Next time you pass one of those shops think of the people who make these things. Try and get someone to take you to the homes of the people who make them, watch them at work.

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In Czechoslovakia the peasants sell these things direct to the buyer — in the market-place, in the street. Why not in Hungary? Is it forbidden? By whom, and for whom?

Come to Esztèrgom, the cradle of Hungary, where the first Hungarian kings had their palace on that craggy eminence overlooking the Danube and the bridge which, until recently, took you into Czechoslovakia, but now the land on the other side is Hungarian again. Come there, too, on a Saturday afternoon, see exactly the same thing happen there in the tiny market-place. Perhaps in a hundred years Esztèrgom will be a great and rich and populous and important town. That little market-place will be growing into a local Piccadilly Circus. Sites there will be the most valuable in all Esztèrgom. They are all owned by Jews. All the shops bear Jewish names, first modest ventures in gilt, chromium, nickel and neon-lighting are being made. The young Jews, in their town clothes, stand about, talking. The town lads run about barefoot, beg watermelon-rinds from the greengrocer, gnaw them till the light shows through the husk.

Come to Kecskemet. This is a town, quite a big one. Here they make that excellent apricot brandy which the Prince of Wales discovered for the Hungarians — so the Hungarians say. Here is a big square. One of the biggest buildings in it is the synagogue. A deal of money, such a synagogue costs. All round the square are the glittering Jewish shop signs. The countryside around is poor, the peasants harassed by want. Out of the synagogue come the Jews of Kecskemet, important, well-dressed, talking in gesticulating groups — a people apart.

Go where you will in Hungary, in every town and every larger village you will find the synagogue among the most prominent buildings, the banks, the shops, the picture theatres, the filling stations, owned by the Jews.

Go where you will in Hungary and you will find that the native craftsman and handworker is almost extinct. Where he still exists he makes lovely things, but he is almost impossible to find. The few shops in the village market-place are a replica in miniature of Budapest — cheap china, shoddy and ready-made, trashy jewellery,

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artificial silk stockings, tawdry frocks, the harvest of a young Jewish-controlled industry working to the lowest possible level of taste and material.

I once went to a great fair on the outskirts of Budapest and was staggered by the nightmare assortment of cheap machine-made goods that I saw there, that the peasants, come in from the countryside, were avidly buying. At one stall a Jew was selling the most hideous collection of cheap oleographs of the Christian God and His prophets that I ever saw, all in gilt frames. I ransacked that fair for something that I wanted to buy, something that, when I was in other lands, would give me pleasure to look at and remind me of Hungary, that lovely Hungary of the abundant fields and the peasants working in them, not this Hungary of inferior machine-made wares.

At last I found a man who sold jugs and vases and cups that he had moulded and baked and painted himself. At last, something *echt*, something genuine, something Hungarian. He had a few drinking-cups, bottoms-up cups that you have either to hold in your hand or empty and put down, you can't stand them on the table and sip. They were lovely. I bought four, and only wish I had bought the other two that he had. I never look at them without delight. They cost sixpence each. To me they were beyond price.

'The Jews' paradise', my Jewish acquaintance had called Hungary. I had taken a good look at it and agreed with him. I was not convinced that the Jews had been good for Hungary. If you want to study this question, which is playing so large a part in our time, Hungary is a good place to begin.

I was impressed in Hungary, as I had been in Vienna up to the very moment when Hitler marched in, as I was later in Prague, by the apparent unconcern of the Jews. England, France, America and the whole of the outer world were ringing with the tale of Jewish persecution, yet in these cities, with Hitler at their very door, they went their way seemingly unperturbed, made no change in their mode of life or their way of enjoying it, pre-dominated, just as they had always done, in the showier cafés and

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restaurants and hotels and bars and night-clubs. This continues at this moment, as I write, in Prague, in November 1938. Only a few miles away, at this very moment, synagogues are burning. Thousands of Jews have been turned out, neck and crop, from Germany into Poland; hundreds into Czechoslovakia. Here in Prague the Jews are eating, laughing, dancing as if they had no cares. Of all the prevalent misconceptions about the Jews the worst is that they are cowardly. They are most courageous — for a cause that is their own. They are also irrepressible.

Many people were puzzled by something I once wrote about the Jews — that when Hitler had passed away they would still be trading in the Kurfürstendamm, in the Kärntnerstrasse. You seem to be right about some things, they said, but you are clearly nuts about this. The Jews are being exterminated. Soon they will be no more.

Don't believe it. You are fooling yourself if you do. Try and realize that the great majority of the Jews who were in Germany when Hitler came to power are there now, that the majority of the shops in such main shopping thoroughfares as the Kurfürstendamm are Jewish — I write this in the knowledge that they were wrecked yesterday, and I wonder how those British insurance companies are feeling about it — and this mass of Jews will stay there.

Of course they will go through bad times, but they will stay there and survive them. Hitler should live, say, another twenty years, or thereabouts. From Vienna the Jews were banished 'for all time' — a favourite phrase of the Führer — in 1422, and subsequent clearances were made in 1554, 1567, 1573, 1575, 1600, 1614 and 1624. In 1670 they were banished for all time again. All through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in spite of periodic banishments, their influence increased. In 1879 the last strongholds — State service and university chairs — fell to them. In 1937 Vienna had more Jews than ever before and they prospered exceedingly.

I don't think the Jews made good or fair use, on the whole, of the flinging-open of all doors to them, and they are now descending

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somewhat from the peak of power and affluence to which the World War brought them. A new period of restriction has begun. No one can foresee at this moment how long it will last or how much damage it will do them. That it will relax again, sometime, is as certain as that the sun will rise to-morrow.

For my part, I am convinced of one thing, and I know that many Jews in their hearts agree with me about this: that the relaxation, when it comes, should not be used, for instance, to make Berlin again at some future time what Berlin was before 1933. For this reason I find some of the things that I see in London to-day sinister and ominous.

The Jews have a part to play if anti-Semitism is to be killed. In London to-day they are doing just what they did in Berlin. They are deserting the East, flooding the West, flooding Hampstead and Maida Vale, squeezing-out, flaunting.

There are nearly two million unemployed in England, millions of English people are living in conditions that disgrace the richest country in the world, and it isn't good enough. The theory of the free fox in the free henroost has got to be exploded.

Why have I written all these things, at such length? First, because I know something about the matter and because I, who have helped many Jews by word and deed, like to say just what I think when somebody yelps 'anti-Semite' at me.

Secondly, because I believe the only way to settle this eternal wrangle to everybody's satisfaction, including the Jews, since the Jews will not change their anti-Gentile religion, would be to found a National Jew State for them, and if I were Hitler I would do that: what a sweet revenge, to be the man who solved the Jewish problem and put an end to anti-Semitism!

Thirdly, because I believe that if you cannot have your Jewish state, then you must resolutely close your frontiers to any more Jews and apply yourself diligently to assimilating those that you have, but in this case you must safeguard yourself against their rise to disproportionate power and affluence through methods which, in our code, amount to unfair competition.

At a railway station in Prague I watched a trainload of refugees

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move out into an unknown future. They were all men. They were all Germans, from the Sudeten German lands that Hitler has annexed. These were Socialists and Communists, men whose lives were in peril. They were bound for England and, after that, somewhither, none knew.

Their womenfolk and children stood on the platform weeping, not knowing when they would see their husbands and fathers again. The men, good, sturdy German working men, stood at the windows and watched them. They said hardly a word. Their faces showed resignation and dejection. They just stood and looked at their wives and children on the platform.

Among them was one Jew. On the platform stood his mother and sister, different from the working-class women around, better dressed. The Jew, alone of all those men, had something to say. 'Wir kommen wieda', he announced loudly, to the waiting crowd at large, 'We'll be back'. The other men remained silent and expressionless; they knew that they would not be coming back. The Jew spoke again, to his sister. 'Trachte, dass du bald nachkommst', he said. 'Try and get out soon.' Why, I wondered, if he thought he would be back.

The train moved out. The men at the windows looked silently at their people on the platform, nodded sadly with their heads, made no other movement. The Jew leaned out of the window, cried, loudly, 'Wir kommen wieda!' The crowd gazed after him, made no response. The other men still stood silently at their windows, nodding their heads in farewell. The Jew raised his arm, fist clenched, in the workers' greeting. On the little finger a diamond flashed in the light of the lamps.

Now, why? I asked myself, as I came away. He simply is not of those men, those working men, neither he nor his ring nor his rather theatrical cry nor his mother nor his sister. They are all quite different, they belong somewhere else. Then why was he there, and what were his innermost motives?

I could find no answer. He was just different.

## CHAPTER 24

### LONG, LONG TRAIL

CHANCE had it that when I came to write about the Jews, as I meant to after the criticisms that had been made of *Insanity Fair* in this respect, I spent much time in places where the wave of anti-Semitism was approaching, and I had opportunity to study them in adversity. I have been in countries on the borders of the anti-Jewish Reich where the Jewish fugitives were gathering, where the native Jews were preparing for the new dispersal. I have seen them in no-man's-land. I have seen them, in thousands, conferring together in hotels and cafés, thronging airline and steamship offices, besieging influential foreigners, newspaper offices and consulates under the banner of *Protektion*.

I have just read the statement of one of these Jewish emigrants, now comfortably situated in London and writing for anti-Nazi newspapers in several countries, 'Wir Juden sind Stehaufmenschen'.

You know those toys that children play with, the little men with the rounded and weighted base whom you cannot knock over, they always bob up smiling? It is an exact description. While people in England are lamenting the fate of the Jews in Germany, they do not notice that the Jews in England are becoming more powerful than ever before.

Everything I have seen has confirmed the opinions I had formed during eleven years of wandering about the Continent, and I have had these opinions confirmed to me by Jews themselves. Now all these Jews are making plans to go to England, to the British Dominions, to America.

It is not a solution; this new emigration will bring with it the same deterioration of standards in those countries, the same disproportionate and unjustifiable rise in the level of prosperity in the Jews above that of the native population, the same conditions that have played their large part in bringing about the present

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outburst of anti-Semitism throughout the territories of the German Reich and of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. These were the promised lands of the Jew, especially Germany, for which all Jews who have lived there hunger to-day. They cannot think to-day of Berlin and Vienna, Frankfurt and Mannheim, without longing and regret creeping into their voices for the countries in which those cities are situated. Were they not largely to blame if they threw away, by immoderate lust for display and wealth and power, the things those lands promised them?

Listen to Benno Israelovitchsky, a rich man who was born in Russia, who lived for ten years in Berlin, for three in Vienna, for eight in Trautenau in the Sudeten German lands, for five in The Hague, for two in Paris, and who, when I talked with him a few hours before writing this, was still a rich man in Prague, preparing now to set out again on the long, long trail of Ahasver and pitch his tent for a while in Reval. Incidentally, he has the passport of a South American Republic, though he has never been there, and this gives him the *Protektion* of the Legation and Consulate of that state whenever anti-Semitism gets too near him.

Benno Israelovitchsky is one of the few Jews I have ever met who drinks a good deal; ninety-five Jews out of a hundred never drink more than a glass or two, because they think, 'If I get drunk my soberer neighbour will be astuter than I, and in any case why drink beyond the point where I know just how much stimulation and wittiness and good humour I am getting for my money?'

Benno Israelovitchsky, in wine, became expansive beyond his wont. He spoke of Berlin after the war, with me and with a second Jew, also Russian-born, who had made the familiar life's journey from Kieff to Berlin, from Hitlerist Berlin to Vienna, from Hitlerist Vienna to Prague, and was now preparing to quit Prague, before the approach of Hitler, for Paris.

'Ah,' said Benno Israelovitchsky, in the lamenting tone which the Jews to-day use when they talk of the spread of anti-Semitism, the diminishing circle of their activities, 'I am an anti-Semite. Berlin after the war! Ah, what a time, what a life that was! And who was to blame for what happened? Think back' — he was

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addressing his fellow-Jew — ‘think back and recall how our young people behaved then. If they had conducted themselves differently we should never have had Hitler. That is what makes me an anti-Semite.’

The other Jew nodded non-committally. ‘Perhaps you are right,’ he said.

Benno Israelovitchsky was right. I knew that Berlin, and he was right. I knew Vienna of those earlier days too, and he would have been right to say the same thing about that city.

The major issue, for Englishmen, of our contemporary times needs to be made clear in a vital point. If we are, one day, to fight Germany again, it must not be to put the Jews back on their cushioned pasha’s thrones there. If we want to help the Jews we cannot do it by letting the least valuable of them into England, so that they can make London in 1939 look like Berlin in 1929. If we want to help the Jews the only way is to help them to their National Jewish State — but not by giving them machine-guns to kill Arabs.

I contemplated Benno Israelovitchsky. He was a man nearing sixty. In the offing sat his twenty-three-year-old *amie*, the usual blonde harem-piece in a fur-coat, discovered somewhere in the provinces of Belgium or France or Germany or Austria. I wondered why he had taken such pains to discover that I was in Prague, to make my acquaintance. From curiosity I had agreed to meet him. I had asked him, why? He said he had read something about me and some forecasts I had made in a Czechoslovak newspaper, admired their accuracy. That, I knew, was not all of the truth. A deeper reason existed, somewhere.

As the evening wore on, and the fourth bottle of champagne (gold foil and a popping cork are wonderful things, and Czech champagne costs little more than nothing, so, well, I mean to say) had gone, headless, to join the dead men, I found out. I had saved Benno Israelovitchsky his fortune. I had written my book from very different motives, but this had been one of its results.

Back in the early days of 1938 he was a worried man. Was Hitler about to swallow Austria?, he asked himself day and night. What would happen to the Jews there, and their belongings?

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What would happen after that, to Czechoslovakia, to the Jews there, to their belongings?

He read newspapers, listened to the radio, asked friends and acquaintances what they thought. But he could not make up his mind. Then, one day, soon after the end of Austria, he read in a Prague Jewish newspaper that I had in *Insanity Fair* foretold the end of Austria and foresaw a similar fate for Czechoslovakia.

Benno Israelovitchsky began to convert his holdings into cash, to export them and get them tucked away safely in small neutral countries, to sell his immovable property and withdraw his movable property from the German-speaking districts of Czechoslovakia. Before the autumn crisis came he was all set, his house and furniture sold, his affairs in order, his financial lifebelts waiting in Amsterdam and Zürich and New York; he and *amie* were living in an hotel, passports visaed and everything regulated.

Around him Jews who had been slower on the draw were wringing their hands. Direktor (as he always called himself) Benno Israelovitchsky walked the streets of Prague, the model of a man who had seen the storm coming and made everything ship-shape. 'The only thing I have lost,' he said to me that night, 'is an old typewriter. Hitler can slide down my back.'

The German language only knows one expression more contemptuous than that. It is snook-cocking in words, an invitation one degree less derisive than that habitually proffered by Götz von Berlichingen.

Benno Israelovitchsky, with the fondness of such men for Latin tags, during the evening used more than once the phrase *in vino veritas*. Now, in wine, he had told me the truth. As he did this I looked at the other Jew, who listened with veiled, expressionless eyes. He never drank. He said that none of the men of his family had drunk since the day, centuries before, when a remote ancestor, a Rabbi, in liquor cursed his wife and, being told of it afterwards, put into his will a clause commanding his male descendants in all perpetuity to shun alcohol, which had for three hundred years been strictly obeyed by them. I don't know if this was true; from my

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experience of the force of Jewish family laws and relationships I think it may have been.

As I listened to Benno Israelovitchsky, and heard his bitter comments on the young Jews of post-war Berlin, I looked around me and thought, 'If he thinks that, and knows that, and sees that, why does he come here?'

We were in the most expensive dance-bar in Prague. On this Saturday night it was packed. Nine out of ten of the males present were young, expensively dressed Jews. Perhaps three out of ten of the women were Jewesses. The others were harem-pieces, useless, stupid-faced, bleached bedtime accessories of the kind that you could in earlier years see in thousands in the dance-bars of Berlin and Vienna. The only woman in the place who was doing a job for her living was the singer, and she was called Princess Capulet, or something equally romantic, but she was a Jewess from Warsaw, and she sang a curious song, the words of which I could not understand; put down phonetically it sounded like this, 'Dooin te Lambet Vork', and as she sang it all the young Jews and their partners laughed and did a kind of strut round the room and clapped their hands and patted their knees and cocked their thumbs over their shoulders and shouted 'Oi'.

An hour from Prague lay the new German frontier. The glow of burning synagogues in the sky, a few nights before, could almost have been seen from Prague. Jews were being driven across the frontier. The outer world was receiving every day a withers-wringing tale of Jewish misery. Here, in Prague, I saw once again the picture that I had seen so often before — in Berlin even for some time after Hitler came to power, in Vienna until a day or two before he arrived there, in Budapest, in Bucharest, in Belgrade.

In the weeks that followed, my English newspapers, every day, were filled with outraged cries about the maltreatment of the Jews, with appeals to help them. You would have thought, to read these papers, that Jews everywhere were on the run, being beaten up, robbed, murdered. Here in Prague, an hour from Hitler, I saw them every day and every night, dancing in the more expensive bars, lolling in the arm-chairs of the more expen-

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sive hotels, thronging the cafés, enjoying life, no wit less aggressive, monopolistic, loudly self-important, than they had ever been. Is London different? It was not when I was there.

The contrast between these two pictures, the one I saw with my own eyes and the one my newspapers gave me, was very great. My English newspapers hardly spared a crumb of compassion for the Czech and German refugees from the Sudeten lands, whose numbers were twenty times as great as those of the Jews, and showed little concern for the continued murder of women and children in Spain and China.

I began to suspect the motives for the outcry about the Jews. Here, it seemed to me, was the fellow-feeling of privileged classes at work again. I was glad when, as one still small voice in all this deafening chorus of generous but ill-apportioned indignation, *The Times* published a letter from a man who had been its Special Correspondent in China under the heading 'Brutality and Suffering — The Inconsistencies of Compassion'.

This letter said that the German Government's measures against the Jews had 'revolted the world'. This time, added the letter, the world, so often revolted, had expressed its feelings in action — for once. The British Government was finding territorial asylum for refugees, the American Government had recalled its Ambassador from Berlin, and so on and so on.

But, said the letter, this made it difficult for people who looked farther afield than Europe to keep a sense of proportion. The sufferings which Hitler had inflicted on half a million people were terrible; but they were negligible compared with the sufferings which the Japanese army was inflicting on the Chinese people. In China nearly a million men had been killed or disabled — *killed or disabled, nearly a million men* — and the Japanese had butchered *several tens of thousands of civilians*, and had rendered destitute and homeless *some 30,000,000 more*. It would be surprising if *2,000,000 or 3,000,000*, mostly old people and children, did not *die* in the winter of 1938-39. The cases of rape and beating were *scarcely worth mentioning* in this holocaust.

The obligations of the British Government, by the written word

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and in the name of humanity, were the same in the one case as the other, said the writer, and he found the world's conscience 'a puzzling organism'.

Does it regard [he asked] 100 dead or destitute Chinese as equivalent to one persecuted Jew, and may we then expect, when Japan's victims top the 50,000,000 mark, to see Ambassadors withdrawn from Tokyo and international action taken to make life possible for the refugees? Or is it simply that the Jews are near at hand and the Chinese far off and yellow at that?

That is the question asked by this man, who knew his subject, on behalf of millions of Chinese, and it is the question I ask on behalf of hundreds of thousands of Czechs, Germans, and Spaniards.

Just as the Jews tend to monopolize the callings and professions into which they penetrate, when there is no anti-Semitism, so did I find them monopolizing compassion and succour when there was anti-Semitism, and as their numbers are small compared with the great mass of non-Jews who are suffering from brutality and persecution in our times, I thought this to be the old evil, the squeeze-out of non-Jews, breaking out in a new place.

The organized Jewish communities in the countries where anti-Semitism exists, or which it is approaching, have complete command of the technique of enlisting foreign help and sympathy. They understand it; this-looking across the frontiers is in their blood. If a group of twenty Jews is put into no-man's-land, the British and American Legations and Consulates in the nearest capital are stormed, the British newspaper offices too, the next day the entire British and American Press rings with the story, photographs appear, bishops write letters, committees get busy, soon the Jews are released and are on their way to a new land.

Not far away 300 or 400 non-Jewish refugees may be starving in a hut. They have no organized community to care for them, to raid the Legations and newspaper offices on their behalf, nobody visits them, nobody knows that they are there or cares about them. They may rot.

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I have seen a great deal of the 250,000 refugees in Czechoslovakia, of whom about 15,000 are Jews, and have been dismayed by the way the small Jewish group, containing a fair proportion of comfortably situated people, contrived almost to monopolize foreign attention, while the outer world never heard a word about the young non-Jews, skilled workers and craftsmen, whom I would have paid to go to our colonies, but who were stagnating in hopeless desperation, without any prospect of emigration to a new country or chance of beginning a new life.

I thought of these things on the evening I spent with Benno Israelovitchsky, in that dance-bar where all the young Jews were enjoying themselves. A very strange thing happened there. These young men were of the type which, as Benno Israelovitchsky had said, had helped to cause anti-Semitism in Berlin. Because he had said that, I wondered that he himself spent so much time and money in these places, behaved so ostentatiously. Was he any different, I thought?

By chance I was able to answer that question. Benno Israelovitchsky, having a little drink taken, was in high good humour, danced with his friend, and, as he passed the violinist, slipped into his hand what seemed to be money, a twenty or fifty kronen note. The man bowed his thanks, unrolled it — and found a blank piece of paper. It was Benno Israelovitchsky's little joke. As he came waltzing round again the young man said quietly to him, 'Only a Jew would do that'.

Immediately there was a fierce altercation. The manager came and separated the two men. Benno Israelovitchsky went off with him to his office. When he returned he said triumphantly, 'I'll show him. His contract is going to be terminated at the end of the month. "Only a Jew would do that." And how often have I given that fiddler fifty crowns?'

With the synagogues burning an hour away!

Benno Israelovitchsky often telephoned to me after that. I was never at home. He may have wondered why.

A few days later I went to L., a Czechoslovak town hard against the new German frontier, to see the refugees from the area seized

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by Germany. On my many expeditions to the refugees, most miserable of human beings, I always noticed the same thing. As you approached the area an implacable funnel took hold of you and led you straight to the Jewish refugees.

On this occasion I was led at once to the Jewish refugees. There were thirteen of them. They were in a miserable plight, but their number was thirteen. In that same town were thousands of Czech, hundreds of German refugees. Their plight was in many cases worse, because nobody cared about them. Nobody ever went to see them. No foreign newspapers raised a clamour of protest and appeal in their behalf. No bishops prayed for them. They and their children were left to almost-starvation, to tuberculosis and scrofula, to death. Only with diligence and perseverance did I succeed in finding them.

Listen to my talk with Pan Julius Malychek, the head of the Jewish community in the district.

Julius Malychek told me of the lot of the Jewish emigrants. On the evening of the synagogue-burning day a group of twenty had been dumped down in no-man's-land, between the provisional new frontiers, that peace-time no-man's-land, with its hunted and fear-haunted human beings, which is the achievement of peace-with-honour at Munich and of our shining contemporary civilization.

As soon as word came that they were there, the Jewish organization in the neighbouring town sprang to life like a well-tended motor when you step on the starter. Tents, straw, blankets and provisions were sent out to them and Julius Malychek spent every moment of his waking day in his efforts on their behalf. He contrived to gain German permission for their return to their homes and relatives. A few days later a second group of about twenty was dumped down at the frontier. The Germans were implacable and would not take them back. Julius Malychek, tireless in his efforts, succeeded in gaining the permission of the Czechoslovak authorities for them to be brought in across the frontier and be given a few days' asylum in Czechoslovakia until Germany allowed them readmittance or they could be sent to some other

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country. When the term of their asylum was up, and no solution had been found, they suddenly disappeared one night, and are now somewhere in Czechoslovakia, un-notified aliens. 'Am I a policeman?' asked Julius Malychek of me, spreading his hands.

Then came the third group. This time the Czechoslovak authorities — the local Police Commissioner, whose humanity had been invoked to get the second group that temporary respite, was about to lose his post and pension because of the disappearance of the second group — refused to let them in. Julius Malychek was bitter about this inhumanity.

This is the background of Julius Malychek's reflections about the Jewish problem, which are the really important thing. After he had described these events to me I saw on his table an illustrated booklet about the progress made by the Jews in building a modern Jewish settlement at Tel Aviv, in Palestine. I turned the leaves over, admired the pictures of healthy and happy young Jews hard at work building a brave new world, and asked him, 'What do you think about that?'

At once he was all enthusiasm. 'Ah', he said, 'if only the men who have the power to solve the problem would realize that this is the only solution. We could settle from seven to eight million Jews there, if a way could be found to placate the Arabs, satisfy their grievances, open the land to us. There are at the outside twenty million Jews in the world' — this is the figure he gave; I think it an under-estimate — 'and the problem would exist no longer. Those who wanted to stay in the countries where they then were might be allowed to, on condition that they took its citizenship and the full duties of citizens.

'Their number would then be too small for the evil to rise again. Such a number would be assimilable. Those who felt the pull of Jewish cohesion strong within them and preferred to become avowed citizens of the Jewish National State, Judea, or whatever you like to call it, could go there. The wealthy Jews of the world should be made to help in financing this.

'But the present position is impossible. The Jew is neither assimilable, nor can he go anywhere that belongs to him. His

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family may live for centuries in this country or that, but suddenly one day he wakes up and finds that he is not a Czech or a Slovak or a German or an Austrian or a Pole — but a Jew, and a Jew with no home. Assimilation is impossible, for all the Jews. What you are doing to-day, once more, is only to plaster over a wound that needs a surgical operation. I myself assert that I am a Czech' — he did not say 'I am a Czech', as I noticed — 'for my family has lived here for a hundred and fifty years, I fought in the war first with the Austro-Hungarian armies, then with the Czech Legions in Russia against Germany and Austro-Hungary, for the freedom of the Czech nation. I can understand now that anti-Jewish feeling is rising among the Czechs. How could it not, after all that they have been through? As long as they were free they gave us everything. Now they are no longer free themselves, hatred and bitterness against everything is fomenting within them.'

This was a cry from the heart. On this basis I could have given my hand to Julius Malychek and said 'Sir, you are my friend and brother, go and live peacefully within the borders of your Jewish state and I should like to think that you would be among the allies of my own country, to fight as a volunteer in your army if some predatory successor of the Turk attacks you. But here, at this moment, you are doing everything you can to monopolize the compassion and contributions and help of the Christian outer world in the interest of your fellow-Jews while a far larger number of non-Jews, within the confines of this your home-town, are in far worse plight. You say you have nowhere to go, but this is not quite true, because the Jew in adversity can always count on the immediate and abundant help of Jews in a neighbouring country, as you yourself are proving at this moment. The non-Jew, in like case, is the most pitiable of creatures, hunted from concentration camp to prison and to destitutes' home, and with not one single soul in all that outer world who cares the faintest damn about him, and I have just been seeing this with my own eyes.'

I did ask Julius Malychek about the non-Jewish refugees in that town, but he immediately lost interest, said he now had to go and renew his efforts to melt the hearts of the local authorities, and

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looked after me with some irritation as he saw that I went away, to visit some more of those destitute Czechs and Germans, in the company of a widow, a most Christian soul, who gave all her time to them. Yet he had asserted that he was a Czech.

Alas and alack, I see no man or men great enough to realize, accept and boldly state these truths and put an end to what Julius Malychek, in his little Czech town, in a despairing cry, called 'dieses Ahasvertum' — the wandering of the Jews, and the destruction of Gentile ideals which it brings with it.

Hitler could do it, and become the idol of the Jews and turn the tables on those muddle-headed and not really compassionate people in the world who feed their self-esteem, varnish their tarnished reputations for humanity, with loud outcry about the persecution of the Jews. But I don't think he is great enough to see the opportunity or grasp it. His present greatness, as it seems to me, is only the sum of the littleness of the men who, in many countries, happened to be cast for the other leading parts when he advanced to the front of the world stage.

Meanwhile the new dispersal is in progress. The Jews are straining every nerve to get from the countries where anti-Semitism is rising to those where it does not now exist or is only latent. Do not think that they have any greater love in their hearts for those countries, or that they will love them when they get there.

Czechoslovakia, as long as it was free, gave them the most liberal sanctuary. I have not found among them feelings of love or thankfulness for Czechoslovakia. They feel that the time is now come to leave Czechoslovakia and go somewhere else, but somewhere else lies in a world which in its entirety is potentially anti-Jewish, where the same things may happen one day that happened in friendly and lovely and tolerant Germany and Austria. To make hay in those other countries as long as the sun of tolerance shines, but never to forget that the night of anti-Jewish repression will follow, that your hosts of to-day are your potential foes of to-morrow, is the innermost feeling of men who have years and generations of wander, wander, wander in their blood. The one place where they could go, when tired of wander-

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ing, and settle for ever, and know certainly that they were at home there and that no enmity to them would ever arise — this one place is denied them.

All kinds are needed to make a world, but the English world, as it seems to me, has too many of one kind — the under-nourished, unemployed, underpaid, under-housed, unfit and uncared-for — and is for these reasons lopsided. You will not improve this world by allowing hordes of people from abroad to come in, without any safeguard against their activities in your country. If you are really humane and compassionate, as you pretend, mend these conditions first, of which I have nothing further to say for the moment save that they are monstrous, criminal, revolting, and, in the richest country in the world, a bloodstained scandal.

Or perhaps, as my own language is apt to be timid, colourless and inadequate, I may borrow the words of a correspondent of Hitler's paper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, who said, in writing about England:

In this country the contrasts between inconceivable wealth and appalling poverty are greater than in any other European land, with the single exception of Spain.

That is the truth about the richest country in the world.

I would complete the picture by saying: 'In England the contrasts between vociferous protestations of humane feeling and cold-blooded inhumanity are greater than in any other European land, without exception.'

If you want to check that, look at any mid-December issue of *The Times*, read in one column the tearful appeals for the Jews, in another the appeals of the 'genuine humanitarians' for the Spanish war to be quickly ended by starving out the Spanish Republicans, who have fought against two Great Powers and a(n) army of Moors for nearly three years, and by compelling their submission to the Generalissimo who has threatened mass reprisals when he has them in his power.

Is it wrong, is it anti-Semitism, for an Englishman, in these times, to think these things? Decide for yourself.

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This inhumanity of Englishmen to Englishmen makes me perplexed when I look at England and see the great outburst of indignation, the mass meetings of protest, against the treatment of the Jews in Germany, the appeals for money to succour them, the opening of our doors to their children.

What is the missing link in this chain of humanity? Why are English people being led once more up the same old garden path? We were told that we must sacrifice Abyssinia, to appease Italy; no compassion for Abyssinians. We were told that we must sacrifice Czechoslovakia, to placate Germany; no compassion for Czechs. We are receiving broad hints that we must sacrifice Spain, to satisfy Germany and Italy; no compassion for Spaniards.

Then why compassion for Jews? After the anti-Jewish outbreak in Germany that followed the murder of vom Rath in Paris by the young Grynzspan four members of the British Cabinet, of that same Cabinet which had abandoned Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia and had implicitly accepted Mussolini's warning 'that he will not allow the defeat of General Franco in Spain', these four British Ministers spoke in a quite different tone. One, Lord De La Warr, said, 'There is a deep and growing feeling that there is nothing we can do that can satisfy the Germans'. Sir John Simon said, 'the world has been deeply shocked and stirred'. Lord Zetland said he had cherished the hope — inexplicable to anyone with knowledge of foreign affairs — 'that the conference of Munich marked the opening of a new chapter in human history, but now I am obliged to confess that my hope has been rudely shaken by the events in Germany of the past week'. Sir Thomas Inskip said, 'The Prime Minister's effort has undoubtedly met with a sad check . . . I find it difficult to believe that the German people approve the appalling treatment of innocent persons.'

Why? What of the appalling treatment of innocent persons in Spain, who are hundreds of miles from Germany, who have never done anything to Germany? Why does that not 'deeply shock and stir the world'? Why, if we are to placate the grab-dictatorships by delivering up to them the Abyssinians, the Czechs and the Spaniards, all for the sake of peace, why are we not to

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placate them by ignoring what they do to the Jews? Why not make a gentleman's agreement about it?

I think that English people have a right to know the answer to this question.

Especially at this time, for at this very moment, when England is ringing with the cry of compassion for the Jews and their children, England, as it seems to me, may be moving towards another piece of inhumanity so monstrous, so discordant with this chorus of humane indignation, that the whole picture of England, contemplated from afar, again becomes blurred and inexplicable, save by the basest of motives.

The democratic Governments, unless their public opinion at last bestirs itself, will unite to deprive the Spanish children of their last hope of life. No compassion for Juanito. No compassion for the hundreds of thousands of Spanish children in like case. No compassion for the two-weeks-old baby that I saw in a Czechoslovak refugee camp. No compassion for English children in the slums. Starve the Spaniards into submission. Another peace with honour.

But 'save the Jewish children' While this maddening tragedy of inhumanity was going on in Spain your Press was monopolized by the clamour for compassion for the Jews. No great British leader arose to plead the cause of those children in Spain. They are Reds. Let them rot, like the children in your own slums. Once some Spanish children were brought to England, away from that Spanish hell, by a committee of English people. Immediately another committee was formed, to get them sent back. An endless and infuriating wrangle arose. What eventually happened to them, I don't know.

But now arrangements were made to bring '50,000 Jewish children' to England. 50,000! Lord Baldwin, in a national broadcast, said that those 50,000 Jewish children must be got to England. The first hundreds or thousands have already arrived. You saw their pictures, in the newspapers. These were no starving orphans, with months of bomb-explosions ringing in their ears. These were the children of well-to-do parents, well-fed, well-tended.

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These children will in the next few years grow to manhood and womanhood. If a new war comes, they will not be liable for military service. They will get jobs, open businesses, in England, while Englishmen are at the front. When the Englishmen come back the Jews will be as paramount in England as they were in Germany after the last war. The squeeze-out will be on. They will not be living in the English slums.

Some Jews themselves recognize that if they make room in their offices and businesses for foreign Jewish refugees by dismissing English employees, they will in the long run be raising a wave of Anti-Semitism in England against themselves and the very people they are trying to assist.

To get a seat in an aeroplane going from Prague to London you had to book weeks in advance: even there, the squeeze-out was on. They had no feeling for England, they had no hope or wish to become 'Englishmen'; they wanted, above all things on this earth, 'a British passport'. You have to travel about Europe a great deal to realize the enormous importance of this piece of pasteboard and paper; the passport is much more important than the man. A waster with a British passport has the whole world open to him, all countries are free for him, he may go where he will, trade as he wishes, call on the protection of the British Embassy if he be in trouble. An honest, hard-working, useful citizen without a passport is the lowest creature on God's earth, hunted from frontier to frontier, dragged from prison to prison, denied any legal existence; he is not a human being. How often have I heard, from despairing refugees, this cry: 'We are no longer human beings, we are less than dogs.'

That England, which will not care for its own people, which in the last six years has with fair and holy words betrayed the cause of humanity and justice in one foreign country after another, should now throw open wide her gates to this one particular class of suffering humanity, and only to this one, is sinister and menacing.

Among the people I have seen leaving Czechoslovakia for England since the dismemberment the majority were Jews, a

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large minority Germans, hardly any were Czechs. They carry with them grave dangers, for England and English people.

The Jewish question, misunderstood as it is in England, clouds what would otherwise be a fairly clear issue for English people. The great influence that organized Jewish communities in England, France and America have over the Press in those countries helps further to cloud it. You must not forget that when you read in your newspapers outbursts of indignation about the treatment of Jews you are sometimes, and not infrequently, reading material inspired by Jews, whose innermost thought is that you should fight Germany, not for your own sake, but to exterminate anti-Semitism. This is an intolerable muddling of issues and you need to be awake to it.

I was in Budapest during the great September crisis of 1938 and I do not forget how the Jews there bought up foodstuffs so that some of the shops in the districts where I was living looked as if a cloud of locusts had passed through them. I myself saw one woman spend over 200 pengos, which is a large sum for a Budapest suburb, with my local grocer, who happened to be a Jew. My humble and hard-working charwoman could not get butter or sugar for her husband's supper. I heard similar accounts from an acquaintance who lives in Ireland and travelled at that time in a ship going to Ireland which had many Jews among its passengers, all of them laden with provisions.

During that September crisis I knew several Jews who were elated at the thought that war was coming, though they themselves would not have fought in it. They intended, as my Jewish acquaintance in Budapest told me, 'to survive', to reap the subsequent harvest of a peace planted on the grave of anti-Semitism. This, to me, was a very grave and disturbing thought. It makes me read with the greatest scepticism all comment on the international dog-fight which I know or suspect to come from Jewish sources.

You should bear this in mind when you read books on the contemporary struggle in Europe, and not forget that those authors who are presented to you as Germans, Austrians, Swiss, Americans

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or what-not are in the majority of cases Jews, who are arguing the case, though this fact is concealed from you, from their own standpoint and not from yours. There is no limit to the methods they use to whip up international opinion against anti-Semitic Fascism, but if you want to fight anti-Semitic Fascism you should do so for your own sake, in your own interest, not for theirs.

The question of to-day is, are you going to let this thing drag on, from waves of Jewish oppression to waves of Jewish domination, or are you going to solve it? If you choose the second way you ought to found the Jewish National State, though not at the cost of Arab suffering, and strictly limit the number of Jews who live outside it. The Jews themselves know it. 'Polish Jew' was the term of supreme contempt and dislike in the mouth of a German Jew whose family had long been established in Germany. But the successive waves of migration wash out all the good that the long-established communities of resident Jews have done.

Soon you are going to see anti-Semitism in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, in Rumania, possibly farther field. The problem grows, it does not get smaller. The pressure of Jewish immigration in England will increase and increase. And these are, in the majority, just the people you don't want, and cannot afford to have. Everywhere I have seen them they have been the presagers of bad times for the native population.

'Anti-Semitism is one of the things that have rather upset the balance of his judgment', said, of me, a writer who knew nothing of this subject.

This was valuable to me as showing how the standards of literary criticism remain stable through the ages. I believe a contemporary of Chaucer reproached that Englishman with anti-Semitism after the publication of 'The Prioress's Tale'. By a rare chance, also, I have among my treasures a fragment of parchment on which is inscribed the opinion of a dramatic critic who attended the first performance of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, and he, antagonized by the portrayal of Shylock, wrote, 'Master Wm. Shakspeare hath suffered his judgmente to be warped by His unlove off the Jews'. Then again, I have a yellow clipping from a

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number of the *Morning Mercury*, published many years ago, in which a critic wrote of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, 'We much regret that Mr. Dickens, in conjuring from the gallery of his imagination the repulsive character of Fagin, has allowed his distaste for the Jews to tilt the scales of that nice judgment which in all other respects, we confide, will find universal commendation.'

Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens. Reds, anti-Semites, all three of them, unbalanced and biased scribblers, men without 'judgment', men whose hearts were filled with inhumanity. Thank God we don't produce Englishmen of that kind any longer. To-day we are full of the Christian virtue of toleration. We tolerate everything, but particularly slums, derelict areas, starvation, the use of coloured troops against Spanish working people, China, Czechoslovakia — everything.

## IN TOWN TO-NIGHT

I AM an enthusiastic Bummler. I love, after a day's work, to go into the town and stroll about and taste its pleasures, to wander here and there, and presently to stop at an inn or a garden and refresh myself with wine and music and then to go on again until I feel that I want to sit awhile in another tavern, another garden, drink some more wine, hear some more music.

To *bummeln* — a word untranslatable in English, unless you care for pub-crawl. A lunatic idea used to prevail that the French language had no word for home, and this was supposed to be most significant, like the other national delusion that in England you are innocent until you are proved guilty and in other countries you are guilty until proved innocent. But in English, as far as I know, and I have racked my brains, there is no equivalent for *bummeln*, no one word to describe that delightful and elegant manner of closing the day.

It means the aimless pursuit of pleasure, without a definite destination; in most countries that I know you do not need to have a definite destination, for the wayside is full of places where you may fall. In my native London, lackaday, that is not so. You may only do that which is described by the word pub-crawl. *Bummeln*. Pub-crawl. Now that, I think, is really significant.

When I consider all the cities that I know I think that Vienna, even the Vienna of decline and decay that I knew, was the most delightful to *bummeln*. You had two things there that you can find nowhere else: the wine-gardens on the surrounding hills, and the Viennese songs, those incomparable songs of the *Heurigen*, all variations on a common theme — wine, and the reflections, sad or tender, melancholy or gay, that it inspires.

The best companionship in the world you found at those rough tables beneath the fruit trees. The stranger at your side was your friend, for as long as you stayed. The boy and the girl across the

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table loved and laughed and kissed and sang as naturally as children playing in a meadow.

If I had a regret it would be that I did not live in Vienna and in Austria in the time of their greatness, in a time of tranquillity, when a man could make his plans for the future without the ever-present fear of the morrow, could look forward to a long series of to-morrows all filled with work and leisure and the people and books and pictures and pleasures that he loved. But perhaps the very uncertainty of our Insanity Fair lends zest to the pleasures one has during the short time that one may enjoy them.

I seem to have lost all my loves — England, Brenda Mary, Austria, and faith. *Bummeln* I still may. But I can never go on a *Bummel* without thinking of Vienna. Those incomparable songs, under the walnut trees, 'Ich weiss, auf der Wieden, ein kleines Hotel'; 'Wien, Wien, nur du allein'; 'Lass dir Zeit, wenn du ein Madel frei'st.'

And best of all that one about women and wine and the changing places they hold in a man's affections as he grows older:

Fein, fein, schmeckt uns der Wein  
Wenn man zwanzig ist — und auch die Liebe  
Fein, fein schmeckt uns der Wein  
Wenn man dreissig ist — und auch die Liebe  
Wenn man vierzig wird, man noch gerne küsst  
Besonders wenn man einst sparsam gewesen ist  
Wenn man alter wird, ein wenig kälter wird  
Bleibt allein — nur der Wein.

Which you may approximately translate, in order to keep the lilt of the music, like this:

Fine, fine and warming is wine,  
And so is love — when you're twenty years old;  
Fine, fine and warming is wine,  
And so is love — when you're thirty years old;  
When you're forty years old, in love still you're bold;  
Especially if you've been thrifty of old,  
But the older you grow, the colder you grow,  
To warm your heart — you've only wine.

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A great song, sung in a garden with lanterns around and the wine flowing, and the gnats dancing in the beams. But don't, if you go to Vienna, call for the *Fiakerlied*, the Coachman's song, as so many tourists do. The Viennese dislike it, they think it smarmy and Jewish and un-genuine and un-Viennese, a typical product of the Vienna of the Hungarian operetta and the Hollywood film, and when they hear it they raise their heads and look round to see the foreigner who has ordered it.

The Austrian marches, too, are the best marches in the world, just as the pre-war Austrian uniforms were the best uniforms in the world. I sat once, just before Hitler seized Austria, in a hall where a German-Austrian fraternization festival was in progress; the people present were all Nazis, and Germans and Austrians sat all mixed together and wondered what to say to each other. Then an Austrian regimental band struck up the *Deutschmeister March*, and an Austrian next to me leaned over and said confidentially in my ear, 'The Germans may conquer the world, but they can't match that'.

He was right. I have not been back to Austria and am unlikely to go, but I am prepared to wager that Hitler, though he paint the whole country brown, can never abolish, emulate or outdo those Austrian songs. The Austrians have them in their blood, and only they can sing them. It is painful to listen to a German who tries. One day in Budapest, on the radio, I heard a German military choir singing the Austrian *Kaiserjaeger March*, and it was excruciating. As the Austrians used to sing that, it was a lovely lilting tune to which a man might march but which did not drum, drum, drum footbeats into your ear:

Mir san' die Kaiserjaeger  
vom alten Regiment.

This is how the Germans sang it:

Wir sind  
die Kai  
ser jae  
ger

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vom al  
ten Re  
giment.

One-two, one-two, left-right, left-right, pick up your feet there, get into step that man, left-right, left-right, left-right. It was awful. That tune was meant for marching, not goose-stepping. As the Germans sang it you could see the sergeant-major.

Another time, in Budapest, I dined in a little restaurant where, in one room, there was a gipsy orchestra, and in another a *Schrammelmusik*, an Austrian band of violin, zither and concertina, and a woman singer. I went into that room.

The only other guest was a Hungarian who had once been an officer in one of the Kaiser's cavalry regiments, and longed with all his heart for those great days in Vienna before the war. There was myself, an English journalist who had lived in Vienna in the bad days after the war and loved it just as much as he. There was the singer, who had never seen Vienna, whose mother was Viennese and whose father was a Serb, but at her mother's knee she had learned those songs and sang them like any Viennese. We were, you might say, three typical Viennese.

She began with the *Erzherzog Johann Lied*, that lovely song of Styrian hills and valleys, of yodels and trills, and sang it as if she had spent her whole youth there. The Hungarian ex-officer and the English journalist both began to get sentimental, and to cheer themselves up with wine. She went on from one song to another, from 'My mother was a Viennese' to 'In the Prater the chestnuts are blooming' and from that to 'I want to see Grinzing once more', and we all became more and more homesick, the three of us who had no homes in Vienna, and the wine flowed more and more freely, and then she sang:

Draussen im Schönbrunner Park  
Draussen im Schönbrunner Park  
Sitzt ein alter Herr, sorgenschwer.  
Out there in Schönbrunn  
Out there in Schönbrunn  
Sits an old man, bowed with care.

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It is the song the Viennese made about Francis Joseph, against whom few of the older ones will hear a word even to-day.

In it you can hear the whole tragedy of Austria, for his life was the tragedy of Austria, and the Viennese, in singing to him and about him, were really singing of their own fears and cares. All his battles lost, all his kinsmen and kinswomen dead by their own or another's hand or by some tragic act of God, his lovely and beloved but unloving Empress always globe-trotting until the assassin's stiletto put an end to her journeying, his Empire cracking and crumbling around him from the first day of his long reign to the last, he was a figure of tragedy, the living embodiment of Austria's decline, but the Viennese loved him:

Lieber, guter, alter Herr  
Mach' dir doch das Herz nicht schwer.

It is almost untranslatable. Say, roughly:

Dear, good and trusted friend,  
Bear up, don't be downcast.

It is as if the Viennese stood beneath his window at Schönbrunn and sang it to him.

The sound of it now, in that little Budapest restaurant, completed our vinous self-commiseration. The Hungarian thought of himself, a subaltern in a gay blue coat, strolling with lovely ladies in the Prater. The singer thought of the Vienna of which her mother had painted such golden pictures. I thought of the Vienna I had known, how I had found a brief happiness there and had worked in my quiet rooms and hoped and hoped and desperately hoped that, somehow, Vienna and Austria could find salvation without being swallowed up and how I had always known, in my heart, that this would not be, that Austria would fall, and that, in the interest of the majority, it deserved to fall, for there were conditions that needed to be changed and which the old rulers would never have changed.

It was, indeed, the last chapter in a period of decline and fall that had begun a hundred years before and moved to its inevitable

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end because of the very things that you see in England to-day — appalling conditions which clamour to be changed, power in the hands of a small class which will not change them because its own nest is well-feathered. Inertia, selfish interest, indolence, the stubborn refusal of the aristocracy, the Church, and the Jews to accept anything less than the status of a favoured and privileged class, to improve the conditions of the poorest classes, killed Austria.

As the song finished we, the three exiled Viennese of whom one had never seen Vienna and none had been born in Vienna, felt that we had sung a mass for that old Austria that we all loved so well, though only the officer had known it.

Here in Budapest, for a rosy hour, I found Vienna again. Budapest, too, is a great city for a *Bummel*. I think, of all the capital cities I know, I would put Vienna first, then Budapest, then Belgrade, then Prague, then Berlin, Paris and London, in that order, for a *Bummel*.

In Budapest, in summer, you have an almost inexhaustible choice of good little restaurants with terraces outside, of gardens where you may drink your wine. I don't include those high-kick-and-splits palaces on the Margaret Island, but if your soul yearns for that kind of *Bummel* you have a large choice in Budapest; they have there several of these establishments, including a dance-bar built in some ruins four hundred years old, and this is perhaps worth visiting once, as a curiosity, because the ruins you usually find in these places are not more than forty years old at the utmost and pass for twenty-five in a subdued light. But if you only want to spend four or five pounds on champagne and legs why go to Budapest? why go anywhere? stay in London, you have them in quantities there.

But that is not my idea of a *Bummel*, and I ought to make this clear, because the kind of *Bummel* I am describing only costs five or ten shillings and would not appeal to you in the least, it only sounds attractive when I tell you about it.

What can the poor man do in London? Go to the pictures. Go to the pub. Go to the dogs. To visit a bottle-party and study the

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cultural life of the moneyed classes is beyond his purse. But *bummeln* he cannot, like the man of his type in other countries.

A garden where he may find music, good food and wine cheaply in summer, an inn where he may find the same things cheaply in winter: these are things he has never heard of. In all German and Austrian and Hungarian and Czechoslovak and Yugoslav cities the restaurants and cafés have terraces where you may sit in the open air and drink your cup of coffee; in the outskirts of all these cities are innumerable gardens where you may go in your leisure hours. In many of these places you may take your own food with you: you only pay for what you drink. In Germany, until recent years, I don't know how it is now, you used to find in these garden and woodland cafés and restaurants a sign 'Hier können Familien Kaffee kochen'. For a penny or two they would even give you boiling water and crockery for the coffee you had brought with you.

Belgrade is one of the dullest of cities by day, I know few places where the streets less repay a stroll. For a daylight *Bummel* Prague is quite different. To wander through those winding alleyways of stout and well-built old houses, over the river and up the hill to the Hradschin is an experience that, for me, never palls; the houses are grouped together in the friendly way that you see in medieval prints, the towers beneath which you pass remind you that once all this was enclosed by a stout wall, the view of clustering roofs changes with every yard that you ascend, the shops are full of things you want to buy. Belgrade has practically no native industry or handicrafts, the shops sell only the cheap foreign manufactures for which the heart of the peasant, and the heart of his son the official, and the heart of his grandson the minister all crave. The streets in this architectural Bedlam are boring, the views have been spoiled.

But at night Belgrade is a very good place for a *Bummel*. Every third house seems to be a café or restaurant, with chairs and tables on the pavement in front where you drink little cups of sweet Turkish coffee or little glasses of rakia, and in the windows three sucking-pigs are rotating on a spit over a tray containing red-hot

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charcoal, turned by an unshaven menial with a cigarette hanging from his mouth who sits inside and continually gives the wooden spit a twist. Next door three or four chickens are turning on another spit.

I am not very fond of sucking-pig, but the sight of that crackling skin growing browner and browner does induce hunger, and once I went into such a little restaurant to try some. It was empty and the waiter said that the sucking-pigs were not yet ready, I should have to wait half an hour. So I waited, and as I waited all the other chairs and tables in the place filled.

The people were curiously silent, and I wondered why. A hush hung over the room. We waited and waited, and at last the proprietor went over, looked with an expert eye at the sucking-pigs, decided that they were ready, had them off the spit, took up a large chopper — and you never saw three sucking-pigs disappear so quickly. In a moment they were gone, the waiters rushing hither and thither with the plates and the diners setting-to with gusto, and all at once the room was filled with talk and I realized why that silence had been.

Then you can go on from café to café and listen to Serb and Bulgar and Greek gipsy girls and Turkish girls singing, always with the tambourine held near one ear as if this amplified the sound, and you will have to become used to this singing, it is mostly a sort of wailing that rises and falls through half and quarter tones, and it is impossible for a foreigner to guess whether the song is about love or war, whether it is gay or sad, because they all sound the same, but in course of time your ear begins to like them.

If you want music that you can understand there is a Russian dance-bar, where you sit among carpeted divans and slender-waisted, high-booted, bedaggered ex-Grand Dukes, sez you, and listen to the Russian émigré girls singing, and they are lovely. How lovely they are, these Russian girls, fiery and yet feminine, alluring, invigorating, slender, with well-shaped heads; it makes you dislike the Bolshevik Revolution and the ring-fence that has been put round Russia.

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Or, if you prefer it, you can go to the very low dives, where four or five women, real relics of the Balkans, sit in chairs against the wall on a raised stage, and from time to time get up and sing a song about Mustapha Kemal, now no more, for the benefit of the Turks in the audience. Or they stretch their arms above their heads, snapping their fingers like pistol shots, and allow their stomachs to go round like wheels, and this is called the stomach dance and is extremely popular with the bawdy Turks, who hope for a heaven just like that.

From too much of this kind of dancing, I suppose, they become over-developed in the part of their anatomy which performs the dance, and for my part I prefer the feminine figure to go in there, but I suppose they can't avoid it.

In one of these places I saw two peasants, probably prosperous cattle dealers or something of the sort — there is a boom in Yugoslavia at this moment — sitting at a table in the corner, completely deaf to the music and blind to the stomachs and all else that went on around them. Each keeping a corner of his eye on the other, they counted wads of hundred-dinar bills which they brought out from successive pockets. Collarless, wearing the rough clothes of the Balkan peasant, hats tipped on the back of their heads, scrubby, cunning-eyed, these two men each drew out from a breast pocket a packet of notes about as thick as he could hold, and they counted them bill for bill against each other and at the end each put a figure down on a piece of paper. This surprised me very much, because of late years, in the countries I have been in, cash has been very scarce, particularly among the peasants. In Austria or Hungary, for instance, you would provoke a riot if you displayed such amounts of money in public, among poor people. A hundred-schilling or hundred-pengö note, in a mean street or a humble tavern, is already provocation.

I was flabbergasted when these two men, after they had counted their wads, put them back, produced from another pocket wads just as thick, counted them, put them back, produced other wads from other pockets, counted these, and repeated the process four times. They must have been carrying on them about 200,000

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dinars, which in Yugoslavia means very much more than the eight hundred-odd pounds sterling which it is worth in English money. The sight confirmed my previous impression, that the astute are to-day making a deal of money in Yugoslavia, but there is nevertheless a mass of wretched and scabrous poverty there and it was staggering to me to see men openly display so much money.

I am always glad when the evening comes in Belgrade and I can *bummeln*. With ten shillings in my pocket the night is mine, I can eat and drink as much as I want, listen to music, enjoy myself. I wouldn't recommend you to try it, because I think you would be disappointed; time is needed to adjust your ideas of enjoyment.

But be of good cheer; if your way ever happens to lie through Belgrade I think there are at least two dives there where you can buy your drinks much more expensively, sit on plush, watch the Split Sisters, who first made each other's acquaintance in Favoriten six months ago, display their curves, and listen to ododeodo.

Berlin? Ah, Berlin. There a *Bummel*, in the earlier years of my stay, meant a tour through haunts of depravity and sexual perversion that vied with the brothels of old Herculaneum or modern Port Said. They've cleaned that up now, and thank any gods that exist for it. It is revolting to think of the lot that awaited young girls and boys from the German provinces, too ignorant to know anything of these things, when they came to that Berlin. It is revolting to think that men and women of the type that did these things, sometimes the selfsame men and women, are at large in London to-day, to read in my English newspapers the tale of their activities, which to you who live in England means little, but to me who have seen these things means a great deal. Read this, from your daily paper of November 23rd, 1938:

London County Council has decided to tighten regulations on employment agencies for theatrical and other artists to prevent the possibility of their being used to cover White Slave operations. Mr. C. W. Gibson, a member of the council, said, 'We have proof up to the hilt that a large number of

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women enticed into accepting situations abroad by agencies licensed by the L.C.C. have found themselves in the worst possible position a woman could find herself in . . . The Public Control Committee is seeking means to tighten the regulations, particularly by raising the age limit from sixteen to eighteen, below which age permission to send girls abroad will not be granted without strict supervision. This country is almost the only first class country where strict control over private employment agencies is not exercised. The Government have been asked to inquire into private employment agencies but they have thrown the ball back to us.

I wish I could draw aside a curtain and show you the picture behind that paragraph. Anyway it means that nothing will be done: the Committee 'is seeking means' to raise the age at which these girls can be dealt in like joints of meat 'from sixteen to eighteen'. 'Are you over eighteen?' 'Yes.' 'Right, then, here's your passport.'

How can you call any country 'first class' which does not exercise 'strict control' over brothel touts, for that is what the men and women are to whom this paragraph alludes. The general trend of life in London is appallingly reminiscent of Berlin, Vienna and Budapest in recent years.

For the kind of *Bummel* that I like Berlin was always dull. There are too many enormous beery Edens, too few small and friendly wine-gardens.

Prague. That is a good town for a *Bummel*, especially in summer, when you may begin it by dinner at the riverside restaurant, and then go on, from little tavern to little tavern, under ancient archways, through quaint streets, up to the little French restaurant on the hilltop for a final coffee.

London. Well, well. What can you do? What *can* you do? You may dine, early and expensively, go to a theatre, expensively, come out and sup, expensively, with just enough time to have a drink before night closes down as relentlessly as the black cap on a judge's head. Unless you go to the one place which, for some reason unknown to God or man, has been allowed on that par-

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ticular night to stay open an hour longer. Unless you dive into a mildewed cellar, distribute largesse lavishly among the hordes of foreigners there, and go through the grotesque farce of ordering a bottle from a neighbouring wine-merchant. Unless your palate pines for the poached egg and you care to go to one of the establishments, usually Jewish, which have the privilege of remaining open all night. You hardly do any of these things without transferring your British money to men of alien blood.

But if you cannot afford those things you drift, as surely as a river to the sea, to the pictures. I never in my life saw so many pictures in a few weeks as during the time that I spent in London.

I tried desperately hard to *bummeln* in London. I found it impossible to *bummeln* without spending a pound or two, which spoiled the evening anyway, because I don't think I got value for the money. I dined at the Ecuadorian Restaurant, the Liberian Restaurant, the Albanian Restaurant, the Indo-Chinese Restaurant, the Sumatran Restaurant, the Lappland Restaurant, the Nicaraguan Restaurant and all the other weird places where the people who live in London — I didn't see many Englishpeople — alone seem to find enjoyment and recreation. I paid large sums and ate exotic dishes which I didn't like, but the only alternative seemed to be the poached egg, for the food at the one good, sturdy, roast-beef-of-old-England restaurant which I tried was foul. Believe it or not, and I know you won't, it is not to be believed after all the millions of words which have been written on this subject, but they offered me a triangular piece of compressed seaweed, with the water still dripping from it, when I ordered GREENS!

In the end I found one small haven, an Austrian restaurant, where, as in the Viennese restaurants I used to frequent, I was about the only Englishman in the place. But there they played, occasionally, a Viennese waltz, and played it well, and I was able to dance again the dance I liked most.

I like nights that are filled with music, but in London they are difficult to find and too expensive. I was glad, when I was once more far from my native city, to be able, at the end of the day, to go out without any particular plans, without changing my clothes,

## DISGRACE ABOUNDING

without filling my wallet with money, and stroll along, knowing that when I had had my fill of walking I could just step aside and sit awhile, with a glass of wine, listen to music, pay my modest bill like any other average citizen, and then go on and drink another glass of wine or go to bed, just as I chose.

As long as I wanted to go on, inns and gardens waited to entertain me at a price I could pay without irritation; when I had had enough I could stroll quietly home and had not far to go — for only in London are distances so great that you are always the prisoner of the underground train, the bus, or the taxi-driver.

## LITTLE GIRL FROM NOWHERE

AN agitated and tearful voice from Czechville said to me over the telephone, 'Do please come down here to-morrow and see for yourself. The plight of these people, stranded out there in no-man's-land between the German and the Czechoslovak frontier guards, camping in the open fields in this October weather, not allowed to go forward or back, is beyond description. Do please come and write something about it. We are taking supplies out to them to-morrow at 1 o'clock. Please come to Czechville by then and visit them with us.'

'Yes, but how?' I asked, 'It's already 10 p.m., and there's no train to Czechville to-night or even to-morrow morning that will get me there in time to come out with you.'

'Perhaps you can take an aeroplane,' said the voice.

'Well, I don't know about that,' I said, 'aeroplanes cost money, you know. But I'll see what I can do.'

'But you must come,' said the tearful voice. 'Hire a motor car. The world must know what is happening here. These people will die if something isn't done soon.'

At the time of this conversation I was already a little sceptical about Jewish appeals for help. The lot of the Jewish fugitives was pitiful, but not more pitiful than that of non-Jewish fugitives; they could always look for immediate help from the organized Jewish communities; and yet their campaign to enlist foreign sympathy and help tended to monopolize the attention of the world, to the exclusion of the non-Jewish fugitives.

Apart from that, I had found that the Jewish organizations, in their eagerness to promote their cause, were sometimes ready to paint the picture blacker than it was, to give out false statements, and to misuse conscientious foreign correspondents, who accepted them in good faith, for the dissemination of these reports. I had

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already had my humane instincts misused in this way once or twice and was feeling very sore about it.

For this reason I listened with some mental reserve to the voice from Czechville. The vision of those Jews marooned in no-man's-land was a terrible one, but, I asked myself, was it by any chance exaggerated?

Now the voice became more urgent. 'Listen,' it said, 'I have just heard that to-day one of those women out there in the fields has given birth to a child, a baby girl, beneath the open sky, without medical help.'

'WHAT?' I said. My humane feelings had in recent years been outraged so often that they had become a little numb, but this stung them to new life. I had a glimpse of that woman, sitting by the roadside, crouched and rocking with pain, a cold October wind blowing, a grey and rain-laden sky, in the distance well-wrapped German guards, their hands deep in their greatcoat pockets, their rifles slung over their shoulders. I heard the whimpering of a newborn child. . . .

'I'll come at all costs, somehow,' I said hurriedly. 'Count on me, I'll be with you at one o'clock and drive out with you.'

Now accompany me during the thirty-six hours that followed and see something of the conditions under which the men work who try, in these times, to collect accurate news for your breakfast-table and, in doing this, their job, to help as far as they can to reduce the mass of human suffering which they find in Insanity Fair.

I quickly telephoned to London a brief report of that monstrous event in no-man's-land, and a few hours later it was humming over the cables of half the world. I cannot think of it even to-day without exasperation, for this was one of the very few incorrect messages I ever sent in many years of reporting. The news of that birth was grossly exaggerated. But this is anticipation.

By the time I had telephoned and run round the town looking for means of transport to Czechville and learned that a bus would leave Prague for that city at five o'clock in the morning, midnight had long since struck. At five, cold and breakfastless, I

## LITTLE GIRL FROM NOWHERE

climbed into the bus. At nine we were stranded on an icy-cold hilltop, shrouded in cloud, while the driver tried to mend his engine. At ten we were stranded again, a little farther on. At midday we had travelled a little farther and the bus was broken down again, in a small town. Czechville was still seventy kilometres distant.

I saw that, in spite of all my efforts, I should reach Czechville too late to join the party that was going to the frontier, too late to help that woman and her baby. I thought continually of this child. I was determined not to return without bringing at least the mother and the baby back with me.

What an extraordinary infant this was, I thought, as rare as the Dionne quintuplets. Miss 1938, the manger-child of our times. Little Miss No-man's-land. The little girl from nowhere, nowhere at all, without a birthplace, without a nationality, without any legal existence. Born in the mile-wide strip of land that the Ambassadors at their table in Berlin, on the orders of the Four Just Men of Munich, had put between the vanguard of the German army and the Czechs.

Cold and hungry, but determined to reach Czechville somehow, I scoured that little town for a car. I found one. The driver made a hard bargain, but I contrived to reach Czechville at about 1.30 and at the offices of the Jewish organization found the rescue-party waiting for me.

Harrowing tales of Czech implacability. Tears. Another long, long drive. Negotiations with Czech officials in a market town. Yes, we might go to the frontier, visit the marooned Jews. Yet another drive. The afternoon was well advanced. At last, two Czech frontier guards. Behind them, on the open road, an amazing encampment.

About eighty Jews were there, men, women, and children of all ages. Behind them, again, farther down that bleak road, was a bridge, and on it half a dozen German soldiers and customs officers, watching. Behind them, again, the roofs and spires of the town where these Jews had their homes, from which they had been driven out.

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An extraordinary scene, in Europe in 1938, twenty years after the war to save civilization. They had been drummed together one day, some of their furniture loaded into lorries, and then they and their furniture had been taken out of the town and put down on the open road, a few yards from the Czechoslovak frontier. They had stacked the furniture together, beds and wardrobes and chests-of-drawers, in a series of three-sided compartments, and then the Jews from Czechville, having heard of their plight, sent out supplies of tarpaulin and they had made rough tents and were living there like that. Picture to yourself that you are dumped down on the Brighton road with a bed, a wardrobe, one or two chairs and chests, and that you then roof and wall-in the whole with tarpaulin, and you will have the scene before you.

They were in a cruel plight, the Germans behind crying forward and the Czechs in front crying back. But the Jews in Czechville had come magnificently to their help, they had sent out bedding and fuel and cookers and clothing and ample supplies of food and by the time I saw them, when they had already been there several days, they had the worst of their immediate cares behind them — save for their tragic and extraordinary plight, stuck there between the frontiers. But that, as I knew, could not last long (later the Czech authorities allowed them in and a grant from a foreign refugee fund was made to put rough quarters for them in a habitable condition) and their bodily welfare was being cared for. They were in no danger of starvation or epidemics.

I talked to them all and promised to do everything I could to make their plight known and get them quickly freed from it. They were, as you can imagine, full of bitterness and hatred, not only for the Germans, but, as I thought, for a Christian world in which they saw only enemies. Their attitude to me, who had taken a deal of trouble in their behalf, interested me. One elderly woman, after inquiring who I was, said contemptuously, 'Oh, a journalist. What can you do to help us? Write an article, I suppose.'

In the event, I think the things I wrote helped to get them out of no-man's-land quicker than they would otherwise have escaped from it, but let it pass.

## LITTLE GIRL FROM NOWHERE

I asked several of them, 'Where is the woman with the baby?' and they all looked vacant and said they knew of none. I had already asked my woman companion from Czechville, she who had given me this harrowing story on the telephone, where was the woman with the baby and noticed that she gave evasive answers. I now asked her again, direct, 'Where is the woman who, as you told me last night, gave birth to a baby here in no-man's-land?' 'Oh, she's not here,' she said, 'she must be at some other place on the frontier. But just look at these people. Isn't it terrible? What will become of them?'

'Look here,' I said, 'where is that woman with the baby?'

'Well, there's another group some miles from here,' she said, 'perhaps she's there.'

'Then lead me to her,' said I.

Another long drive, in the deepening dusk. At last we found the second group, of about twelve people. They, too, had been dumped down in no-man's-land. Their furniture was still there, stacked beneath tarpaulins in a little wood. But they were living in relative comfort. A Czech railwayman had a cottage at this spot and he, one of the greatest heroes of peace-in-our-time, of whom I had been told nothing, had taken them all into his house. They were there, packed close together in two rooms, but safe from wind and weather, warm, well-fed.

'Where is the woman with the baby?' I asked.

'The woman with the baby?' they said, 'We've no baby here. Perhaps you mean this woman, she's going to have a baby some time.'

I looked at the woman they indicated. The room was dark, I could not see her well. She did not look to be anywhere near her time.

'Why do you do this sort of thing?' I asked the woman from Czechville. 'The plight of these people is bad enough, you don't need to exaggerate it. You know perfectly well that the Germans are always accusing you of spreading *Greuelmeldungen*, atrocity stories. Why do you play into their hands? And what is more important, why do you use me, a hard-working newspaper man

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with a carefully acquired reputation for accuracy, to put a story about that isn't true?"

A flood of excuses. I was tired and sore and listened to them impatiently. It is extremely difficult to put misinformation over on me, but if anybody wants to make an enemy of me for life he only has to do it, successfully, once. Now it was already dark, and I wanted to get back to Prague, at least six hours away, in time to telephone an account of what I had seen. 'Come on, let's go,' I said, 'but as you induced me, by appealing to my compassion, to make this long and arduous journey, at least find me, in Czechville, a car that will take me quickly and cheaply back to Prague in time to telephone to London.'

Oh yes, she said, of course, of course. The very car in which we travelled, which belonged to a member of the Jewish community, would take me back, and his son would drive it.

Two hours more on the road, and we were in Czechville. If we had a clear run, I thought, we could make Prague by midnight. But suddenly there was a hitch. The young driver asked me to wait in a coffee house; he must go and ask father. After half an hour he reappeared. He was sorry, but father had forbidden him to drive to Prague. But he had a friend, who would do it. Here was the friend.

Another young man presented himself, bowing. He was not sure whether he could do it, he said. First, the cost. It would cost 700 crowns. Good, said I, let's go. But no, he must first go and ask father. He went. Then came the first father. I would understand that he could not allow his son, a young man who had an exhausting day behind him, at this hour to drive to Prague. But he would certainly arrange for a car to take me. It would be expensive, but after all I was travelling not at my own cost; my firm would pay.

'Sir,' said I, 'who pays is my business. I came here at the urgent appeal of the Jewish community in Czechville to see Jewish fugitives and to do what I could to make their sufferings known and get them alleviated. Now all I want is a car that will take me at a reasonable price and quickly to Prague, so that I can telephone

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my message. I do not want to go to the first taxi-driver, because he would exploit the situation and charge more than the journey is worth.'

'Ach, so, so,' he said quickly. 'Yes, of course, I can arrange that. Let me see,' he turned to his son, 'telephone to Oozy Goldschmidt and ask him if he can lend his car and chauffeur. Of course,' he resumed, turning again to me, 'a taxi would cost you more than 700 crowns. There is the petrol, and the return journey, and the chauffeur's time, and his lodging in Prague, and . . .'

I looked at the clock. It was already nearly nine, and I saw that there was no longer any hope of reaching Prague in time to telephone.

'Let's leave it at that,' I said. 'I am now going to an hotel, where I hope to be able to get a call through to London and to snatch a few hours' sleep and in the morning, at five o'clock, there is a bus to Prague which I intend to catch. Good night.'

I did get a few hours' sleep, making a total of six or seven hours in the two nights, and at one o'clock the next day rolled again into Prague, with thirty-three hours of almost uninterrupted travel behind me, a sadder and, once more, a wiser man. I had had a non-existent baby planted on me, and was very sore.

A few weeks later, however, I did find Miss No-man's-land, or a baby very nearly deserving that description.

She was two weeks old. She had been born, with the help of a midwife, no doctor, in a hall where 293 Czech and German refugees were living. They all ate, lived and slept in that one hall — men and women, boys and girls, children down to the age of the two-weeks-old baby. I don't know whether you can imagine at all what it was like, but try.

She had been born a little before her time, because the Storm Troopers had pushed the pregnant mother about when they paid a call on the family. Five German soldiers had interfered and the family had managed to escape into Czechoslovak territory: the father, a young German working man, his wife, her two children of six and four years, and the child she was about to bear, which was afterwards born in that refugee camp.

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The father, the two brothers, and the brother-in-law of that young German had all been caught and put in a concentration camp. His only surviving relative in the Sudeten town which he had left behind him was his mother, who had one arm and was ailing. He could look forward to no future at all. Nobody visited him, nobody found a place in an emigrant transport for him, nobody paid his passage to England or the colonies, he was living in fear that he, his wife and three children would have German nationality automatically and inescapably bestowed on them under the Peace of Munich and that they would all be shunted back across the frontier.

The baby was two weeks old. It was not getting much milk. Other children in the hall were coughing, were ill.

Later, several of these non-Jewish children died, one, a year old, on Christmas day. Nobody cared about that.

In view of these things, which I saw in October, I was sorry to read in November Sir Samuel Hoare's statement in the House of Commons that Jewish children would be admitted to England in any number, without any limit whatever, 'if they were sponsored by responsible bodies and individuals'.

'Without any limit.' Ten thousand, twenty thousand, fifty thousand Jewish children. Not a word about the non-Jewish children, so much more numerous.

When I read this it seemed to me, who had seen those non-Jewish children, a clamant iniquity.

Hardly a week after that speech the first transport of those Jewish children — 208 — arrived in England. They were the vanguard of thousands of others. A *Daily Express* reporter, Mr. O. D. Gallagher, was sent to report their arrival. He had seen other refugee children — 2000 Spanish, non-Jewish ones, with whom he had travelled from Bilbao to France. They had 'blank faces, dead eyes, drooping mouths'. These Jewish children, when he saw them in 'Dovercourt's £60,000 holiday camp', were in good condition, physically and spiritually, well fed and full of play. 'A rich London Jew' had sent to Dovercourt 300 pairs of shoes, 300 raincoats, 300 woollen jerseys for the 208, but the new

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clothes 'were still in the boxes; they are not needed'. Those 2000 Spanish children, when he travelled with them, could only talk of one thing — *pan blanco*, white bread, and the joy of eating it again. When he told 'black-haired Reuben, aged thirteen', 'There is a good breakfast waiting for you when you leave the ship and arrive at the camp, porridge, bread and butter, and . . .', Reuben 'held his tummy, smiled', and said, 'We cannot eat now. We have eaten too much.'

This foreign-compassion-emigration-and-foreign-succour business is being worked by the Jews in exactly the same spirit as, in the times of their power and prosperity, they use their position in business and the professions — to squeeze out the non-Jews. Even in adversity, the spirit of racial antagonism drives them. They cannot help it, it is in them, they work like bees to get the best for their own people. If the non-Jews allow it, they are to blame. But it is monstrously unjust to the non-Jews who are in want and distress.

I was depressed, when I was in Czechoslovakia after the dismemberment, by the way this process worked. There was only one fair method to distribute foreign compassion, emigration facilities and financial help — to apportion it among the refugees in proportion to their numbers, the degree of their want, and the danger in which they stood. That did not happen. The intensive collaboration of the Jews, the unremitting siege which they began of all men who might in any way conceivably promote their cause — foreign diplomats, foreign newspaper men, benevolent foreign visitors, foreign philanthropic and relief organizations — and the manner in which they painted the picture blacker than it was and succeeded in monopolizing the foreign Press for their side of the problem, all enabled them to gain for themselves far too large a share of foreign compassion, of facilities for emigrating abroad, of foreign financial help.

In Prague a young non-Jewish refugee, who saw no hope of ever getting away, said bitterly to me: 'If I were a Jew I should have been cut of this long ago.' I could not challenge him. I knew this to be true in very many cases.

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I had seen far larger numbers of non-Jewish than of Jewish children, in a worse plight, uncared for, with no organized community of sympathizers in the nearest town, with no one to enlist foreign sympathy on their behalf, coughing, breaking out in scrofulous sores, developing tuberculosis. The only hope they had was a far distant one of being admitted to some British colony or dominion, but this hope was so remote that it was hardly perceptible. By the time this book appears we shall be able to see what has happened to them. I knew English people who carried the banner of humanity about with them but seemed unmoved by the lot of these non-Jewish children, who were so much more numerous and no less deserving than the Jewish ones. Their active compassion seemed only capable of being awakened for Jews.

With the thought of that two-weeks-old baby in my mind, I found it incomprehensible. I could explain it only by hypocrisy or by muddle-headedness beyond cure.

For my part, knowing how these things are done, I was glad that the *Sunday Express* on December 11th exposed 'the myth of the branded Jewish baby refugee'. This 'extraordinary story that a Jewish child refugee from Germany had arrived with the swastika branded on its back', said the paper, 'was being whispered from one end of Britain to the other'. By diligent inquiry, by questioning hundreds of people, the *Sunday Express* was able 'after a fortnight of searching investigation to assure the many thousands of people who have been horrified by this story that there is no vestige of truth in it whatever.'

I know. Next time you read a story of that kind, think of the little girl from nowhere, and be frugal with your credulity.

### POSTSCRIPT

I am glad to add, as this book is about to appear, that the German, non-Jewish refugees in Czecho-Slovakia, thanks to the untiring efforts of a few people who knew the facts of their appalling plight and to an arrangement which the British

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Government eventually agreed to make, were at last, many months after Munich, allowed to emigrate and were thus saved from being sent back to Germany. Among them was the Little Girl from Nowhere, for whom public sympathy was aroused in England by an article of mine, Manger Child 1938, that the *News-Chronicle* most kindly published about Christmastide of that year.

I had the pleasure of seeing her, with her parents and her brothers and sisters leave by air for England, and I was particularly glad that at long last a helping hand was held out to these, the most deserving and the most useful, as they had been the most neglected, of all the refugees.

## ONE-EYED OUTCAST

HE came rather doubtfully out of the fragile summer-house in the allotment where he was living, the allotment where the wet brown leaves were already rotting into the mud beneath a cold November sky, where the decaying skeletons of flowery plants straggled dankly about, where the black and weeping trees stood around like mourners at a funeral, and he looked at me with his right eye.

It was alive, could still mirror hope and fear and cold and hunger; the other was dead, an ill-matched glass thing, ill-fitting in the distended socket, that stared in another direction while the live eye looked at you. His wife came out after him and stood behind him, silent, hopeless, downcast. They stood together in the flimsy porch of the matchwood box in which they lived; to them it was a warm and lovely haven; their dread, day and night, was that they would have to leave it, take to their heels again, have to sleep again on damp straw in icy schoolrooms, be arrested, expelled. . . .

A criminal type, you would casually have thought, if you, warm and well-fed, had on your way to some important destination passed this man in the street. Hatless, and his dwindling grey hair unkempt. His clothes in tatters, muddied all over, his collarless and only shirt dirty. That distorted gaze, half-dead, half-alive. That bruised and broken mouth, full of unnaturally white and gleaming teeth. That scarred forehead.

But if you looked at him in profile, on the side with the live eye, you saw the remains of a fine-looking man. A good forehead, nose and jaw. He was now starved, but his thews and muscles, though marred by the branding iron, were still like the trunks of young trees.

You have seen, often enough, those heads of 'The New Germany', those fine, fit, blond and smiling young men, with the wind

## ONE-EYED OUTCAST

playing in their hair. The flappers love them, the do-be-nice-to-Germany aunties point approvingly to them.

You should take a picture of this man's head and put it in the gallery of 'New Germany' types. It is also representative. Death in the one eye, the fear of the hunt in the other, the scars, the false teeth that have taken the place of the ones that were knocked out. For background, the hut in the allotment, a winter sky, a foreign land.

I found him by accident. I had been wandering round the outskirts of Czechville, a town within a stone's throw of the German lines. You couldn't speak of a frontier, in November 1938; when you looked out of your bedroom window in this town one morning and saw the familiar hill a mile away, and the next morning you looked again and in the night the Germans had quietly taken it, and it was Germany, and you hoped and hoped that they would leave your town, your Czech town where barely a single German lived, and you looked at the little river between yourself and the hill and gradually that river came to mean Land's End, World's End, for you, and you thought each morning, each night, desperately, 'If they will only stay on the other side of the river, if they will only stay the other side of the river, once they cross the river our town, too, will be in Germany'.

This was a town of 12,000 people, and there were 8000 refugees in it. Think of that. Or rather, don't think of that. It is a billion miles to the moon, we are spending a million pounds on armaments, a hundred thousand Chinese have been killed in China, a thousand Czechs have fled before the advancing Germans, a hundred Jews have been driven into no-man's-land — what do all these noughts mean to you? Nothing.

See and talk to one man in all these thousands and millions and you will begin to understand; multiply a hundredfold all that he tells you, tag a string of noughts on to that tale of human misery, and your brain will reel. So come with me to Czechville.

Here, in the company of the widow lady, who had lost her husband in the spring and now spent all her waking hours in the single-handed effort to mitigate, a mite here and a mite there,

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this mountainous mass of suffering, I visited the refugees, Czech and German.

In empty schoolrooms, in barracks, in barns and outbuildings and cattle trucks, I found them, the Czechs, and Slovaks, a few of the hundred thousand that had fled before the Germans, the Poles and the Hungarians. There they were, the Legionaries, the men who had fought with the Russian and French and Italian armies against the Germans, who had battled and shot their way right across Siberia to Vladivostok, there to take ship and travel all round the world to France, so that they could fight again with the Allies, men who wore British and French and Italian decorations. A few weeks before they had been school-teachers, officials, postmen, workmen in steady employment. Now they lay, three men, three women, two boys, in one small room, each with his or her pallet. No work, no money, hardly anything to eat. Beaten up by the Germans, expelled by the Germans, fled from the Germans — a Legionary was a marked man. The future? A labour battalion, stone-breaking on the roads, perhaps. Perhaps a job — A Job! — one day, when the rump Czechoslovak state had succeeded in reducing chaos to order.

‘The Lord Mayor’s Fund?’ ‘What’s that?’ they said, ‘we never heard of it, you are the first foreigner that’s been to visit us. We need fuel, and underclothes, and food, and a little money.’

Then, with the widow, I went out to the allotments, each with its ramshackle hut. Here the Germans were living, the German working men who had given their allegiance to the Czechoslovak state because they hated Hitlerism, because they felt freer and letter men in the free Republic.

Now they lived in these huts, that belonged to Czech working men — ‘The poor people are the only ones who help,’ said the widow — and counted themselves lucky to be there. Three men, two women and three children, in a hut the size of a toolshed. Take a look at the toolshed at the bottom of your garden. November. Cold. Wet. December coming, January, February . . . A mile away — you can see them from the bottom of the allotment — the Germans. Perhaps they will be here to-morrow.

## ONE-EYED OUTCAST

Damp in the hut. Potatoes cooking on the stove. The widow, indefatigable, has begged and borrowed some potatoes, but the neighbours are already beginning to shake their heads and say they can't give any more.

The children — three, four and six years old. Merry and laughing; it's great fun camping-out in the allotment. Their faces are breaking out in sores — scrofula. Lack of meat, of vegetables, of milk, damp surroundings. These children will never be quite sound again. They will be rachitic and tuberculous.

The widow is the only friend these people see. Nobody comes to bring them coal and wood and clothing and meat and vegetables. Nobody puts their names down on emigration lists for England, the British Dominions, America. They are Germans; not even the Czechs, in their bitterness, feel kindly towards them. They rot. Two working men, one dental mechanic, two wives, three children — Reds.

As we went away, the widow and I, we passed a little cottage, with an old woman leaning out of an upper window. She spoke to the widow. 'Can't you get some milk for those children?' she said, 'I gave them all I could this morning.' 'How can I? Where can I?' said the widow. 'We have no money. We have had one grant of 3000 crowns' (say £21) 'but we used all that for medicines. I don't know where to turn.' They talked, and as they talked tears trickled from the eyes of the old woman at the window. The widow saw them and said to me, 'Look, she's crying,' and then tears came from her own eyes and she called to the old woman, 'Yes, we are all crying now,' and we went on.

We went down the rutty, muddy path to the corner, where a car waited for me, and as I was about to get in I saw another woman come out of a hut and stand at the gate, looking at us. She looked without expression and made no sign, but I felt that she was looking to us with some faint hope stirring in her heart and asked the widow, 'Is she a refugee, too?'

'Yes,' said the widow, 'all these huts are full of them.'

'I'd like to talk to her,' I said, and we went across.

She said she would fetch her husband and went in and he came

## DISGRACE ABOUNDING

out, with her following him. He looked at the widow, and his one live eye was grateful, and then at me, and it was questioning and scared and doubtful.

I looked at that eye, at the scar on the forehead, at the misshapen mouth full of glistening false teeth, and considered his general demeanour. I knew the symptoms. KZ. is the name of this disease. Pronounce it Kah-Tsett. It means Konzentrationslager. Concentration camp.

‘What happened to your eye?’ I asked.

‘Oh, they knocked it out,’ he said, reluctantly, looking from the widow to me, only half-reassured.

‘And your teeth?’

‘My teeth, too,’ he said, ‘but I am in a very difficult situation and don’t want to make things worse for myself. If they get me again I am lost.’

His wife reassured him and told him to show his arm and when he did not she herself pulled up the sleeve and showed the brown stripes of hot irons, like those that you see on your grilled sole, and on the other arm a deep scar from a boot heel.

‘What were you — a Communist?’ I asked.

‘I was in the Party until 1924,’ he said, hesitatingly, ‘and played a leading part in it then, in our district, but in 1924 I lost faith in it and left it and then in 1933, one day, I was working in my plot and the SA came and took me —’

‘After nine years?’ I asked.

‘After nine years,’ he answered, ‘they hadn’t forgotten, and then they took me off to an SA home and got me in the cellar there and beat me up with steel bars and truncheons, and that’s how I got this’ — he touched his eye and his misshapen mouth — ‘and they kept on telling me to reveal the names of Communists in the district and I kept on saying I didn’t know them and each time they set about me again, and then they brought the hot irons, and at the end they left me nearly dead, and when I came to I couldn’t pass water, but they wouldn’t let me have a doctor, and my stomach swelled and swelled and I tried to open my artery with a fork’ — his wife silently turned up the sleeve again and showed a

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red scar — ‘but they noticed it and brought a doctor and now I only have one kidney and am always ailing, and then they put me in a concentration camp and I was there for two and a half years . . .’

As he told this story his wife stood silently by him, her eyes on the ground, and I saw the tears creep out of them and run down. She did not wipe them away. The women I have seen weeping in Europe of late never do. They just let them run. How many women have I seen weeping, and how many more shall I see weeping in these years to come, more and more and more, like a river in the rainy season, a trickle, a stream, a river, a torrent, a flood, and no hope of stopping it, that I can see, in these coming years, but only more and more tears.

‘And then I got across the frontier into Czechoslovakia,’ he went on, ‘and I got another little plot of land and I’ve been working that for a year or more and then came the Germans and I had to clear out again and here I am.’

He looked, with his one eye, over my shoulder, through the branches of the leafless trees to the hill beyond, a mile away, that the Germans had occupied one night, while he lay there, trying to keep warm in the summer-house.

‘Have you anyone at all to interest himself in your case?’ I asked.

‘Me?’ he said. ‘No one. That’s the joke of it. I left the Party in 1924, fourteen years ago. If I had stayed in it I should be on the books now, I should be able to apply for help, possibly to get my name on to some emigration list. Now I belong nowhere, to no country, to no nation, to no organization. What I’m afraid of is that they will make me shift from this shanty. I can keep warm here, but if they put me in another schoolroom, on the bare boards, in the icy cold, me with my one kidney, I’m finished.’

As I left him, this humble working man, this member of the ever-growing Legion of the Lost, I felt a rage and misery in me greater than ever before and that is saying very much.

A few days before I had read in my English newspaper of a London magistrate who said to the two contestants in a case that

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came before him that he would like to put them in concentration camps.

I don't know what sort of picture this name, Concentration Camp, conjures up to anybody who hears it in a London club, but I will say that any man who should ever introduce them in England would be a conscienceless traitor and a sadistic black-guard and less than the scum of the earth, for there is no crime that you can commit worse than this. The soul of the man who murders his grandmother for half a crown is white and shining compared with that of the man who puts his countrymen in these places.

Hitler and National Socialism have done magnificent things for Germany. They have done many things that I would like to have done in England, that ought to be done in England. They care for the health of their people, for the housing of their people, they see to it that the countryside is not ruined and ravaged by self-seeking manufacturers, speculative builders and dog-in-the-manger landowners, they make sunshine and air available to the masses, they fight unemployment and under-nourishment and slums. To attain such ends, even rigorous methods against political opponents might be justified.

But the bestial brutality of the concentration camps, practised not in the white heat of revolutionary fanaticism but in the coldest of blood, upon helpless people, is a thing awful beyond the power of description.

It is not even necessary. The times in which such things were formerly done, we have always been taught to think of as The Dark Ages. Even to talk of establishing such places in England, at a time when the country enjoys the completest civic peace, when English people have even become apathetic to the social crimes that they see around them every day, unemployment, under-nourishment, unfitness and ill-housing, when they make no more than faint protests against the obscene wealth and luxury that flaunt and parade in the midst of so much misery, even to talk, from a comfortable place, of establishing concentration camps in England at such a time ought to be a penal offence.

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Is the crime of being poor, of being unemployed, of being underfed, of being ill-housed, not to be punished by incarceration in concentration camps? Is that the argument? There are no revolutionary mobs in Whitehall. Among all those millions of poor people none seeks to interfere with the few who live in cushioned ease. They are too apathetic, too leaderless, even to raise their heads above their own squalor, even to hope for an end to it. And on top of all that, you would put them in concentration camps? Or are the concentration camps to be reserved for the wealthy, the leisured, the lapped-in-luxury?

Only one thing can be worse than the thought that such things are possible in Germany — the thought that there are people in England who would like to make them possible there.

With these thoughts raging like a tempest in my mind, I came away from that leaky hut on the edge of Czechville and turned, as I went, for a last look at the man I had left. He was standing, looking after me with his one good eye. Behind him, in the middle distance, I saw the misty outline of the hill that the Germans had occupied in the darkness, a night or two before.

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DON'T leave it to God to do that. He won't. If you want to make England mightier you must do it yourself. God didn't make the Peace of Munich, for all you prayed for it and gave thanks for it. You made it, and sacrificed Czechoslovakia to make it. Perhaps it was worth it. I don't think so.

Personally, I don't want to see England mightier, or her bounds set wider. I would like to see, within those bounds, a cleaner, decenter, more humane, less class-ridden England. But as we are talking about bounds and England's might, let's talk about bounds and England's might.

Since I wrote *Insanity Fair*, which foretold the end of Austria and of Czechoslovakia, I have gained a reputation for second sight. People ask me, by word or by letter: how did you know?, what is going to happen to us now?

This is nonsense. I only wrote what all men knew who had lived long in Europe and studied the Germans. You could find the same story hundreds of times in the private files of newspaper offices and of Whitehall, if they were open to you. Your Government was informed of what was coming years in advance, but either wouldn't believe it, or wouldn't act on the knowledge, or wanted things this way. Perhaps you wanted things this way — or were you just bamboozled? This is one of the answers that I don't know.

You will have no respite in coming years. Every year since

<sup>1</sup> For ignorant foreigners: The title of this chapter is taken from a song called 'Land of Hope and Glory', one verse of which runs:

Wider still and wider  
 Shall thy bounds be set;  
 God who made thee mighty  
 Make thee mightier yet.

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1933 has been filled with more and more alarms and excursions, more and more wars, more and more crises, more and more territorial swoops, more and more sudden surprises — which should not and would not surprise you if you were informed.

This process will not slow down or stop. It will continue, at an accelerated pace, in 1939 and 1940 and 1941, unless your big war comes in those years, the war of which no man can foretell the outcome. Whether that war will come or not I cannot tell you, because it depends on you, because I no longer understand my countrypeople enough to know which of their only two alternatives — war or capitulation — they will choose, or at what point they will choose it.

These are your only two alternatives — war or capitulation. Capitulation means for you just what it meant for Czechoslovakia — the surrender of territory, the surrender of your domestic liberties, an alien race in occupation of strategic points on your soil.

There is a case to be made out for the surrender of your overseas territory and the surrender of your domestic liberties, for the reasons I indicated in broad outline in *Insanity Fair* and will explain in more detail here: that you do not use your overseas territory, and that in England a small and selfish group has now learned so to manipulate your domestic liberties that the result is not to safeguard your liberty, but to perpetuate a form of slavery — slums, derelict areas, ill-health, bad-housing, under-nutrition. But these things could be altered, if you had an awakening of the public mind in England and enough men of enough energy to lead the movement, under a democratic system. If there is no energy in you, somebody else will do it for you.

In Europe you will see the frontiers of the German Reich expand and expand. If you believe that stuff about 'Germany has no further territorial ambitions in Europe' you are beyond hope.

For some reason, a number of your governing politicians pretend that they believe it. You will see, very soon, Hungary pass completely into German vassalage. This means that the living and working conditions of the workers will be improved and some land found for the peasants, that the hold on the land of the

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Church and the Jews will be loosened, that the Hungarian army will become part of the German fighting-machine.

As there are 600,000 Germans in Hungary, and many of these live in the western part, along the banks of the Danube, I expect to see at least a strip of Hungary along the Danube pass, in some form, into the actual possession of Germany. This may happen in disguised form at first — for instance, by the building of a German-owned road to Budapest, then to be connected by another German-owned road across Czechoslovakia to Breslau. But it will happen.

This will not be a mortal blow for Hungary, as it was for Czechoslovakia. In Czechoslovakia the masses of the people felt that they owned the state, the workers had good working conditions, a free vote, their own parties, their own Press, trades unions; the peasants owned their land; the result was a nation of freemen which burned to fight for its land and its liberties.

In Hungary the position is quite different. There the masses have never had this feeling. When a part of Czechoslovakia was given to Hungary, at the order of Germany and Italy, the result was an immediate political crisis in Hungary, because in those recovered areas the peasants owned their land and the few workers had known freedom, so that the entrenched ruling classes in Budapest felt this to be an attack on their privileges, while the suppressed Hungarian National Socialists hailed it as the coming of the dawn.

They wanted to raise the rest of Hungary to the level of the newly won areas; the embattlemented ruling class wanted to bring the new areas down to the level of the rest of Hungary. The masses in that Hungary have never known freedom. The only changes in their conditions of life for centuries have been a change of masters — from Turk to German, from nobleman to the lesser gentry, the Church and the Jews. If the new master is to be called Hungarian National Socialism, and this master is to be the lieutenant of German National Socialism, they do not greatly mind, if only their conditions of life are improved at long last.

For you, the importance of this is that the Hungarian army will

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become part of the German fighting-machine and that all the foodstuff wealth of Hungary will be at the disposal of Germany.

In Czechoslovakia, as you will see if you look at the map, the easternmost part of the Rump Republic, after the German road has been built across the waist of the land, remains outside the frontiers of the Reich — a tongue reaching out towards Rumania, Poland, and the Ukraine. Within the German wall are the Czech lands, Bohemia and Moravia; outside it remain Slovakia and the easternmost province of Czechoslovakia, that little backward, seldom-heard-of country which was called Ruthenia.

Inside the wall Czechia, as I write, is in complete subjugation to the Reich. It is a German-guarded compound, a concentration camp on the colossal scale, but its domestic regime still retains (as I write) the traces of its love for democracy, parliamentary politics and constitutionalism. The love of the Czechs for these things is so great, that they will be difficult to root out, though they will grow less and less, and some form of Fascism will take shape. Knowing that Czechia is in any case securely in its hands, the Reich may let them play with these things.

Slovakia is already Fascist, with a monopolistic party, Storm Troopers, beatings-up, a concentration camp for Marxists, and the like. The Catholic lands always yield more readily to this system than those with a Protestant tradition; the Catholic Church has often been among the cruellest and most ruthless of the oppressors, and Catholic parties, in all such countries, avidly grasp at the chance of a strong-hand regime when one offers.

It is an illusion to think that the antagonism between National Socialism, Fascism or whatever you like to call it and the Catholic Church, in those countries where clericalism is a major political force, is based on a clash between the ideal of humanity and the doctrine of inhumanity. It is a clash between self-interested groups each avid for political power. In Slovakia, incidentally, where there is a fairly strong and well-organized German National-Socialist minority, particularly in the capital Bratislava, the two are at present working hand-in-hand, reconciled for the nonce in the division of the spoil.

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Remains that tiny, easternmost tongue of land called, in the old Czechoslovak state, 'Ruthenia'. At the moment it is called either 'Carpathian Russia' or 'Carpathian Ukraine', which, is not quite clear, though the difference is important. The difference is, broadly, that some of the inhabitants consider themselves, culturally, part of the great Russian family beyond the Carpathians, and want their own little Republic within the Czechoslovak state. The others feel that they belong to the Ukrainian race of 40,000,000 people, now lying partly under Polish and partly under Russian rule, and they dream of a great Ukrainian state under German tutelage. The respective strength of these groups — the 'Great Russians' would sooner belong to Hungary than to Ukraine — and what they want does not matter much, because the aims and interests of Germany will decide the issue.

This is why the remote Carpathian Ukraine, let us say, with its half a million marooned mountaineers, is one of the most important strips of land in Europe to-day. It is the springboard for Germany's future eastward jump. When Czechoslovakia was being dismembered, Poland and Hungary both demanded, clamorously, that Carpathian Ukraine should be divided between them, so that they should have a common frontier.

This was an anti-German move. It meant that the ruling classes in both countries saw the German eastward drive coming and wanted to join hands and put up a barrier against it, in their own interest. When Czechoslovakia appealed to Italy and Germany to arbitrate, Italy, the friend of Hungary and Poland, did succeed in forcing Germany to give Hungary a substantial slice of Carpathian Ukraine, namely, all the arable land in the south, the big towns to which the plain peasants in the south used to bring their foodstuffs, geese and pigs to market, and the east-to-west railway connecting them all. Remained half a million woodsmen and mountaineers in valleys separated by a chain of north-to-south mountains, like the ribs of a spine with no inter-communications, no markets, no rail connection and only the scantiest road connection with the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Economically, as these people would have starved unless kept

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alive by artificial feeding, they might as well have been given to Hungary too. It was not Herr von Ribbentrop's wish, at Vienna, to give those big Carpathian-Ukrainian towns and railway centres to Hungary. He showed the Carpathian-Ukrainian envoys a map on which they were marked as remaining with Carpathian Ukraine. The pressure of Italy, trying to assert her position as the protector of Catholic-Fascist Hungary and the friend of Catholic-Fascist Poland, was too great. He had, for the nonce, to give way. But Germany was determined, at all costs, to keep that tiny corridor to the east open, and she succeeded.

A village of 20,000 people, Chust, suddenly found itself the capital of Carpathian Ukraine, with the spotlight of world publicity beating on it. You will hear a good deal about Chust in coming times. It was the remotest place. It had a shoe-factory, a pork-butcher's shop where you could buy for three-halfpence a pair of smoking hot and remarkably good sausages, a barber's with Tussaud-like busts smirking behind the dusty window, a few gipsy taverns with gipsy girls, the friend of man in Chust, and wailing music, a main street where the inhabitants surged languidly to and fro during the afternoon promenade.

The only sign of our modern times in Chust were the great four-square concrete schools and public buildings which the progressive Czechoslovak Government, in the twenty years of Czechoslovak independence, had built, and in front of them geese quacked to and fro, ox-drawn peasant wagons slowly passed. Where the Premier of Carpatho-Ukraine has his office a brown bear was shot in the winter of 1918.

Suddenly, with raiding Polish and Hungarian bands still infesting the northern and southern frontiers, which you could almost span with your hand, German envoys arrived in Chust, a German Consul, half a dozen German newspaper men, Ukrainian émigré patriots who had lived for ten years in Berlin and seemed well supplied with funds.

The Great Power game had found a new field — the village of Chust.

Now look at your map and see how the game works out.

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Through that tongue of land, joined up with the great trans-Czechoslovak German motor-road, which in its turn leads to the great inner-German network of strategic roads, called Autobahnen, will soon come another road, built under German supervision, German-controlled.

By it Germany will dominate Southern Poland — the Polish Ukraine — and Rumania. Will her might alone be sufficient to detach that rich and golden land and form an independent Ukrainian state, ruled by those Berlin-trained émigré patriots, of which Germany will be the master? Will war be needed? Will Poland fight?

Poland will be in a bad jam. Poland, as I think, is a misjudged country. Contemptible treachery, it seemed, when Poland, partitioned three times by predatory great Powers, jumped on Czechoslovakia's back during the September crisis and took her little bit. But if everybody had joined hands to resist Germany Poland would have come in against her too.

In 1933 Marshal Pilsudski told the Western Powers, 'You must stop Germany now or never. You can do it now with a minimum loss of life and time and treasure. You can do it in five minutes. Later will be too late.' When they turned a deaf ear to him he made his ten-year pact with Germany. Now that pact, too, is going to prove a double-edged sword, that wounds its wielder. But what could Poland have done? The source of all evil is the feebleness of the Western Powers, afraid of their own victory in a world war. Now Poland, too, is in danger of losing territory.

Down there in Carpathian Ukraine Germany will be at the door of Rumania too, Rumania who holds the one thing she craves after above all others — oil. You can put a match to oil, to prevent your advancing enemy from having it. They did it in the World War. Do you think Germany will take that chance again?

You will see Germany at least in domination, probably in physical possession, of these invaluable resources of foodstuffs and fuel — the only thing so mighty a military power needs to make her invincible in Europe for long to come.

Now comes the greatest question of all, the vital question for

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you and your Empire, the question whose answer will decide your and your children's lives.

If I guess the mind of our rulers rightly, the calculation has been that at this point Germany will come into conflict with Russia. She will try to do the impossible, to accomplish that which has defeated every bold adventurer in history. She will spend her time, her men, her strength, her treasure, in fighting the colossus Russia — in fighting nature. Nazi dog, that you fear but sneakingly like, would eat Bolshie dog, that you detest, or both would die. You would be left in peace. Social unrest, and the hateful necessity for curing social evils, would be banished for a century. You would with an easy mind go back to your golf.

Will Hitler do this? I cannot tell you. If he does, the old men may have been right, I and the others wrong.

It all depends whether you believe that Hitler means what he says — that Bolshevist Russia is his mortal enemy. It is not true. Russia has never done anything to Germany, Russia was beaten to her knees by Germany, a peace treaty far transcending Versailles in vindictive cruelty was imposed on Russia, Bolshevism was sent to Russia by Germany, in a sealed railway compartment.

The mortal enemy is England. Not Bolshevist Russia has what Germany wants — world power and overseas possessions — but England. Germany has an enormously long bill against England, no single item of which has been forgotten. They are all stored up in the minds of men whose memories are as long as their thirst for revenge is insatiable. If they have their way, and they are near to attaining it, they will make you repay every penny of reparations, recoup to the last farthing and more the value of the German property you confiscated in the war you won — and then lost — they will take all their former colonies and more.

Do you want proof? Think of the tone of Hitler's references, of Goering's references, of Goebbels's references to England after Munich. Already they are within an ace of sending you a six-hour ultimatum if you choose for Prime Minister a man they do not like. They are not quite so far, but a few more riots in France,

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a few changes in Russia, and they will be so far. You are in mortal danger.

I am writing less than two months after Munich, when men shouted, 'Three cheers for Germany' in Whitehall and a man shouted, 'Heil Chamberlain' Unter den Linden. Do you really imagine that these cheers were for peace? Would you not cheer a man who enabled you without war to conquer another country? If you wish to know what Hitler thinks of Mr. Chamberlain read his contemptuous reference, in Berlin on November 6th, five weeks after Munich, to 'umbrella-carrying bourgeois types'.

As I write, less than two months after Munich, there is in Germany a deadly campaign to inculcate hatred of England, the like of which has never been seen. It is kept out of your newspapers, save for scanty references which mean nothing to you. There has never been anything so sustained, so laden with hatred, in the world. In almost every newspaper he picks up, in almost every newsreel he sees, in almost every radio programme he hears, the German has this hatred dinned into his soul. It is done at the order of a single man. He has pressed the button, and the whole gigantic machine has sprung into life. Why, if there is eternal peace and goodwill between us?

Why? They mean to be first this time with the 'atrocities propaganda', with the baby-killing stories. They are doing it on a scale we never dreamed of, even in the worst days of the war.

Listen to Goebbels, speaking in Berlin on November 23rd, 1938. He first quoted a letter written by a German author, Max Halbe, to German Imperial Headquarters during the war. Halbe expressed grave anxiety about the superiority of the enemy in propaganda. The strength of Germany's enemies, he said, was that they were prosecuting the war as a moral crusade; why did not Germany use this weapon of the appeal to the spirit? He received a non-committal answer.

Said Goebbels: 'Now you know why we lost the war. And you can also imagine why the propagandist side of National Socialist policy is a thorn in the eyes of the other Powers. The others are gradually beginning to see that Germany is also taking a hand in

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the game. We, too, have mastered the technique of propaganda, and we have men who are clever enough to exploit it.'

Now look at some of the results of this campaign and remember that no German, man or woman, young or old, can read a paper without seeing this sort of thing sooner or later:

The *Volkischer Beobachter*, the leading and official National Socialist organ, on its front page on November 24th, 1938. A long article from one of its own correspondents in Jerusalem, whose name is given, about 'The Shame of England'. It is about British methods in Palestine. The shame of England is the concentration camp. The article says that about 2000 beings are confined in these concentration camps, that the Law of Suspect suffices 'for English justice in Palestine to deprive the citizens of the mandated territory of their freedom for months'. The sanitary conditions in these camps 'are beyond description'. A prisoner told the correspondent that in Akko 'there are three closets for 500 prisoners', no means of washing. The closets 'are closed from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.' In the room in which the prisoners are kept during these twelve hours 'there is no possibility of relieving natural necessities'. 'Frightful conditions prevail.' 'Thrashings are daily occurrences, although the English deny this.' One case, concerning the son of a respected family, 'has been established by documentary evidence'. But the main attack of the 'mandatory lords' is directed against the civilian population. 'Revolting details' of the methods by which the population is terrorized will be given in the next report.

The next number of the *Volkischer Beobachter*, for November 25th, 1938, contains the second article about 'The Shame of England'. It says the chief weapon of British terrorism against the civilian population consists in domiciliary visitations. 'Domiciliary visitations mean destruction'. A town or village is surrounded by British troops in the dawn, suspected persons are taken off to concentration camps, cases have been established where persons desired to be incriminated have had weapons 'planted' on them, 'during the raids thefts by British soldiers are daily occurrences', but 'not only gold and jewellery' are stolen.

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In the old town of Jerusalem two hundred horses were stolen, an Arab journalist had four pounds stolen from his pocket. The poor possessions of the people, a few sticks of furniture or stocks of food, are destroyed, 'for the British military authorities are obviously resolved to break the resistance of the civilian population by starvation'. The want and distress of the people 'is terrible'. More and more cases are occurring where 'captured and fettered Arabs are shot during transport'. There was such a case in Jaffa, 'where a suspect Arab, who was handcuffed, was made to run the gauntlet between English soldiers and was finished off by revolver shots'.

In this British-ruled territory, too, says the correspondent, the fiendish trick of pretending that a dead prisoner was shot 'while trying to escape' has been introduced — together with concentration camps. 'A second case was established on the Haifa-Djenin road, where two captured Arabs, who had been put in handcuffs, and were to be removed by a motor car, were shot, allegedly because they had tried to wrest the rifles from the three British soldiers escorting them.' 'Just imagine', says the correspondent, 'two handcuffed prisoners try to overpower three fully-armed guards and are shot. In the official communiqués these cases are reported as "shot while trying to escape".'

The ruthlessness of the British soldiery, he proceeds, is shown by the repeated cases of Arab women being raped. 'In the village of Silluan, where two Englishmen had been shot, seven Arab women were raped.' Such occurrences, says the correspondent, 'are daily events, but are hushed up by the Arabs concerned in the interest of their family honour'. During the operations in the old town of Jerusalem the number of 'old men, women and children allegedly killed by stray bullets' was just as great as that of the Arab irregulars. 'England' the correspondent concludes his report 'is making of the Arab population of Palestine in truth a people of martyrs.'

Take the *Völkischer Beobachter* of November 26th, 1938. A whole page about England, reproducing from French newspapers of 1898 pictures of British atrocities in South Africa. There is a

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quotation from a report of Lord Roberts, containing the words, 'it is touching to see with what consideration and care the Boer women are treated'. Above this is a picture of a British soldier kicking a pregnant Boer woman in the stomach.

Another quotation, from an official report of the British War Ministry during the Boer War: 'The traffic communications have been restored and the railway is operating normally; the accidents so frequent a few months ago have ceased.' Above this is a picture of a British armoured train with a Boer woman and two children lashed to it to deter train-wreckers and sharpshooters.

At the foot of the page an article entitled 'The bloodbath of Amritsar'. It begins: 'We are by no means of the opinion that General Dyer, who on an April day in Amritsar mowed down two thousand human beings with machine-guns and without warning, was a bloodthirsty man. We should speak no ill of the dead, and in any case a colonial officer must be regarded in the first place as the product of a long line of teachers and predecessors whom he had before his eyes during his whole life. Dyer of Amritsar seems to us to be the type of Anglo-Indian officer, not better and not worse than the average . . .' And so on, and so on.

This is not in wartime, but in what passes for peace in our time. It is not sporadic, or confined to a small section of the Press as in Wilhelmian days, or accidental. It is the result of an order, to which the entire German publicity machine, press, radio and film, immediately responds. At a given moment the man in command may choose, for this reason or that, to take his finger off the button. At another given moment, he will press it again. This particular outburst comes less than two months after Munich. If you had stood firm at Munich you would not have had this, you would have had a respectful German Press to-day, you would have had a large body of grateful opinion in Germany, you would have had the thanks and support of the world. The more you give, the worse it will get. While this is going on your Government privately approaches the American Ambassador and begs him to have the contributions of Wickham Steed and A. J. Cummings cut from a newsreel, for fear that it might annoy Germany.

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Any British newspaper correspondent in Germany who wrote a fraction of the things about German concentration camps and the rest that that German correspondent in Jerusalem wrote about England would be thrown out like a dog, and he would have no support at all from his Government.

This is what I mean when I say that, by 1939, the process has gone so far that British newspaper correspondents are working under censorship while German newspaper correspondents may say what they like. The British Press to-day, with only two or three last exceptions, suppresses or obscures things you should know, either from class-feeling or from pressure.

The days are gone when the *Völkischer Beobachter* was the dullest paper in Europe. Now its foreign news is most instructive. Its correspondents already feel themselves proconsuls in the countries they inhabit and I strongly advise you, particularly if you want to know what is going to happen in the Danubian and Balkan countries, or if you want to know what feeling towards England Hitler wishes to imbue in his people, how much respect he wants them to have for England, whether he wishes them to think that England is a contemptible and decadent country, unworthy to occupy the top place in the world and easy to overthrow, to read it every day.

To come back to the great question of our times — Russia, and what Hitler will do about Russia. Nobody can tell you this, because only he knows. The great game of European chess is approaching the decisive gambit — and I think you will know the result in 1939, a year which is going to give you no respite from suspense and uncertainty.

In the answer to this question lies his fate, I think. If he goes against Russia his doom may be sealed — ultimately. At the end he might lose all he has gained. If he goes against Russia he will make possible the one combination still strong enough to beat him — England, France, Russia and America. He will give you time to pull yourself together, to recover your wits, at last to get on with rearmament, to find leaders who have feelings and understanding.

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Will he? The answer will be found here, where I am writing, in Danubian Europe, and that is why it is so enthrallingly interesting.

His obvious move now, his master move that would give him game and make him world champion, would be to join hands with Russia. There is nothing in the Russian people to prevent it, no deep-rooted German-Russian hatred, no irreconcilable territorial quarrel. Together, the world would be theirs. National Socialism and Bolshevism are not worlds apart, but close together.

There is one great obstacle. Stalin had or has — I am not sure how matters stand at the moment — a Jewish wife. The Jews are powerful in Russia, numerous in the Bolshevist administration. I can perfectly well imagine an alliance between National Socialist Germany and Bolshevist Russia, and people who say this is inconceivable are vapouring. I cannot imagine an alliance between National-Socialist Germany and the present regime in Soviet Russia. If you see signs of a change of regime in Russia, of the exclusion of the Jewish element, you may book that passage for the Bahamas, for all is lost.

If that does not happen, there will still be plenty of trouble coming, but I should think in the very long run Hitler would lose. In the meantime he would overrun large areas of Europe, and for ten or twenty years would rule the Continent, but at the end, probably, he would succumb to a European coalition.

That is the vital question, which everybody understands so well in Europe and hardly anybody in England. The French and the Czechoslovaks saw it nearly four years ago, when Germany began to tear up treaties and proclaimed her intention to rearm. If jungle law is again to rule in Europe, they thought, if tooth-and-claw are again to decide, we will get in with the strongest pack. First inviting Germany, who refused, to come into an all-in non-aggression-and-joint-action-against-an-aggressor pact, they made their pacts with Russia.

Now you have compelled Czechoslovakia to withdraw from that combination, to go with Germany. France? Is France still the ally of Soviet Russia? You may search me, but you won't find the answer.

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That leaves Russia in the air, a German-Russian alliance, the greatest menace to European peace that you could devise in a century of hard thought, a possibility. Immediately after the fall of Czechoslovakia the rude references to Soviet Russia began to disappear from Nazi speeches. Polite references to 'the Russian people' — not that Jewy regime, but 'the people' — began to appear.

Now the great game is on. Can Hitler find a way, as he found a way with Czechoslovakia, to compel the submission of Poland and detach Poland from Russia, or can he bring about changes in Russia which will enable him to detach Russia from her, partition Poland, and turn his face to — the West?

These are the questions to which you will soon see the answers. Already Germany is well on her way to complete mastery of the south-east, the Balkans. She has to find some way of cutting that eastern deadlock. Then she is ready.

The Eastern problem — unless Hitler commits the unimaginable folly of attacking Russia — is only one, for Germany, of covering her rear. The things she wants are in the west — the gateway to the oceans of the world, to overseas possessions, to world power.

For your part, I expect to see you give back the former German colonies, and without fighting. During the debate on Czechoslovakia I read that a Conservative member of Parliament stated that he would oppose this until his last breath. I expect nevertheless to see those colonies given back and to find him still breathing.

Hitler told Chamberlain that this question of the colonies 'remained', 'was awkward', but was 'not a question to be settled by war'. I think he is absolutely right. He will very probably get them without war; he is strong enough. A few years ago, and in return for real pledges, reclaimable at a moment's notice, not for 'assurances', I would have voted for giving them back. I was sorry, then, that we had ever taken them.

The spectacle of England handing over Czechoslovakia to Germany and then protesting about 'defenceless natives' being handed to Germany does not appeal to me. Do not think that the

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German demand for colonies can be fobbed off with a small piece of malarian Central African jungle called Bungaloo, or something like that. It means Tanganyika, and nothing less — the most cherished of all German colonies. Do not think, either, that it can be stilled by giving Germany somebody else's colonies — those of Belgium, Holland or Portugal. She would take them, of course — and use them as bases for the recovery of her own colonies.

There is no hope, and you can believe this, of a bargain about the colonies: 'We give you the colonies, and in return you give us that watertight arrangement about keeping the peace that we long for.'

If you hope for this you are deluding yourself or being deluded. The same old carrot is being dangled before your nose. You can never get your teeth into it.

Hitler will not 'negotiate' about the colonies. He has, times beyond number, before and after Munich, said that there is nothing to negotiate about. I am using the word 'negotiate' in the sense in which you understand it. Of course, Hitler is prepared to 'negotiate' in the Munich sense — that you go to him, he tells you what he wants and means to have, under the threat of a world war, and you give it to him. If that is what you understand by 'negotiation' you can have it. You cannot have anything more.

Hitler has publicly stated that he does not understand what British politicians mean when they speak of an 'understanding' about the colonies. He wants the colonies. The only basis on which he will negotiate is that they shall be given to him, without any counter-service. They rightfully belong to Germany. 'If we do not demand our rights by negotiation we demand them and obtain them in other ways.'

Lord Hailey, addressing the English Speaking Union in December 1938 about 'the German claim for colonies', said: 'There are two conditions for any return of the German colonies. First, the certainty that by returning them we can avoid a war on which our resources at the time will not permit us to enter. Secondly, the assurance that we can by this means, and this means

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alone, secure an agreement of which we can believe, on solid and substantial grounds, that it will make a radical change in securing peaceful relations in Europe.'

Still that mirage!

You can return the German colonies, unconditionally. How on Saturn can you, by returning them, make certain that you can avoid a war on which your resources will not permit you to enter? If Hitler knows that you are not equal to making war, why should he give you the certainty that you will be spared it? He would only do that if he knew that you were strong. As to 'assurances', 'solid and substantial grounds', 'radical changes in securing peaceful relations in Europe', it is almost past belief that these phrases should still be current coin in political discussion.

In my view, you will return those colonies unconditionally, without any certainty that this will save you a war, without any 'assurance' that it will give peaceful relations in Europe.

I imagine that when this question of the colonies becomes acute it will develop approximately in this manner. The propagandist campaign will be released, the first rumblings of the distant thunder will disturb your tranquillity, it will swell to its tempestuous climax. Suddenly, Germany will not be able to exist a moment longer without colonies, no German will be able to sleep at night for thinking of the intolerable injustice that was done to Germany when they were taken from her.

In England a great outburst of public resentment will follow, and men will say, 'We've had enough of this, let's stop this guy, we'll fight'. At the peak of the crisis, when you are all keyed up to fight and nevertheless dreading war, a still, small voice, probably in a newspaper, will venture a gentle suggestion: 'After all, is it worth the lives of millions of men? Why not give the colonies back to Germany, whose Führer, who means what he says, has solemnly assured us that after this Germany will have no further claims of any kind, anywhere, anytime, anyhow, anyway, if we can in return have some binding pledge — say the return of Germany to the League of Nations, a pact of mutual admiration, and the limitation of armadillos under international control?'

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The proposal would be officially disavowed, your statesmen would gravely but fearlessly avow that they were almost beginning to commence to fear whether there might not be a spirit abroad in Germany which was not conducive etc. etc. etc., and England, though at the table of international and amicable discussion she might be prepared to consider the transfer of mandates over certain territories to Germany, would never submit to the threat of force etc. etc. etc., and we don't want to fight but by jingo if we do etc. etc. etc., and we should be prepared to pay even a third visit to Helsingfors if we thought it would do any good etc. etc. etc.

Then one day the bells of Helsingfors would peal out the glad news of peace with honour and you would wake up to find that you had transferred your Colonies to Germany, rather more colonies than you had ever expected and under rather worse conditions, but in return you had a brand new pact of Mutual Admiration, and Germany would consider, under certain conditions and at an unspecified later date, a return to the League of Nations, and universal limitation of armadillos was to be introduced — (News item from Berlin, From our own Correspondent, it is reported from Essen that 1,000,000 armadillos escaped last night and have not yet been traced) — and the natives were to have the right of option, and you would frolic and rollick in Whitehall, or perhaps you wouldn't next time, I'm not sure.

The trouble is that you — no, not you, your politicians — have allowed Germany to get too strong for you, and your only hope of curing that mortal ill now, if they have at last learned, is that Germany will get into a tangle with Russia and her Eastern policy in general which will give you time to close the gap a little.

That reminds me of something I have been meaning to say, and continually forgotten, since the beginning of this book.

That phrase about 'war is inevitable'. Your politicians, who have brought you to this pass, are always getting up in the House of Commons and saying, 'I strongly deprecate the view, so often expressed to-day by the professional pessimists, that war is

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inevitable'. This phrase is a sure winner, and invariably brings down the House. For cool cheek, it is unsurpassable.

Who ever said that war is inevitable? All men who knew something about foreign affairs said that war would be inevitable if we failed to rearm when Germany rearmed, that this policy which has been pursued for six years, against all the warnings of men who knew, would make war inevitable. Perhaps we were wrong; after all, there is always capitulation, but at the time we didn't think of that one.

War is never inevitable, unless you make it so by allowing those who want what you have to become overwhelmingly stronger than yourself. I would never admit to myself that it was inevitable — even now. There is always time — until it breaks out. Is the time being used, even now, after six years, after all that has happened?

You must try and understand the men with whom you have to deal, how inflated they are with success, how ruthless, how strong, how resolved to take what you have.

Read this:

It does not often happen that the earth is divided up anew; that is a historical rarity. When this fact becomes perceptible, that the hour is ripe for the goddess of history to come down to earth and sweep mankind with the hem of her garment, the responsible men must have the courage to grasp the hem of her garment and not to let go of it again. I have the impression that we are living in such an historical hour.

Goebbels speaking, on November 20th, 1938. 'Divide up the earth anew' you notice.

Listen to this:

Slowly but surely the old world is sinking. No agitation, no calumny, no terror . . . can arrest the course of Germany. What will come one day out of the collapse of the old social order in the other countries, what will arise on the ruins of this old, crumbling world? We do not know.

Ribbentrop, speaking on November 17th, 1938.

What they say is very nearly true. The people of England are instinctively awake, they see the evils in their own land that need

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changing, they see the foreign dangers that threaten them. But they are in the iron grip of a small class which will not mend the one and seems to foster the other, from motives which can only be either criminal inertia or class antagonism.

Consider the state of England after seven years of Ramsay (On-and-up) MacDonald, Stanley (Trust-me) Baldwin, Neville (Eat-my-hat) Chamberlain, potentially to be followed by a further period of Samuel (Hoare-Laval) Hoare.

Before those seven years you had a rising Socialist Party in England, a party, built up in years of struggle from small beginnings, which might have come to power and made England safe in foreign affairs while mending the social evils at home. When it was within grasping distance of power, there was the usual swift and slick manoeuvre. 'A national emergency' you were told, which demanded that all good men, without regard for party, should come to the aid of their country. The good men, without regard for their party, went to the aid of their country.

That is to say, the Socialist leaders went over to the Tories and formed a 'National Government'. You may have forgotten it, but that 'National Government' rules you to-day, so that you can assess the results. They were the façade, these Socialist leaders, for a new decade of rule by class antagonism. Class antagonism, you thought, how can anybody talk of class antagonism when the foremost Socialist leaders are in the Government?

These men were the tools of the ruling class. One of them went to the House of Lords and died. Another was long Prime Minister, without power, a figure-head, and resigned eventually after his speeches in the House had long become incoherent and incomprehensible, so that his colleague, who had gone to the House of Lords, spoke of his 'constitutional inability to make any clear and understandable statement on any question' and advised the Cabinet 'to look into the case of the Prime Minister not only in his own interest but in that of the country, for it is a positive danger to the country that its affairs should be in the hands of a man who every time he speaks exposes his ignorance or incapacity.'

I met that Prime Minister myself, once, at Stresa, and talked to

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him alone. I was amazed and depressed beyond description. His speeches are still available to anybody who cares to read them and form his own picture of the man.

The third of these foremost Socialist leaders left the House in circumstances which are in most people's memory.

That tragedy of 1931 wrecked the great Socialist Party, which might have reinvigorated England, made England a land belonging to all its people, not only to a few, which might have made it invincible within its frontiers, humane and happy at home.

There is no hope in that party now. The health has gone out of it. It has been out-manceuvred at every turn, it flounders about this way and that, always out of its depth in foreign policy, impotent to get anything done in England about slums, unemployment, under-nutrition, bad housing, and ill-health.

There are many men on the other side of the House who keenly feel these things, who see the dangers and the evils, but apparently the iron clutch of the Party Machine, which relentlessly rends any man who votes against The Party on any major class issue, intimidates them.

Those events of 1931 represent a major tragedy in British history, and if England returns to the Dark Ages they will mark the beginning of the process.

Now see what happens to a man who tries to enlighten you. For eight years L. MacNeill Weir was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the man who, tragically, was at the head of the Socialist Party in that historic hour, Ramsay MacDonald. In nearly every country this tragedy was repeated — the great Socialist Parties that forced their way through oppression and victimization to within reach of power in the second half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, threw up leaders unworthy of themselves.

Mr. MacNeill Weir tried for three years to publish a book giving the history of that momentous crisis. Here are his words:

I had thought that if one had a case to put before the British public it would be possible to put that case. I had thought that the freedom of the Press and of publication had been

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won. I was mistaken. I found that the publication of such a book was a difficult and even dangerous adventure. The character of the book became known to several people interested, and they recognized that it was an exposure of the 'National Government' and that its publication must be prevented. Persuasion was first tried. Certain friends of mine were approached with the object of persuading me not to publish the book. Later, persuasion developed into coercion. Although there is nothing in the book that comes even remotely within the scope of the Official Secrets Act, my ignorance of the Act was presumed and I was warned that I would be prosecuted under this statute. They could not prevent the author writing such a book but they could set about to prevent its being printed and published. A publisher or a printer could be intimidated by threats of legal action. This bane of publishers and editors, the law of libel, was invoked. Even subsidiary characters in the story were approached, shown the chapters and pages where references to them occurred, and urged to threaten the publishers with legal proceedings if the allusions were not deleted. Several interesting communications resulted. One came from a famous member of Parliament not even mentioned by name and not otherwise readily identifiable, who was persuaded to write a letter threatening proceedings unless a certain paragraph were deleted. A London editor, inquiring why there was so long delay in publication of the book, was told that the publication had been abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

Now do you see how the machine works? There is no censorship in England. Oh no. There is an Official Secrets Act, which you thought was meant for spies. There is a law of libel, the most ferocious in the world, which you thought was for the safeguarding of honest citizens against dishonest slurs on their character. If you criticize the Government, with affairs in their present mess, you are 'fouling your own nest'. An unwritten law says that you must not ask questions about a Permanent Official. Another unwritten law protects the dead.

<sup>1</sup> *The Tragedy of Ramsay MacDonald* by L. McNeill Weir (Martin Secker and Warburg).

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These are the reasons why you are where you are.

Let me give you four instances of the way the machine works, under your free-speaking democracy:

(1) A London magistrate, addressing a Fascist accused and two witnesses who seem to have been more or less Red, said: 'I should like to see you get a dose of your own medicine and all of you put into concentration camps for five years and made to study history.'

The charge was a trivial one ('being found in an enclosed yard for unlawful purposes', which meant that the accused man had smeared Fascist slogans on walls). The magistrate may not have meant what he said but, to anyone who has seen a concentration camp and men who have been in one, this was a disgraceful statement. It seems to me a matter of great public interest. A question was asked in Parliament. The answer returned was the usual stereotyped one that 'No public interest would be served by discussing, and so on and so on . . .'

I once lunched with a Junior Minister who, when asked what he would drink, said primly, 'Please, either water or a very small whisky. This afternoon we have questions, and I need to be alert.'

I should have thought alertness was the last quality needed for the kind of answer they give in the House of Commons. 'I am unable to add anything to the statement made by my right honourable friend on the Umpteenth of Bumbleberry.' 'I must have notice of that question.' 'The answer is in the negative.' 'I have no knowledge of the incident to which the honourable member refers and shall be glad to have any information in his possession.' 'It is well known that foreign help is being used by both sides in Spain.'

(2) Mr. Mander, I think, once asked a question about an interview alleged to have been given to twelve or fourteen Canadian and American journalists by a British Prime Minister which gave an entirely different picture of British foreign policy from that officially proclaimed and officially presented to the dear old British public. The answer, if I remember rightly, was that he was 'a mischief maker'. Yet this seems to me a matter of the most vital interest to every Englishman.

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(3) During the height of the crisis about Czechoslovakia a British Minister, Lord Winterton, that is to say, he is Chancellor of the Duchy, and if you have any earthly meaning what duties are described by that title I hope you will write and tell me, made an ironic statement about Soviet Russia, suggesting that she either did not offer or would not have given help to Czechoslovakia if that country had been attacked. Soviet Russia's treaty obligation, which she had categorically stated that she would fulfil, was to go to the aid of Czechoslovakia if France did so.

Now, it seems to me to be a matter of the most vital interest for every Englishman, in such a crisis, to know what other Great Powers would do. The Soviet Ambassador in London, M. Maisky, immediately called on Lord Halifax to protest that Lord Winterton's statement was in flat contradiction to the public and official declaration made, a few days before it, by the Soviet delegate to the League of Nations Assembly at Geneva. Lord Halifax told M. Maisky that 'it was inevitable at a time of crisis that many rumours should be in circulation and there was little profit in recriminations'.

What on Mars does this mean? Soviet Russia made an official statement of her intentions, Lord Winterton told the British public something quite different. When the Soviet Ambassador protested he was told, 'Why recriminate?'

What was the truth? That the British Government wanted its public to believe that Russia was backing out too?

The dear old British public, however, still did not know the facts. About six weeks afterwards a question was asked in the House, to elicit them. The questioner was rebuked by Mr. Chamberlain for 'trying to make trouble between two friendly Governments'. Not Lord Winterton, but the questioner. Pressed, Lord Winterton himself got up and said the Russian Ambassador had been good enough to say that the incident was closed 'and he could not think it would be in the public interest to add or subtract anything from the statement made by the Prime Minister'.

So now you know what the public interest is — to know nothing,

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to be told something that is not true, and then not to be told that it was wrong because that is not in the public interest.

(4) A question was asked in the House about Sir Horace Wilson. He, as you know, accompanied Mr. Chamberlain on his three journeys to Herr Hitler, he made a fourth journey in between as Mr. Chamberlain's emissary, he was Chief Economic Adviser to the Cabinet, he read the ultimatum to the Czechoslovak 'observers', 'stating formally that he had nothing to add', and, as it seems to me, it would have been a matter of the most enormous public interest to know what Sir Horace Wilson's qualifications were in foreign affairs, for assisting at the carve-up of Czechoslovakia, and for a leading part in the process of altering the map of Europe.

The answer given was that it was the practice of the House not to mention the name of any permanent official and we deprecate any departure from the usual practice.

We deprecate. We deplore. The usual practice. Mischief-making. Not in the public interest. Fouling your own nest.

Do you see how you are fobbed off and bamboozled and have dust thrown in your eyes and are duped? What in the name of Demosthenes is the advantage of a democracy manipulated like this one?

*Insanity Fair* brought me a letter from an American reader. This is an extract from it:

I have come to the reluctant conclusion that England is in fact no friend of democracy and while in fact pretending to be such a friend is in fact a friend of the Fascist countries, Germany, Italy and Japan, and would destroy the power and prestige of democracies rather than have these Fascist countries defeated and discredited. It seems to me that, notwithstanding that the English people are democratic at heart, they are actually ruled by a small group of Tories who would sacrifice democracy and the whole British Empire rather than see real democracy and liberalism supreme. They seem to fear that if the radical and democratic countries become more powerful, it will encourage radicalism in their own country with the

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inevitable conclusion that their own power and wealth will be diminished. The evidence that England is dominated by such a group who would sacrifice the interest and principles, even the life of the British Empire, for their own selfish interests seems to me to be borne out by a plethora of evidence that is conclusive and overwhelming. It is manifest that Hitler could have been curbed long ago when he had no armaments and army and it was just as obvious then, when he first got in power, that if he were not curbed he would do exactly what he has been doing; increase his military strength with a view to doing exactly the things that he has been doing. Even a child with the most rudimentary understanding of the motives, purposes and objectives of the present German Government knew that Hitler would do exactly what he has been doing if given the chance. The impression seems to prevail that England, no matter what the provocation, does not wish to take any serious action against the Fascist countries under any circumstances. While the rulers of England make a great pretence at being shocked at the violations of international law and decency on the part of the Fascist countries, this pretence is done only for home consumption and perhaps for the benefit of other democratic countries of the world, but is entirely insincere. No one takes seriously the thesis of the ruling class of England that they have done what they have done to prevent being involved in war; in fact the evidence is quite persuasive that they have been doing the only thing that will make a war inevitable . . . I would certainly welcome any information from England that would have a tendency to convince me that the rulers of England are more democratic and less Fascist than I think they are, and that they would not destroy the British Empire and democracy the world over merely to save or protect the holdings of a few of the wealthier Tories in England.

I have studied and studied that letter from that American and cannot find any hole to pick in it. I cannot find any evidence that would have 'a tendency to convince' him that his opinion is wrong. I think it is right. On the eve of 1939, after all that has happened, with all that is about to happen, the evidence in favour

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of his opinion is overwhelming. Nevertheless, it is most unfortunate that what would otherwise be a clear-cut issue for Englishmen is clouded and obscured by a third issue — that of the Jews. Englishmen would fight again to make their country and the world free and happy. They do not want to fight to make Berlin safe for the Jews.

Consider the facts. The Duchess of Atholl, Conservative member for fifteen years for Kinross and West Perth, thinks that our foreign policy is leading us to disaster. She disagrees with the Government. Not even a Duchess may do that with impunity. Immediately the Party Machine gets to work, she is disowned by her local Conservative Association. Not even a Duchess — not even a King — may challenge the little coterie that rules us.

Duff Cooper resigns. Immediately a letter appears in *The Times* castigating him as a renegade. He was elected to support the National Government. How dare he oppose it?

Do you remember on what appeal this Government was elected? To succour a small country against a mighty aggressor? As soon as the election was won the small country — which could have made good terms, as Benesh could have made good terms, if it had been told in advance — was left completely alone, face to face with one of the strongest military powers in the world. Then the same thing happens to another small country. A Minister resigns. He is the traitor, not the Government elected on that very issue.

It is impossible to believe that the people who have done these things did not know what they were doing. The long, long trail from China and Abyssinia to Spain and Austria and Czechoslovakia was plain to see in advance, and they were told about it long in advance. Immediately after the Peace of Munich the way was cleared for the ruthless subjugation of another small State — Spain.

For nearly three years Republican Spain has held out. Do you think a government could have done that, against 80,000 Moors and 80,000 Italians and masses of German and Italian aeroplanes and artillery and tanks, if it hadn't the people behind

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it? Your Lord Chancellor speaks contemptuously of the 'so-called Government of Spain'. Does this not show you the trend of the wind, the real state of your Government's mind? Immediately after the Peace of Munich the latest Gentleman's Agreement with Italy, *cherchez le gentilhomme*, was brought into force, by the docile Conservative majority of the House of Commons. Nothing has changed, to justify its honouring. Italy has not withdrawn her troops. They are bombing Spanish women and children every day. We need to be 'realist' about it.

Ah, if I could be a realist. Life is real, life is earnest and things are not what they seem. To me, a dead child in a Madrid street, killed by an Italian or German bomb, seems to be a dead child in a Madrid Street, killed by an Italian or German bomb, killed by men from a country which, in the name of sanity, if there is such a thing, cannot have any right to kill children in Spain, to be in Spain at all. What has Spain ever done to them?

But to a realist that child is a Red, deservedly done to death by Franco's gallant Christian soldiers, the Moors, the Germans, the Italians. The rich men in all countries, the Church, the Royalists, all applaud.

Nothing has changed in Spain to justify the ratification of that agreement. Mr. Chamberlain said one thing had changed, the thing that had prevented him from ratifying it sooner — 'the Spanish war is no longer a danger to European peace'.

How is it less or more a danger to European peace now than then? Because you are going to increase your support of Franco, help to starve out the Republicans? But look out for yourselves. Not long ago, on the east coast of England, you saw the flashes of gunfire — off the east coast of England! They came from a Franco ship that was shelling a Republican ship. Look out! A little while, if you go on like this, and you will be seeing those flashes again, but the shells will be falling on English soil.

Lord Halifax has told you that 'Signor Mussolini has always made it plain from the time of the last conversations with the British Government that, for reasons known to us all, whether we

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approve of them or not, he is not prepared to see General Franco defeated'.

There you have it. There you have the definition of 'non-intervention'. Franco must win. You have sanctioned the victory in advance. The Non-Intervention Committee, that grisly and ghastly tribunal, may still be sitting for all I know. It should have a coat of arms — the three monkeys, see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing. But even that wouldn't be honest, because it does see, does hear, does know. It knew all along what it was for — to let Franco win. Only one monkey: say nothing.

What will become of Spain, if Franco wins, and what will it mean to you? Listen to Mr. Chamberlain, and read his words again after Franco has won:

Some honourable members with that eternal tendency to suspicion which I am afraid only breeds corresponding suspicion on the other side (loud cheers) persist in the view that Germany and Italy have a design of somehow permanently establishing themselves in Spain and that Spain itself would presently be setting up a Fascist state. I believe both these views to be entirely unfounded. When I was at Munich I spoke on the subject of the future of Spain with both Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini and both of them assured me most definitely that they had no territorial ambitions in Spain . . . I am perfectly clear in my own mind that the Spanish question is no longer a menace to the peace of Europe.

If you are prepared to hold Republican Spain down, as you held Czechoslovakia down, of course it is not a menace to the peace of Europe, it never was, and Columbus alone knows what such words mean.

But consider the rest of that passage. If Mr. Chamberlain believes that you are in more than mortal danger, you are lost. Under such leadership you must be lost.

What is this war in Spain about, why are the Germans and Italians helping, why is Franco using 80,000 Moors, 80,000 Italians and 13,000 Germans to kill his own countrymen, if not to

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set up a Fascist state? I will eat my steel helmet and gasmask if Franco, providing that he wins; does not set up a Fascist state — by which I mean a state with concentration camps for Spanish workpeople (Marxists), beatings-up, one monopolistic political party, storm troopers, no freedom of the spoken or written word, no trades unions, and in foreign policy an alliance with Italy and Germany if those two countries are then still allies. Franco himself has declared that he will take vengeance on two million people — TWO MILLION PEOPLE — when he wins. There will be a reign of terror far worse than Germany ever knew.

It is almost beyond belief that such things should be told the British Public by Ministers of the Crown.

‘No territorial ambitions in Spain.’ What are you meant to believe by this? That as soon as Franco wins all the Germans and Italians will retire to Germany and Italy? It is not true. That they won’t be there in fifty years I can believe, but what English people presumably want to know is whether they will be there after Franco’s victory and what this might mean to England.

The facts are these. Big German guns, in large numbers, have been mounted on both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar since 1936. If war breaks out they can at the worst keep your navy out of the Mediterranean altogether; at the best cause you the loss of many costly ships and valuable lives. These guns will not be dismounted if Franco wins. They will stay there, German-manned, a deadly menace to you. A most important piece in the war game has already passed out of your hands.

In the Mediterranean itself Italy has established air bases in the Balearic Islands. These islands intercept the communications of France with her African colonies, Algeria and Tunis, on which she counts for large numbers of coloured troops in case of war. These troops will not be able to pass. Italy will not withdraw from these bases if Franco wins. Franco cannot refuse the countries that have helped him to power the use of these bases.

In Spain, especially in the north, nearly all the aerodromes are in German hands. German artillery and German fortifications are there. France is just across the border. Is France still your

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ally? The Germans will not give up these aerodromes, these guns and forts if Franco wins.

Such is the picture of your position in the world. And still that docile majority in Parliament troops into the lobby and says Aye to everything that is done, still those completely misleading speeches come from the Government benches, still the great British public flounders about in a quicksand of misinformation. Since I wrote last, a year ago, the position has changed so much to your disadvantage that I hardly see now how it can be saved.

Now look at the picture at home. This is from *The Times*, under the heading 'Growing up in Shoreditch — squalor and ill-health — five in a bed'.

The facts are taken from a report of the Shoreditch Housing Association. They reveal, says *The Times*, 'conditions of almost unbelievable squalor, overcrowding, insanitation, lack of open spaces, ill-health, and poverty in the East End of London', and this total picture, says *The Times*, is 'disquieting'.

Ah, that disquiet. It keeps you awake at nights.

The report is based on the examination of 400 children. It says that about 75 per cent of the houses in which they lived are bug-infested, and many of them are very damp, causing among other things a high incidence of rheumatism, which affects children as well as adults. One child in six suffers from one or more of the following diseases: rheumatism, anaemia, weak heart, bronchitis, otorrhoea, and chorea. During school age these diseases are noted and treated; after leaving school these Londoners, citizens of the richest city in the world, 'receive the minimum of medical attention'. 'Very few children get a holiday away from home, except perhaps for a week-end trip . . . The whole picture is one of drab monotony.' The report gave ten sample cases. In one, five children slept in one bed in a back-room, in which cooking, washing and eating also took place. In another case an entire family slept in one small room, except the eldest girl, who used two chairs in the living room. Mrs. X, one of the samples, was 'very bitter'. None of her children had what she considered a decent job though three were working. The eldest boy had a

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tumour on the brain and was rapidly going blind. One girl, was bedridden, crippled and hopelessly misshapen, with rheumatoid arthritis in arms, legs and body. The youngest girl had a tubercular hip.

The lack of privacy, the constant noise and the inability to rest peacefully drive many growing boys and girls to spend their leisure hours away from home, often walking the streets at a loose end and an easy prey to undesirable habits. The children have nowhere indoors to play, for the congestion of people is always accompanied by a terrifying congestion of furniture . . . They are also forced into constant contact with their elders and generally acquire at an early age habits such as swearing and gambling. Two-thirds of the school-children normally play in the streets. The borough of Shoreditch, one square mile in area, contains only nine acres of open spaces and nearly half this area is churchyards. The insanitary state of many of the homes is demonstrated by the frequency with which lavatories are shared by several families and even more by the appalling lack of washing facilities. The only tap is out-of-doors in one-third of the cases, in over a quarter every drop of water has to be carried upstairs from the tap to the rooms in which the family lives, and in two-thirds there is neither a bath nor any suitable substitute for it.

I mix these two things up — the plight of England in the world and the plight of people in England — because they seem to me to hang together. I can only explain the behaviour of England in world affairs, and the pass she has come to, by contemplating Shoreditch. Then I think, either the people who rule us are so inferior and callous that they cannot even abolish Shoreditch (the equivalent of which you could not find in a certain small country you know nothing about, Czechoslovakia) and their inefficiency explains the mess we have got to in the outer world; or they know about Shoreditch and are determined to keep Shoreditch like that and are pursuing a foreign policy deliberately calculated to bring about Fascism — and immunity from criticism — in England.

One of these two explanations is right. Both are frightful.

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What are you going to do about it? I don't see any hope from Fascism if Fascism in England is going to be run by the very same people who have allowed Shoreditch, Hoxton, Stepney, Bethnal Green, Bermondsey, Jarrow and hundreds of other like places. That simply means the same people — and no criticism. Not that criticism seems to have achieved much yet. But I don't see why they should be spared it.

That is the awful thing — if you have a war, and Hitler wins, that means Fascism in England, probably in the hands of the same people. If you have a war and Hitler loses, the same people remain in power in England. If you don't have a war the same people remain in power in England.

What *can* you do about it? Neither the Conservative nor the Labour Party offers any hope. There is only one hope — a new party. Not a Churchill-Eden-Duff Cooper party, because that simply means the same class of man once again. They happen to have been right about foreign policy, but they are no nearer to the people than the others. You want a new party with some men like that in it but also with the younger men from the Socialist Party in it, with young men from all classes in it, and at least half from the working classes. But not doctrinaire trades unionists — I have seen these bureaucrats at work in half a dozen countries and they never get anywhere. You want young men who will at last mend these intolerable evils in England, clear away these intolerable slums, put an end, at once, to these intolerable housing and health conditions, see that every English child, somehow, has a right to good health and enough food and light and air, get that intolerable unemployment figure down somehow.

If you could take care of the people, foreign policy would take care of itself. If you cannot make England safe for the people, then England deserves what it gets.

I was criticized, when I wrote *Insanity Fair*, for seeing only despair and never saying what ought to be done about it. I don't think the criticism was right. At the end of the war I thought we should have inflicted a complete military defeat on Germany, but I was only a young officer and couldn't give orders

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to Lloyd George or Foch. Later, when I went to Germany, I was confirmed in my view; I couldn't see the use of sacrificing a million Britishers if you were afraid to consolidate your victory. When Germany began rearming, I felt, desperately, that we ought to rearm so fast that she couldn't outarm us and rob us of the fruits of victory. I wrote this, as far as I was allowed, in my dispatches, as did most of my colleagues, and in private reports and letters, and when I was in England hammered away at every important man I could find, but nobody would take any notice.

Mr. Chamberlain, after Munich, said there had been a spiritual revival in England. I cannot see one. A spiritual revival must have some source, and from what source does this one spring? From the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia? From the thought that Franco is going to win in Spain? From the thought that Shoreditch is still Shoreditch?

If you want a spiritual revival you will have to stop throwing small countries to the wolves and do something about Shoreditch.

So there it is. You will see, soon, further German expansion in Europe. You will, in my opinion, return your colonies to her. Not your bounds will be set wider, but Germany's. At the end lies — war or capitulation. But if you go to war, it should be, not for the Jews, but to make the masses free and healthy in England and in other countries. You cannot be expected to dethrone one system of racial antagonism in order to enthrone another.

Now, the first tenet of your foreign policy must still be rearm, rearm, rearm, but I fear that it is already too late, that you have been too far outarmed. Also, the events of recent years have given good ground for suspicion that those arms might be used, not to defend democracy but to defeat it. We should have been better off if Germany had won the war in 1914. The world to-day would have been groaning under the German yoke — but that is coming anyway, and we should have saved millions of lives.

So long as Shoreditch is like that it's nonsense to talk about mother of the free, anyway.

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ON a December day I watched the third President of Czecho-Slovakia — spelt with a hyphen now — drive from the Parliament building, after his election, across the Moldau and up the hill to the Hradschin, the castle of the Kings of Bohemia on the hilltop. A few minutes later the Presidential standard ran up the mast, bare for two months, and fluttered again at the top. After the crowds had cleared away, the Hradschin, loveliest of palaces, looked exactly the same as it had looked a month, a year, ten years before, save that the Czech Legionaries, doing sentry in the courtyard, now wore Czech uniform: they could not be induced any longer to wear the French uniforms they had earned in the war and worn ever since, and the Italian and Serbo-Russian uniforms had been simultaneously withdrawn.

A picturesque little *cortège* trotted up that most picturesque of hills before the car of the new President, Dr. Emil Hacha. In front cantered Czech dragoons, their red breeches vividly slashing the white horses on which they were mounted, the soldiers of one of the finest armies in Europe, though a small one, beaten without a battle, subdued by an array of overwhelming force.

But the little *cortège* went up the hill between silent crowds. Dr. Hacha, as they knew, as he knew, was the President of their vassal-*dom*, of a new era of tutelage. All he could do was to do his best. He would never be President of a nation of freemen. His not to reason why; his but to sign on the dotted line. Only a patriot would have accepted so thankless a task.

Up this hill Masaryk and Benesh had driven, amid thunderous cheers. Down this hill I had followed Masaryk's coffin, between silent and weeping crowds, that felt in foreboding, if they did not foresee, what was to befall them. Now Dr. Hacha drove up the hill. 'History', as the morons say, 'was being made.'

This was the last spadeful of earth on the grave of the free

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Czechoslovak Republic. In the present lay submission to a foreign race that for a thousand years had repeatedly overrun the Czechs. In the future, near or distant, but probably remote, lay only the hope that the Czechs would one day experience a glorious national resurrection. After centuries of battle and struggle, after the loss of untold millions of lives, a nation of freemen had at last been planted here in the Bohemian lands, in the heart of Europe, where the tyranny of kings, the tyranny of dynasties, the tyranny of nobles had long held sway. That one achievement made the whole World War worth while. Now this too was gone, and the dragoons cantered up the hill. Another twenty years, another half century, another century, more centuries of alien domination and class antagonism lay before Europe. For this, a million Britishers had died. This, England had helped to bring about.

I was glad to spend a great part of the winter in Czechoslovakia, because I wanted to watch the decline and death of this isolated democracy. Death, in the sense of the loss of freedom, which is death. A tiny spark of life remains, a faint pulse-beat survives, in the unquenchable longing of men to be free again, if not themselves, then their sons, or their sons' sons.

These Czechs were free in a sense that Englishmen are not free. They owned their land, or could own it if they wished. If they had leisure, the whole land was open to them. They were not the serfs of a plutocracy, the minions of millionaires. You nowhere saw a keep-out notice; if you wished to climb a mountain you might do so. There was no ruling class, entitled to rule by position and not by merit; the politicians sprang from the people. There was no officer caste; the officers, too, were of the people, travelled in tramcars with them, sat at the next table to them in modest restaurants. This was a people's state.

Take a brief glance at the history of the lands which the Czechs inhabit, which we may call Bohemia and Moravia. Just about a thousand years before Dr. Emil Hacha drove up the hill, in the year 925, Prince Wenceslas, finding the superiority of the Germans in numbers and arms too great to resist, made an agreement with them. He said, 'I will become part of your realm, as an inde-

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pendent Czech Prince, and I will pay you yearly 120 oxen and 300 talents of silver'. This tribute was, indeed, paid for centuries. For Prince Wenceslas, as for the Czechs in 1938, there were two possibilities: war or peace. He made peace. He was killed a few years afterwards by Czech patriots — by his own brother, for that matter.

Prince Wenceslas surrendered the liberties of the free Czech nation as the lesser of two evils, and with the thought in his mind, 'One day the nation may become free again; if I do not make peace now, it may perish altogether'.

Dr. Emil Hacha, before he drove up the hill, was presented by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Prague, on the steps of Parliament, with the skull of that Wenceslas, which he kissed. A symbolic gesture, meaning, 'I herewith absorb the wisdom and inherit the tradition of Wenceslas'.

But after that submission an interminable quarrel began between Germans and Czechs about the measure of that 'Czech independence' which had been guaranteed. Guarantees, in 938 as in 1938, were things as difficult to hold fast as a soaped eel. The Czech seditionists (do you know this word, it is often used by Anglo-Indian colonels about Indians?) always had their own ideas about the way to govern their country and about foreign policy. The successors of Wenceslas made alliances with Poland and Hungary — 'the barrier against the German drive to the east'.

However, the Czechs asserted themselves, and by 1212 the Princes of Bohemia were Kings of Bohemia and by 1348 the King of Bohemia was Holy Roman Emperor and ruled over the Germans from Prague. In Prague, indeed, was the Central Chancery of the German Empire, and from it the development of the modern German language began. Here Martin Luther found his inspiration for the translation into German of the Bible. Perhaps this is what the Germans mean when they say that Prague is a German city. Charles IV was Kaiser of the Holy Roman Empire, and his son Wenceslas IV — your Good King Wenceslas — was also Kaiser.

Then for a time the Czech kings were completely independent of

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Germany until Czech independence perished at the Battle of the White Mountain, near Prague, in 1618, which was a victory for the German nation and the Catholic Church over the Czech nation and Protestantism.

Incidentally, James I of England was at that time the ally of the Czechs and had promised help in such an emergency. There were even two Runcimans sitting in the Castle at Prague and telling the King of Bohemia that their King was his father and mother and would help him, and that was how the Czechs lost their independence, and you see that everything then was very much as it is now save that umbrellas had not been invented.

Bohemia remained a Kingdom, but without the braking power of the Czech nobles, who in feudal times represented a democratic element against the autocratic authority of the king. The Czech nobles were killed in the battle or driven out, and their lands and privileges given to Catholic German nobles. Nevertheless, those historic frontiers of the Kingdom of Bohemia remained as they always had been. In 1938, when they were a thousand years old, 'an eminent English jurist' discovered that even after a victorious war it would be impossible to put them together again. The Emperor in Vienna was for centuries 'King of Bohemia', of the lands contained within those immemorial frontiers, which the Czechs had first inhabited and fought so tenaciously to retain.

Within those historic frontiers, the oldest in Europe, three waves of Germanization followed each other in the course of the thousand years:

(1) During the glorious period of Bohemian history, German handicraftsmen were brought in and settled by the invitation of the Czechs in the border districts. This was a friendly proceeding.

(2) After the Battle of the White Mountain, the lands of the Czech nobles were given to the Catholic German nobles; this was aggressive and violent Germanization.

(3) In the mechanical and industrial age of the nineteenth century, industries were deliberately settled in the northern part of Bohemia. There was a reason for this. After 1866, when Prussia defeated Austria, a prospect of eternal peace stretched ahead

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between the Emperor in Vienna and the King (subsequently Emperor) in Berlin. It was the age of the Berlin-Vienna axis, in the eloquent language of our time. This being so, Northern Bohemia, midway between Berlin and Vienna, was the safest place for Austria-Hungary to put its industries. The Polish, Italian and Hungarian provinces were much too exposed to the danger of war. Moreover, Northern Bohemia was especially well suited for industry; it had the timber and coal and water-power that industry needs. From these two ruling ideas, strategic and geological suitability, the industries of Austria-Hungary were planted in Northern Bohemia. A very large proportion of this industry was Jewish, and financed with Jewish money. The Jews, who prefer the big battalions, were all heart and soul for the Emperor in Berlin or the Emperor in Vienna; what chance had a Czech Jew of becoming a General or Hofrat? They compelled their Czech workmen to send their children to German schools.

Thus Bohemia lost millions of its Czechs. In the areas handed to Hitler, as a result of Munich, were towns where the population was preponderantly for Germany, but the names on the stones in the churchyard were all Czech. Henlein himself had a Czech mother. Czech peasants were transformed into German workmen and miners. The peak of this period of Germanization was reached with the famous Austro-Hungarian census of 1910 — used by the Four Just Men of Munich as the chart for their amputations. At that time the Governor and the whole administration of Czech Bohemia were German. High native-born Czech officials had to speak German with other officials senior or junior to them. The Czechs retained nevertheless their longing for freedom, but even their Parliament was dissolved in 1908, and remained dissolved until the World War, because the Czechs, from democratic conviction and fellow-feeling for the Slavs in the South, opposed the annexation by Austria-Hungary of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even then they saw the coming war. The dissolution of their Parliament was part of the preparation for it. Another part of it was the memorable census of 1910, when men were asked, not 'What is your mother tongue?' but 'What language

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do you customarily use?', and as they were compelled anyway to speak German they answered 'German' and were inscribed as Germans, and this census was used, twenty-eight years later, and after a world war, at Munich.

On this basis, of knowledge and justice, the ancient Czech frontiers were destroyed.

These were the three waves of Germanization which successively broke upon this small but unconquerable nation in the heart of Europe. In 1938 Dr. Emil Hacha, kissing the skull of Saint Wenceslas, resumed perforce the 'policy of fulfilment' practised by that Bohemian Prince. The 'policy of fulfilment', as you may not remember, was a phrase used much by Germany after the war, until the shackles had been broken.

I came to Czecho-Slovakia to watch the fourth wave of Germanization, for history shows that, when the Germans have the Czechs in their hands, they generally seek to Germanize them. And Bohemia is now the bird in the German hand; close the fingers and it is crushed. Hitler has said, 'We do not want any Czechs'. He took over territory containing nearly a million. He is building a wall round the rest.

Now come with me and watch Germanization in practice.

At Munich four things were supposed to have been saved for the Czechs, four safeguards which justified the Franco-British ultimatum to them and the desertion of them, which entitled Mr. Chamberlain to claim that he had brought back 'Peace with honour'. They were (1) International guarantee of the new frontiers; (2) plebiscite; (3) right of option; (4) orderly and progressive occupation by stages between October 1st and October 10th.

There has been no international guarantee. As I write, the Czechs are pressing for it, not because they have any illusions about its effectiveness, they know that they are held in the hollow of Hitler's hand, but because they think the Great Powers which ordered their dismemberment should at least make good their promises. Whether an international guarantee will be given or not, I do not know. It would be the greatest hypocrisy. Only Germany can guarantee the frontiers now.

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There was no plebiscite. Any plebiscite would have been a farce.

There is no right of option for Germans to become Czechoslovaks. All Germans in the occupied areas become automatically Germans. For those who do not want that, there is only a right of flight, which every man has without a Treaty of Munich.

Now we come to the occupation, which continued by a creeping process — the Czechs had been ordered by the Ambassadors in Berlin always to fall back — until the middle of November, when much more territory had been taken than the British public was ever led to expect, including large areas almost entirely Czech. I saw some of the last slices being carved off, and this is where you may watch Germanization at work with me.

In the extreme west of Czecho-Slovakia is a small frontier district which arouses in the heart of every Czech the same feelings that the thought of Waterloo or Trafalgar cause to an Englishman. Or even deeper feelings. Those battles gave us another century of freedom from invasion. This little frontier district is the cradle of the Czech nation, it symbolizes for the Czechs a thousand years of struggle against foreign invaders, the survival of the Czech people and the Czech language against all odds. There is not a German in this area. About half of it now lies in Germany. This is the story.

About the year 1100 Prince Bratislav settled peasants in the neighbourhood of the town of Domadzlidze, the centre of the district which I am describing. Either they had inhabited that part of the country from the beginning of history as we reckon it, or they were imported Eastern Slavs from the Polish or Russian frontiers; their dialect has points of resemblance with Ukrainian.

These few men had an especial task and especial privileges which have made them renowned in Czech history. They were the Guardians of the Frontier, of that historic frontier, where magnificent forests run over romantic Bohemian hills. They were exempted from all taxes, given the right to bear arms, they owed labour to no lord. They were freemen in the noblest sense of the word. Their emblem, the dog's head, you may see everywhere

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to-day in that district; they themselves were known as the Dogs' Heads.

In return for these rare privileges, their duty was, like that of the Cossacks, to watch and guard the south-western frontier of Bohemia, where the Golden Road led in that brought the salt from Salzburg. They had to guard half of the Böhmerwald, the Bohemian Forest, and the passes leading into it.

Fourteen villages round the town of Domadzlidze, the Dogs' Heads built, and all through the centuries they lived in them and kept their breed pure. The district is called Chodsko, from a word meaning to walk or patrol, and the people are the Choden. Their duty was to patrol the frontiers and keep a look-out for the raiding Germans, and when they saw them to light a beacon, which was repeated by other watchers on the next hilltop and the next, so that the alarm spread like quickfire, and the peasants from all the villages hastened to Domadzlidze, where the King's Captain organized the defence until the King's soldiers should come to their aid.

The rights and privileges of the Choden were respected by every dynasty and every king until the Battle of the White Mountain. Then the villages were given by the German Emperor to a German noble, who built a castle and imposed his laws on these freemen. There was a peasant rising against him, and the Choden sent deputations to Prague and Vienna with the parchment charters of their ancient rights — 300 years later, when I was in Domadzlidze, the Mayor had just made an equally vain journey in the same cause to Berlin, to try and see Hitler — and many of the baron's soldiers were killed, but in the end numbers prevailed, the Choden leader Kosina was captured and hanged at Pilsen.

From that time, the Choden lost their privileges. But the centuries of proud tradition were deep in their bones, the instinct of the frontiersmen strong in their blood, and when everything was Germanized this, somehow, remained a purely Czech country, pure in breed, pure in spirit, pure in patriotism.

Here, in this little corner of Bohemia, you could see, in the flesh, what it means to have the blood of freemen in you. These

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fourteen villages produced the finest stock in all Bohemia, the best poets, the best doctors, the best teachers and professors and priests. This was the cradle of the moral strength of Czechoslovakia. It is the one corner of Bohemia where the lovely old costumes are still in daily wear. The physique of the people is splendid, here you see young men and girls of rare beauty.

This district was more than entirely Czech. It was Bohemia. To take this district was to spill vitriol on an open wound. Of the fourteen villages, freed again in 1918, the Germans in 1938 took seven. Why? That is another interesting story.

The German nobleman who was given these Choden villages after the Battle of the White Mountain bequeathed them to his son and in course of time they passed, apparently by inheritance, to an Italian nobleman, and then, I suppose again by inheritance, to a German noble family which owned them when the World War ended. Then the Czechoslovak state was founded, the Choden found themselves again under Czech rule and freemen — and a part of the German nobleman's land was taken from him, against compensation, to provide land for those peasants who had been there for a thousand years.

The German nobleman still had vast possessions, but they did not satisfy him. Now you know why those seven villages were taken by Germany in 1938. Now you have perhaps some idea how Germanization works, how Germans may be made. You only need another census in 1940, another Munich in 1950, and more 'predominantly German areas' will be ready for handing over. I have described this incident for the particular benefit of those fair's-fair people who during the Czechoslovak crisis threw up their hands in perplexity and just couldn't understand why 'the German areas' were not given to Germany and all would be well.

This particular incident seems to me to be most important, because it indicates the real motives that are behind some actions in international politics — not 'self-determination', not patriotism, but the very old motive of personal greed and grab, of class antagonism. In this case German National Socialism, with its proclaimed respect for race, its professed belief in the system of the

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land-owning peasant and the inalienable family farm, was the friend of the great German landowner and the enemy of the small Czech peasant, the friend of the bondmaster and the enemy of the freeman.

An episode, but a highly significant one. Consider everything that has happened and is happening in Europe, not as a clash between country and country but as a clash between class and class, not as an inter-state war but as a class war, and much becomes clear that previously seemed inexplicable.

I first became convinced, in 1936, that Czechoslovakia would be thrown to the wolves because of the hostility to that state which I observed among certain British representatives. At that time I thought they were biased or ill-informed. Looking back I feel convinced that their unfriendly feeling to that state was a thing rooted in class antagonism, and that the feeling was shared, from the same motives, by influential people in England who at the decisive moment pulled a deal of weight. That taking of land from the big landowners was the thing they couldn't forget. The liberation of the masses meant nothing to them. There were foreign millionaires among those great landowners who lost some of their acres to furnish peasants with farms.

In my view, then, the hostile spirit that I observed among certain British representatives was but the reflection of a hostile spirit that prevailed among some people in high places at home. I mentioned this spirit in a chapter of *Insanity Fair*, written long before the fall of Czechoslovakia and said that it showed which way the wind was blowing. The people I had in mind allowed themselves an outspoken unfriendliness about the state in which they dwelled, which would have brought them immediate recall in any neighbouring state, and their attitude was implicitly friendly to the neighbouring, anti-democratic state which was besieging Czechoslovakia.

Thus I was not surprised when, immediately after the annexation of Austria, a junior British Minister made a speech which was tantamount to an invitation to Hitler to go ahead with Czechoslovakia. Afterwards he made a bashful withdrawal, saying he

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couldn't think why he had done it, he was just a simple sort of chap and didn't understand these things at all, really, actually. To me, that didn't seem to help much. First, I had the feeling that in his big, clumsy, bless-the-lad way he had blurted out the truth; and secondly I gathered that not to know anything about anything was a great qualification for Ministerial office in England anyway, so why apologize?

Assume this motive of class antagonism to be present among those who rule us, assume them to be possessed by the idea that the Fascist dictatorships are the enemies of the working-class masses and the friends of the wealthy classes, and must therefore not be destroyed, and you can understand everything that has happened in Europe. No other explanation fits.

Take that one, and the right-about-turn, immediately the 1935 election was won, in the Abyssinian affair becomes explicable. Mussolini must be allowed to win. Apply that explication to the Spanish affair, and it becomes comprehensible. Franco, the protégé of Mussolini and Hitler, must be allowed to win. Apply it again to Czechoslovakia, and it fits again. Hitler must be allowed to win. The Fascist dictators have never tampered with private property; if they were discomfited you might get peasant and working-class movements springing up here and there.

Apply another test. Among the ruling classes in England there is, as far as I can discern, no compassion for Abyssinians, none for Spanish women and children machine-gunned as they wait in a bread queue, none for destitute and hopeless Czech and German refugees. Express a word of compassion for such people and a dozen bishops, peers, baronets and colonels will write to the newspapers to prove that they are 'Reds'. After a letter, to which I have already alluded, appeared in *The Times* pleading that 50,000 dead Chinese ought to be worth more compassion than one persecuted Jew a colonel replied that 'the Chinese after all can capitulate'. My daily newspaper, as I write, tells me that Franco has announced his intention to bomb 200 defenceless towns, has been machine-gunning those women in the bread queues; in another corner I read of an air raid which has killed

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dozens of Spanish children, and the newspaper comments, 'Our moral faculties are becoming numbed by the long-drawn-out horrors of war . . . We are no longer shocked in our souls when we read of inoffensive civilians being slaughtered'.

Then why, if England has become indifferent to 'the slaughter of inoffensive civilians', why is there a nation-wide outburst of indignation and compassion when Hitler persecutes a Jew? He has not been slaughtering Jews. He has been depriving them of some of their property. When he does that the archbishops, the bishops, the ministers, the baronets and the colonels burst into a furious chorus of protest. Ministers who can see in Abyssinia, in Spain, in Czechoslovakia, in the German concentration camps, nothing to impede friendship with Germany, begin to say, 'It is hopeless, we shall have to give up trying and prepare for war.'

Why? These people do not protest about the concentration camps, which are primarily for Germans, not Jews, or about the things that go on there: it took about five years to kill Ossietzky. They do not protest about atrocities in Abyssinia. They do not protest about the bombing, that has been going on now for nearly three years, of women and children in Spain, in China. They are as silent as the grave about tens of thousands of homeless Czech and German refugees, who have lost every farthing they ever had.

But touch a Jew, take some of his possessions, put him into no-man's-land, and the whole British Press is filled with the clamour of angry protest.

And this is compassion, generous indignation? In my opinion, it is the voice of money talking. The Jews belong to the wealthy classes in England, an attack on them is an attack on The Rights of Property. Persecute a Jew, and your bishops will call for prayers, write letters to the newspapers, get up on the platform at protest meetings. Try to get these people to call for prayers the next time a hundred women and children are killed by bombs in some Spanish town, urge them to write to the Press about it, invite them to raise their voices on public platforms -- and see what answer you get.

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These were some of the thoughts that filled my mind when I watched those seven Choden villages being taken over by the Germans, thought of the great landowner again becoming overlord of these Czech peasants.

In Domadzlidze I saw those peasants, the descendants of the Dogs' Heads, streaming in from the fourteen villages, just before the annexation of seven of them, to protest against the thing that they knew was impending. A perfect picture of an unspoiled medieval Bohemian town, is Domadzlidze. The market place is a page out of a fairy-tale. On both sides stretch long rows of houses with arcaded fronts and walls a yard thick, some of them many hundreds of years old.

They gathered round the old fountain in the middle of the square, some two thousand of them, and one of their number harangued them. The mayor was sent for, and came in a car. This was he who had been to Berlin, as his predecessor three hundred years earlier to Prague and Vienna, to try and save the Chodenland. He too was hoisted on to the fountain, spoke to the crowd. 'We are doing everything we can', he said, 'we here, and the Government in Prague. But if Germany wants this land, we can do nothing. We can only hope.'

The crowd listened silently, and then sang the national anthem. A few days later the Germans took the seven villages. The German nobleman was able to re-enter into possession of those freed farms. Once more the Choden in them were bondmen.

I shall never forget that scene in Domadzlidze — the looks and physique of the people, the beauty of their costumes, the loveliness of their town, all the products of a thousand years of noble tradition, in freedom and in bondage.

In England no archbishop or peer, no retired diplomat or minister wrote to the newspapers about them. This didn't count as persecution. This was all perfectly normal and natural; honour had been done to The Rights of Property, The Right of Self-Determination. Set a debate about this subject in the House of Lords, and one noble lord after another would warmly argue that no free Englishman's conscience need be in the least disturbed by

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what happened in the Choden district, this is a small country far away that we know nothing about and we should mind our own business.

But let the Germans put twenty Jews into no-man's-land anywhere near the Choden district — indeed, this actually happened — and the compassion of the wealthier classes immediately boils over, your newspaper men are sent rushing to the spot to describe the scene, the back pages of your newspapers are filled with photographs of them, the letter columns are full of the clamour of generous indignation, telephone and telegraph cables hum as the appeals for help flash to and fro, emissaries constantly appear with provisions and fuel, disused factories are hurriedly and expensively converted into habitable quarters.

The same motive shows through every time. It raises a very big question for Englishmen, the biggest possible question. They fought one war to save their own skins and, at the same time, to liberate enslaved masses in other countries, and they succeeded. Now, everything that they helped to gain has been lost, their rulers do not oppose but connive in the process, but nevertheless they are told every day that they must rearm and rearm again, that another war may come.

What is that next war to be for, if it comes? Is a false ideal again to be dangled, carrotwise, before the nose of the men who go out to fight? Will the rulers of England have in their hearts a motive directly opposite to the one in whose name the idealism and energy of the nation is kindled — as in the case of Italy and sanctions, as in the case of Spain and non-intervention, as in the case of Czecho-Slovakia and self-determination?

Will that next war, if it comes, be fought to put the Choden back again, twenty years after, under alien rule, to have them deprived of their farms? Will it be fought to enable the poverty-stricken masses of Spain once more to be bloodily reduced to serfdom by Moors, Germans and Italians? Will it be fought to make England safe for non-access-to-mountains, for Shoreditch and Bermondsey, for under-nutrition and unemployment and jerrybuilding, for white shirts and tiaras, for imported smut on

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the stage and the bookstalls, for the sacred rights of property reaching down even to the bowels of the earth, for the Jews in England and to put the Jews back where they were in Berlin?

If that is to be the issue I should hope that Englishmen would not fight. And that seems to be the issue, as things are going now. Try to pin your rulers down to another issue, a clear issue, and they will wriggle away, they will fog you with indignant protestations and resounding but meaningless phrases.

While I was in Czecho-Slovakia in that winter the Poles and Hungarians each received their crumbs from the rich table of Munich. The Poles took theirs. The Hungarians were given their piece at the order of Germany and Italy. The award of large areas of Slovakia and Carpathian-Russia to Hungary was a particularly bitter pill for the Czechs, because in a straight fight with Hungary they would have won in about five minutes, and now they had to hand over areas in which they had spent millions on development works to a country renowned for its dogged backwardness in social works. By doing so, they probably hastened the end of the reactionary regime in Hungary, but that was small comfort to them.

For the last time their bitterness flared up. 'They've taken nearly everything', said a Czech friend to me, 'the richest towns and the richest lands and the most valuable factories. Let them take everything. Let them take our trousers. What does it matter now?'

I went down to Slovakia about that time, and there, in a prison dormitory, I met my Hungarian acquaintance, the patriot-journalist, whom I had last seen waiting on the aerodrome for Imrédy and Kánya to return from seeing Hitler.

A strange encounter. In that prison were over 300 Hungarians, in raincoats and plus-fours and rough clothes, with a fortnight's growth of beard on their chins; you never saw such a crowd of hobbledehoys. They looked like tramps. But these were Hungarian officers and soldiers, put into plain clothes and sent over the frontier, with arms in their hands and their pockets stuffed full of bribe-money, to try and bring about such chaos in the

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coveted area that Poland and Hungary could nip in and share it out between them.

Never was there such a fiasco. My acquaintance X was the commander of that band. Led across the frontier in the night by a local guide, he penetrated without difficulty deep into Slovak territory. It did not occur to him that that was just what the Czechoslovak troops meant him to do; his knowledge of tactics seemed to be elementary. The next morning the Czechoslovaks sent troops and armoured cars, as they did every morning, along the frontier, to close it. X was in the net. As the grey and chilly dawn broke, X and his men, bivouacked in a wood on a hilltop, found they were hungry and cold, and X paid a peasant, whom he took to be a good Hungarian, 500 crowns for grapes and wine. The peasant gratefully pocketed the money and went off to tell the Czechoslovak troops what he had seen. A little later X, peering out of the trees, saw tanks circling round and round the hill. A little later he and his 300 men, minus a few who had been caught by tank bullets when they tried to make a dash for freedom, but without firing a shot themselves, were in that prison.

Seldom have I seen such aggrieved men, such artless dupes. They would never have harmed a kitten, said the gigantic X to me with eloquent gestures and a charming Hungarian smile. They had just been told that revolution had already broken out across the border and that they were to go in and restore order; the surrender of the area had already been agreed. Then why did they go in the dead of night, in civilian clothes, with rifles and bombs, with their pockets full of money?

X charmingly confessed his simplicity. None of these things had struck him at the time as being sinister. He kill a man? 'I am a journalist like you,' said X, 'I am a colleague and a gentleman and an officer. I would never harm anybody. I was an officer in the Great War, too, but do you think I would ever have killed a man? No. Now, do try your best to get us out of here. It is too bad that we are kept cooped up here and treated as common felons.'

The Hungarians have the most elegant manners and can turn

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on charm like a tap. They could disarm Satan himself with that friendly smile. But I should be reluctant to fall into their hands if I were a Slovak or a Croat. Indeed, some very unpleasant things happened in the first days of their occupation of the ceded territory.

At last it was all over, and Dr. Hacha drove up the hill and Dr. Franz Chvalkovsky, who had been Czechoslovak Minister at the three corners of the anti-Comintern triangle, Berlin, Rome and Tokyo, and had long warned against implicit reliance on France and England, became Foreign Minister, and the new Prime Minister, Rudolf Beran, an old enemy of Benesh, in his first national broadcast stated that, after Munich, Germany was obviously dominant in Europe, that it would be foolish and disastrous to ignore this, and that Czecho-Slovakia, for the sake of her present and future generations, would plump for 'open collaboration with our mightiest neighbour'. Beran's newspaper, *Venkov*, stoutly supported Germany's claim for colonies — those colonies which free Czechoslovakia would have fought to help England retain.

Czecho-Slovakia returned, perforce, and after a thousand years, to the policy of Prince Wenceslas.

Here let me give you a glimpse of the enormously superior position, in tactics and strategy, that Hitler held during the Great Power manoeuvres that led to the subjugation of Czechoslovakia.

When the crisis was approaching its climax Benesh was in frequent telephonic communication with his Ministers in London and Paris, Masaryk and Osusky. It is now known for certain that every word he said was recorded on gramophone records in Germany. The international cable was tapped on German territory. Later Hitler, thanking German journalists at Munich for their collaboration in the great crisis, lifted a corner of the veil. He knew, he told them, everything that passed between Benesh and London, Benesh and Paris. When he heard Benesh one day express misgivings about the French attitude, he gave the order for the German Press 'to turn on the drumfire'. When he heard Benesh, on another day, express still greater misgivings about the attitude of the French, he ordered 'the drumfire to be increased'.

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This gives you an instructive glimpse behind the scenes of the vociferous, deafening, eardrum-bursting German Press and radio campaign that played so great a part in the Czechoslovak crisis.

Do not make any mistake about the feeling in the hearts of the Czechs. They long to be free, because they know, from a thousand years of experience, that German domination means servitude, that Germany will encroach and encroach upon their home rule, until it is a tattered shroud, until Prague is avowedly 'a German city', until a German governor sits in Prague.

But they will faithfully pursue 'the policy of fulfilment', they will go with Germany in peace and war, because no other course is open to them; they are harnessed to the German Juggernaut and you have forged their chains. Many of them will loyally pursue this policy. Many of them fought loyally for Austria-Hungary, in spite of everything, in the last war. Few of them wanted the disruption of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They only wanted home rule, equality of status with the Hungarians, the coronation of the Emperor in Prague as King of Bohemia, a Czech administration in the Czech lands. They did not want to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire; they did not break it up. It broke up from within, in those stormy autumn days of 1918, and they took the only possible course — they formed their own state.

Now you come to a very interesting thing — the pledge for their vassaldom. This is the great German road across Czecho-Slovakia.

It is a strange thing that the meaning of this road seemed to escape the understanding of the outer world. It is the belt of the strait-jacket into which the Czechs have been forced. It is of the utmost strategic, military and political importance.

In those November days, before the Germans would agree to a fixed frontier with rump Czecho-Slovakia — the 'creeping' process was then going on daily — the Czechs were made to sign on the dotted line the gift deed of a belt of territory, eighty yards wide and forty miles long, running across Czecho-Slovakia at the narrowest point from Breslau, by way of Brünn, to Vienna. On this is to be built a German road, linked up with the great inner-German network of Autobahnen.

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The track of the road is sovereign German territory, a strip of Germany laid across Czecho-Slovakia just where the hyphen comes. It means the prolongation of the German frontiers across Czecho-Slovakia, the enclosure of the Czechs within the Reich. If a German commits any crime or offence on that road he is not subject to the penalties of Czecho-Slovak law; he may be judged only by German courts.

I think this is an entirely new device in map-making, in the Great Power game. Do you see what it means? It means that the Czech lands are a concentration camp. Formerly you had concentration camps in Germany for political opponents of the regime. Now you have concentration camps on the colossal scale, built on to the frontiers of the Reich, for the internment of foreign neighbours whose good behaviour is not quite sure.

Strategically it is genius. Germany has not interfered with the national independence of the Czechs; they may rule themselves, in their own lands. But they are contained in a German compound; their territory can be occupied within an hour or two if need arise.

By this extraordinarily astute device of the innocent-looking 'motor-road', the whole problem of ensuring the subjugation of the Czechs was solved at a stroke of the pen. When, a year ago, I was writing about the subjugation of Czecho-Slovakia, I wondered how this complete security could be achieved without the actual occupation of the whole country. I could not find the answer. I knew that Czecho-Slovakia would be reduced to servitude; I also knew that nothing less than complete security about this would satisfy the Germans. Only military occupation of the country seemed to offer that entire security. That was why I wrote, 'I think — I hope I am wrong about this — that the Germans will sit in Prague'.

Now the Germans have found that method, that I could not guess, of interning the Czechs without a military occupation. They do sit in Prague in the spirit, of course, and will appear there more and more in the flesh. But, given that road, they do not need to occupy the country. The bird is in the hand.

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The bold and gigantic strategic conceptions of the Germans command admiration.

Read what Arthur Seyss-Inquart, electioneering in the Sudeten lands, says about the Czechs, Seyss-Inquart who, as I remember, before he appeared on the stage told me that in his opinion the frontiers of his native Bohemia should remain as they had always been:

National Socialism, which derives all its strength from the nation, does not wish to oppress foreign nations. But the Czechs must bear in mind that it is impossible for them to be enclosed in the Germanic territories and nevertheless to act against the laws of these territories.

I have discussed at length this new idea of the strategic road through foreign territory, because it is capable of indefinite extension. It is a marvellous means of bringing small neighbour peoples within your frontiers and under your domination by sleight of hand.

Soon a great road will run eastward from the north to south Breslau-Vienna road through narrow Carpathian-Ukraine to Rumania. If Germany demands from Hungary the right to build a road from there to Budapest, Hungary cannot refuse. In Yugoslavia, as I wrote earlier in this book, Walther Funk, German Minister of Economics, has been laying emphasis on the need for good roads, on the German talent for building them. You may get a road from Budapest to Belgrade, from Belgrade to Zagreb, from Zagreb to the Adriatic. The areas contained by those roads would be under German domination. The land within them would be 'enclosed in the Germanic territories'. In all these areas there are large and well-organized German minorities.

What does it mean to live under German domination? I spent winter months in Czecho-Slovakia to find out. We are too much the prisoners of phrases, and too seldom take the trouble to think out just what they mean. They sound magnificent or terrible, but we take them too much for granted.

I remember once, at the Montreux Conference, somebody gravely said to me that if Soviet Russia's claims were granted this

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would destroy the 'balance of power in the Mediterranean'. For days I went about feeling that something precious to me was in imminent and mortal danger. I had a gloomy feeling that something I loved was to be done to death. Suddenly, sitting out on the calm lake and contemplating the Dent du Midi, I realized that I hadn't the faintest idea what the balance of power in the Mediterranean was and that for all I knew it might not matter a hoot to me if it were knocked head over heels.

Since that day I never allow myself either to be lulled to sleep or to be stirred to anger by a phrase — 'non-intervention', 'the sacred right of self-determination', 'loyalty to the League and the principle of collective action against aggression', or what not. I tear them asunder and try to get at the truth, which is often revolting and nearly always quite different.

What does it mean to live under German domination? I studied it in Czecho-Slovakia, where the domination is only beginning.

First of all, it means practically no difference at all for a nation that would or could, for a man who would or could, put all thoughts of nationhood out of its or his mind and accept the idea of a peaceful and possibly prosperous existence on one immutable condition — submission to German wishes, the abandonment of all opposition to German aims. Peace and happiness in the concentration camp. The Pax Germanica.

Take an individual case, a Czech who is, let us say, a butcher, a baker or candlestick-maker. If he has no feelings about national freedom, he may have just as good a life under German as under Czech rule. If he is an egoist, if he only wants to live well and earn as much as he can and find a pretty wife and go for week-end excursions into the countryside, why should he not? There always were Czech butchers, bakers and candlestick-makers; there always will be. To such a man it does not matter very much whether a German Governor sits in the Palace, whether somewhere, fifty miles away, a German road runs across his country.

Is not this, perhaps, the better philosophy, for a nation as well as for an individual man?

I watched Prague preparing for Christmas. Gaily decorated and

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illuminated Christmas trees in the main squares, with collection boxes beneath them for the poor. The shops full of Christmastide wares. Surging crowds of parcel-laden people. The children watching with big eyes the Christ Child, in electric lights, coming to Prague. A picturesque and happy Christmastide scene, a far prettier one than London offers at that season. Peace on earth and goodwill towards Hitler. Good King Wenceslas might look out on a Prague under German domination.

As I watched, I thought, but for Munich this might all have been smashed up. Surely this is better.

But, somehow, men will not accept this, possibly better, philosophy. The Czechs did not want this Christmas at this price. Even now, when the portraits of Masaryk and Benesh were being removed from public offices and schoolrooms, when the stamps with Benesh's head were being withdrawn, most of them only made the reproach against him that he did not fight, against no matter what odds.

You cannot root out that feeling in the hearts of men who want to be free, they will not, strange as this is, look upon life solely as a material undertaking, from which each man must extract the maximum of monetary profit and physical well-being for himself. They yearn for things of the spirit, and you cannot stop them. Imprison their spirits, and their Christmastide may look the same to you, but it is not the same to them.

Nevertheless, a great possibility of the near future is that large areas of Europe and large numbers of its people will have to submit to this German peace, this Pax Germanica, for long to come. That being so, I could not help but rejoice for the Czechs, even though they did not rejoice for themselves, as I watched them prepare for Christmas. Tens of thousands of refugees were huddled in cattle-trucks and camps, others were in the uniform of labour conscripts, making roads, prices were rising, their currency was slumping, their country was at the mercy of Germany. But they have withstood the shock marvellously well. They had passed from agonized despair to indifference, with bitterness hidden deep within themselves.

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I now felt that, in the long run, Munich might be good for them. When the storm broke, they would be outside its fury; others would bear the full brunt of it. They had not wanted it like that; the others had compelled them. But because of that they would survive the storm and one day, in the far future, they, who deserved to be freemen, because they used their freedom well, might be free again. They had found such troubled peace as lies at the centre of the storm.

What was even a century to people who had fought for more than a thousand years? They had ardently desired, as their officers said, to be 'in the front rank of those condemned to death'. They, with a spirit now almost impossible to find in Europe, had rushed to impale themselves, in a common cause, on the sword of a Goliath adversary. With a cynicism cold enough to freeze boiling oil, they had been left alone at the last moment, or not even left alone, but held down by their friends.

In the storms that are coming the great Czechoslovak crisis will soon seem like a tea-cup tempest. A remote speck in the receding distance. But it was the decisive test. Your real troubles date from it. Here you had the last chance to stop aggression, to ensure peace in our time. Possibly, I do not know this for certain, you had not even that chance because you were too far behind with your armaments; but after six years of warnings, that is your look-out. Now you have the briefest of breathing-spaces and no more. You were told that all would be well — as you have for six years been told that all would be well — if Germany were given just this one positively final satisfaction. If it were not so, your rulers would eat their hats.

In Czecho-Slovakia you missed the last bus.

In a Czech family gathering I celebrated the festival of Saint Nicholas and his knave Rupprecht, alias Krampus, alias the devil. Czech children are luckier than English children in that they have a foretaste of Christmas on December 6th. Saint Nicholas is the equivalent of our Father Christmas; at Christmastide the chief part is played by the Christ Child.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the things that had happened

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in October and November, the Czechs celebrated this feast with great honour. For days beforehand the children were as good as gold; they washed their hands and necks, kept their nails clean, did their homework, remembered to say their prayers.

I watched them that evening, with eyes like saucers, waiting for Saint Nicholas, with his rosy cheeks and kindly eyes and mitre and long white beard and sack of gifts over his shoulder, to knock at the door. Frontiers meant nothing to them, nor motor-corridors; Nicholas meant a great deal. I was thankful in my heart that they could, in 1938, again greet their Nicholas as if nothing had happened.

Came the knock at the door, its opening, and the appearance of the good Nicholas; behind him, awe-inspiring, red-clad, horned Krampus, with his birch. Then began the questions to the children before the distribution of gifts: had they been good? The meddling Krampus put in his word: 'It's not true, Herr Bishop, that child blotted its copybook only last Tuesday', and then terrible wieldings of the birch, but Nicholas always placated Krampus in the end and the child got its gift.

I loved it, though I thought a great deal about the refugee children in the huts, especially about that two-weeks-old baby. No Nicholas for them.

A great deal of money was subscribed in England for those refugees. I saw little, in Czecho-Slovakia, of the results of that subscription. I often asked, when I visited the refugees, if anyone had been to see them and at one place they said yes, some time before the British Consul had been there, and at another place they said yes, the Lord had been there several weeks earlier and measured them for clothes, but none had arrived yet, and in both cases I found, on closer inquiry, that the visitor had been one of the few representatives of The Lord Mayor's Fund.

I believe blankets and things had been provided, but the condition of those refugees was nearly as miserable as it could be, nevertheless, and by Christmastide the realization of the one hope on which they lived — that they would be enabled to emigrate to a new land and start a new life — seemed very far off. I most

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sincerely hope that by the time this book appears their lot will have been alleviated and that I shall be able to write a postscript in that sense.

As I came away from that Festival of Saint Nicholas and the crowds of excited children I walked along the street of the 28th October. This was the day on which the free Czecho-Slovak Republic was born. On October 28th, 1938, it would have celebrated its twentieth birthday. By October 28th, 1938, the name of the street had lost its meaning.

But I was glad, as I walked along it, to see those Christmas crowds, to see the moon rising into a clear sky above towers and turrets and spires and steeples still intact, to see the children eagerly dragging their elders to the shop windows.

I walked across the Charles Bridge, the loveliest bridge in Europe, as I always do when I have a few minutes to spare in Prague, looked over the side at the Moldau flowing beneath, up the hill at the peerless silhouette of the Hradschin. At the farther end of the bridge, in a little open place, was a Christmas market of peasant china and earthenware. Gaily lit booths in the dark little square. Figures hurrying to and fro, bargaining.

I went down and walked around. Some of the loveliest and cheapest things in Europe, the Czech and Slovak peasants make. The Slovak pottery is exceptionally attractive. I bought, for a few shillings, a great hand-painted platter, a really beautiful thing, the sort of article you only find in countries where the peasants are free and sturdy and are able to practise, even in the age of clockwork and tin, the native handicrafts that have been handed down to them from generation to generation.

It came from the Choden district, from one of those seven villages which now lay behind the German frontier. Again, by chance, I had picked up one of those memory-laden things with which I fill my room when I have one. When I look at them I see all Insanity Fair, with its brassy bellows, its tricksters, its showmen, its strong men, its dazzling lights, its mazed and surging throngs.

## REDS!!!

I HAVE a file, swollen and bursting, of cuttings about 'The Reds' collected from many newspapers in many countries during the past ten years. Hundreds of newspapers — some already defunct, like the *Morning Post*, or the Prussian Diehard *Kreuzzeitung*, or else *gleichgeschaltet*, like the Catholic *Reichspost* of Vienna — supplied these thousands of cuttings, with their millions of words, in which vigilant writers of a dozen nations exposed the plottings of The Reds.

You certainly were warned! No detail of Bolshevist devilry was so small that it escaped the infra-red vigilance of the anti-Red writers. In all that vast collection of yellowing clippings, slowly moving to its next incarnation — dust to dust and wood-pulp to wood-pulp — my choicest piece, which I shall never destroy, is this report from General Franco's lines in Spain, published one day by the *Reichspost*:

During an attack on the right flank of the Franco troops near Villavent, the Red Militia used large wild wolfhounds, trained to attack men, as fighters. These dogs crept noiselessly up to the Nationalist sentries and sprang at their throats, and in many cases succeeded in injuring their victims and putting them *hors de combat*. The attack itself was repulsed, but through the use of these wolfhounds the militiamen were able temporarily to push forward to the Franco front line. The majority of the dogs were killed in the battle; the few survivors noiselessly retired at a gesture from their commanders and trainers, who were apparently Russians.

No other story of the Spanish conflict so vividly portrayed the horrors of a modern civil war as this one of the noiseless Red dogs, trained to do or die in a silence uncanny and uncanine by their apparently Russian instructors.

Hundreds killed in Almeria by shells from a German cruiser, hundreds killed by German bombs in Guernica, hundreds killed in air raids on Alicante or Barcelona, the Catholic Basques con-

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quered by Moors, Italians and Germans: these things were slightly disturbing, but did not deeply offend the world's sense of propriety.

But those companies of wild dogs, recently arrived from Moscow! Could devilry go further?

Another cutting from my collection about The Reds tells of a statement once made at the annual meeting in Glasgow of the Scottish Liberal National Association by a Chief Whip, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Kerr, about a Red Plot to overthrow the Government. Colonel Kerr had inside information about the plot. He was present at a meeting of the conspirators 'at a private house in London, where three men were present who had been working in Communist organizations in the country'. He went there to watch their activities.

I can express nothing but horror at what I was told at that meeting. You would hardly credit the terrible, low-down, wicked efforts that are being made to undermine everything we hold dear. There are people in a very big way in this country who support Communism, though not outwardly. There is a lot of money behind this, and I regret to say that a great bulk of the people working in that direction are of the Jewish race.

'But why,' asked Colonel Kerr, 'is this plot not exposed?'

In my mind an echo answered, why? Why did not Colonel Kerr expose it, since he knew all about it?

It was puzzling. It made me think of an acquaintance of mine, a cynical man called Marmaduke de Bunker, who has lost many friends in the society he frequents by arguing, in a surly manner, that there is no Red Plot, but that Red Plots have become an indispensable part of their emotional diet to many people in England. The same instinct that drives the Lower Classes to the switchback railways at the fun fairs — a titillating fear of breaking their necks — drives the Upper Classes, he says, to their little daily dose of Red Plottery — a titillating fear of losing their property.

Perhaps he is wrong. Perhaps the Zinovieff plot to overthrow the British Empire was concocted by Zinovieff, now mouldering in his grave with a Bolshevik bullet in his brain, if I remember rightly, and was not a trick to win an election. Perhaps those rabid Red wolfhounds led the attack on Franco's patriots. Perhaps Colonel

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Kerr saw the Red Plotters. Perhaps the rabbit-trapper was right who wrote to the newspapers to complain that Red money was behind the agitation against the kind of trap he used in his profession.

But the facts seem to me to speak against Red Plots. The Bolshevik Revolution is now twenty-one years old and in that time, as far as I know, nobody outside Russia has suffered any harm from the hands of Russia. In those twenty-one years Communism has not succeeded in bringing about a major revolt, far less a revolution, in any country, and in the European countries where I have travelled in the last eleven years it has never given serious anxiety to the police. It never had any hope of attaining power by the ballot-box; and police forces in all countries were well able to deal with it if it tried violence. The parent country of Communism, Russia, invaded no foreign country in support of its doctrines.

On the other side of the ledger, the Fascist dictatorships have by force of arms annexed Abyssinia and Austria, reduced Czecho-Slovakia to servitude, and at great cost of life and money are trying to enforce a Franco victory in Spain.

So if you look at this thing from the point of view of British national interests alone, without any ulterior thought in your mind, you have, on the one side, the Red Plot, including the Red wolfhounds in Spain.

On the other side, German-manned and German-mounted guns on both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar, German air forces on the southern frontier of your ally France, Italian air forces in the Balearics, athwart the sea-routes of your ally France.

The balance of this sum seems to me to be a direct menace to the unity of the British Empire and to the security and independence of England. I do not see any direct Russian or Red menace.

Nevertheless, the bulk of feeling among the rulers of England seems to be favourable to Franco and to approve all that he, the Moors, the Germans and the Italians have done, on the ground that they are fighting The Reds. What is the motive, since The Reds do not threaten us? That The Reds have no proper respect for private property? But in that case, let us take the thing to its logical conclusion. Are these same people prepared to bring

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foreign and coloured troops to England to suppress The Reds there? You may not see any Reds. But they do — everywhere.

What is the answer to all this? That if the Red Plot is rubbish, if Germany is the country we fear and against whose menace we are rearming, then we ought to look about for the most valuable kind of armaments — allies — and enlist the help of the European king-piece, Russia.

It is too late for that, now. It would have been a good move until recently, because by it you could have prevented war, and therewith you could have banished the only danger of Communism. You could have given Germany her Fair Deal, but at the same time, by confronting her with superior force, you could have made her keep the peace. In peace Communism cannot come; you could have used Russia to defeat Communism. The lesson of the twenty-one years that have elapsed since the Bolshevik Revolution is that, in peace, Communism cannot spread, that in its parent country it was likely to broaden down to some bourgeois form of life comparable with the development in France after the revolution there. But in any protracted war, which brings misery and suffering to the civilian population, you will get, in large areas of Europe, the very thing you feared: Communism, anarchism or some indescribable mass upheaval. You would probably have in Germany an efficient, well-organized, successful and imperialist Communism that would be far more deadly than Russian Communism.

If the avoidance of war was really the paramount aim, as your rulers always tell you, it could have been achieved by combining with Russia to confront Germany with overwhelming force if she threatened war. This was the only way. Now, it is too late. The development has passed that stage. Now the only question is whether Hitler will attack Russia or make terms with Russia, before attacking the west. England, by supreme maladroitness, has so closely associated herself with the organized campaign of international Jewry against Germany that collaboration with Russia to-day would mean asking Englishmen to march under the Semitic flag and make Berlin safe again for the Jews — after the Chinese, Abyssinians, Spaniards and Czechs have all been sold without a word or a blush.

## R E D S, !!!

That would not be good enough. So do problems grow bigger and more complicated if you have not the courage to grasp the nettle safety in time — or am I mixing this quotation?

Fear of The Reds, of a threat to private property, brought us to this plight, and prevented the people who had power from taking the one course that could have banished any reason to fear them. This fear is so deep in some of our rulers that it blinds them to England's danger, to the desire to know the truth. It produces even noble lords who, in defiance of facts that can be ascertained by any man who cares to look for them, state in the House that 'it has been proved to my satisfaction that Russia began the war in Spain'.

I think I express the feeling of many Englishmen of my generation when I say that I am embittered by the way English people of high position, condone and approve the daily massacre of Spaniards by airmen and artillerymen of alien races, apparently because a starving and tormented revolutionary mob, whose sons and brothers and fathers had died for and with us, seized power in Russia twenty-one years ago, under a leader sent to them from Germany. We never foresaw this and would never have believed it. If we had known we would most conscientiously have objected — as did some of the men who to-day are applauding these things.

But now we know. The people of Almeria, of Guernica, of Alicante were not Bolshevists. The Abyssinians were not Bolshevists. The Cantonese were not Bolshevists. The Czechs were not Bolshevists. But the Red Herring has been drawn across the trail of straight thinking in England, the country that once took up the cudgels for oppressed Armenians and Greeks and persecuted Magyars and crippled cobblers and the underdog everywhere.

Now, because of a few old ladies who see a Red under every bed, we are in a devil of a mess. The German guns covering the Straits are real. The Red wolfhounds are not. We have been told for years that the Red Plot is real, that the Germans guns are not.

What are we to be asked to do now?

Now the moving finger is writing, and you can no longer dictate what it shall write, only watch it.

## CHAPTER 3 I

### CHRISTMAS DAY IN CHUST

PRONOUNCE it Hoost, the H guttural like the ch in Loch. Who would ever have expected to be bothered with the name of this remote Ruthenian village? But Great Power politics lead to the strangest results.

I made my way to Chust by way of Slovakia, the second of the three provinces of Czecho-Slovakia. Under German tutelage Slovakia, since Munich, has become a home-ruled Fascist statelet. It has its Slovak Storm Troopers, the Hlinka Guards, who wear a black uniform akin to that of the Italian Fascists. Only the Germans, in Slovakia, enjoy full political liberty. When the Hlinka Guards parade, a detachment of German Nazi Storm Troopers appears at their side. The pledge for the good conduct of the Czechs is the German road which is being built across their territory. The pledge for the good conduct of the Slovaks is the fact that the Danube bridge alone separates their capital, Bratislava, from Germany. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bratislava — Pressburg, to the Germans — was to Vienna approximately what Windsor is to London. Soon after Munich Herr Hitler appeared at the other end of the bridge and cast a look full of meaning at Bratislava. If the people of Bratislava had any doubt what that look meant, it was probably removed by the enormous notice, plain for them to read, which soon afterwards appeared on the German side:

‘Heil Hitler! We will fetch you home. Heil victory! Pressburg was, is, and will always be German. One realm, freedom and bread. Death to the Jews! Brothers, hold out. We shall come and liberate you! Heil Hitler!

So the Slovaks, with only the bridge between them and the Germans, are likely to be well behaved.

With memories of Vienna, a few miles up the Danube, in my

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mind, I took a last look at Bratislava and then went on to Preshov, in East Slovakia, and there, on Christmas Eve, I set out by the only means of transport — an antiquated bus — over the long mountain road for Chust, the capital of rump Ruthenia, the tiny home-ruled state now called Carpathian Ukraine.

In the luggage-hold of that bus I had, of all unlikely things, a miniature Christmas tree. My mind was full of memories of Christmas 1937 in Vienna, which was the happiest time of the brief period of tranquil happiness which I found, within the four thick walls of my quiet rooms there, in the months before the annexation. Then I had had a Christmas tree decked all in silver and white, a vision lifted straight from a snowbound forest, and that tree was the last thing I saw, through the double doors of my sitting-room, when I went to bed at night and the first thing I saw when I awoke in the morning, and so lovely was it that I could not bring myself to dismantle it on Twelfth Night but kept it for nearly three weeks. I should have been a happy man if I could have looked forward to a succession of such Christmases, but they were not for me, in *Insanity Fair*, and now, on Christmas Eve, 1938, I was bumping and rattling over the Carpathians by the only road that led to Chust with a miniature Christmas tree, two feet high, an artificial but pretty thing, ready-decorated, that I had bought in Prague to remind me of that other tree.

Late at night, after an eight-hour journey, while the bus and my fellow-passengers disappeared into the night, I found myself dumped with my bags and my Christmas tree in the muddy cobbled square of a small village — Chust. In the light of two or three flickering street lamps I could see the faint outlines of houses, and in one corner was a primitive electric sign which, on close inspection, I found to spell the name of the hotel I had been told about.

I have slept in many strange places, but in few so strange as this little hostelry, where accommodation was sold by the bed, and not by the room, so that a deal of bargaining was needed to obtain a very bare room, with a single electric bulb that did not give enough light to read a paper, for myself. I undressed, con-

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templated my muddy shoes, asked the first man I could find if it was safe to put them out for cleaning, and he answered cheerfully, oh yes, of course, and then, tired out, I lay down and went to sleep.

When I awoke, on Christmas Day, heavy snow was falling and I blessed it, because it hid the dreariness of Chust. I contrived to shave and wash with a small jugful of cold water, dressed, and opened the door to look for my shoes. They were not there. I had half expected this. So I went in search of someone in authority and found a sleepy and half-dressed youth who, questioned about my shoes, answered 'Well, after all, if you leave your property about like that, what can you expect?'

So then I tried an old trick. I stood with him in the corridor and stormed at the top of my voice and presently two other menials appeared and then a waiter and a cook and a frowsy chambermaid and they all stood around, understanding nothing that I said, and I stormed louder and louder until they all began scurrying about and looking in other rooms and registering great indignation and sympathy and interrogating other guests, and suddenly my shoes were there, having been found tucked away behind the closet.

Then I went out and looked at Chust, mercifully cloaked in white, and took train for the two show villages of Carpathian Ukraine, Rachoff and Jassina, about three hours away, and you have to travel through Rumania to reach them, so complicated are communications in this remote and truncated statelet. In Rachoff I had my Christmas dinner and by chance it was turkey, and very good, and here I found the only moderately prosperous people in all this miserably poor region, peasants with attractive costumes living among lovely wooded hills on the banks of the Tisza, a good place for winter sports if it were not so remote, and in the evening I took train back to Chust and lit the candles on my Christmas tree, and sat, and thought of Vienna.

Plague take this demented Europe and these demented times, I thought, as I compared this Christmas with that and thought that, if the map continued to be remade at the present rate, I should spend my next Christmas in Baghdad or somewhere,

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and then I thought I would see if a bottle of wine were to be had in this benighted village, which lived in a permanent black-out, and I rang and a new chambermaid answered, and by great good fortune she was a remarkably good-looking one, a Hungarian girl who spoke German, and she made saucer-eyes at my Christmas tree and helped me to eat the things that were on it, and to my astonishment there were about eighty of them, though they looked like twenty, and then she fetched a bottle of wine and bashfully drank a sip of it and gradually conversation began to flow and she told me about herself and I told her about myself and so this intolerable Christmas evening, an evening on which the most hardened of nomads cannot shut out thoughts and memories, passed, and I bade her good-night and went to sleep, saying thank Mahomet that this day is over, anyhow.

The next day I began to study Carpathian-Russia, alias Carpathian-Ukraine. When Czechoslovakia was dismembered, as I wrote earlier, the best thing for this easternmost province, if the welfare of its inhabitants alone were considered, would have been to divide it between Hungary and Poland, since otherwise the few marooned mountaineers who were left could hope for little better than starvation. But this did not happen. Italy did succeed in getting for her protégé, Hungary, the fertile plains to the south and the only two towns of any size, Ungvar and Munkacs, together with the railway. But Germany insisted that a narrow strip, consisting mainly of mountains and intervening valleys running, rib-like, north and south, should remain independent; and this became the home-ruled statelet of Carpathian-Russia. This is the official name for it, but actually the members of the two-man Government are both Ukrainians, and the little state is currently spoken of as Carpathian-Ukraine.

Why? Why were these few hundred thousand half-starved mountaineers cut off from their only chance of making even a meagre living — the Hungarian plain — and given an unwelcome independence?

In order that the name 'Ukraine' should be printed on the European map. Poland, which has between 4,500,000 and

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7,000,000 Ukrainians, Russia, which has from 20,000,000 to 25,000,000 Ukrainians, both deny that there is a great Ukrainian nation pining to be liberated. But the champion of the principle of self-determination, Germany, has put the word 'Ukraine' on the map. The sight of this little self-governed Ukrainian state is supposed to fill the Ukrainians in Poland, Russia and Rumania with longing.

When Germany, after Munich, enforced the creation of Carpathian-Ukraine it did look very much as if the 'Great Ukraine' would be the object of the next German coup, and that was why I made that dreary journey, over the one remaining road, to Chust. Germany had already liberated the Ukraine once, during the World War, and put in a Hetman there, and the idea of the German-controlled Ukraine, with its great mineral and agricultural wealth, was a pet one of many German expansionists.

For the last twenty years Berlin has been the home of emigrant Ukrainian leaders. The present claimant to the Hetman's throne lives in Germany, and is said to keep his crown there; he is even a colonel in the German army. Immediately after Munich masses of propaganda about the 'Great Ukraine', printed in Berlin, London and New York, began to be distributed. I have even seen a map showing that in the seventeenth century a Great Ukrainian state did exist, comprising the territory, now in Polish, Russian and Rumanian possession, that the Ukrainian patriots of to-day claim for it. But, for that matter, in the seventeenth century nobody questioned the historic frontiers of Bohemia. These were mutilated for the first time in history by the Men of Munich; it would be strange if an indirect result of their work were to be the restoration of the original frontiers of Ukraina as they existed in that same century.

So everything, after Munich, seemed to point to the Great Ukraine as the direction of Germany's next great coup. But when I went to Carpathian-Ukraine I became rather doubtful about this, or at any rate about the possibility of using Carpathian-Ukraine as a suitable basis for the erection of the Great Ukraine, or as a springboard for the great Ukrainian swoop.

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For one thing, there is only the one road, at present, leading to Carpathian-Ukraine. It goes up hill and down dale for some hundreds of miles, and would need a deal of improvement before it could be used for major military operations. For another, the population of this remote statelet only amounts to about half a million people. The evidence of the eye would suggest that about half of these are Jews; actually a sixth is probably nearer the truth. The remainder comprise some of the most miserably poor and racially mixed people in Europe; most of them do not themselves know what they are, but they do know that they have nothing to eat. Many of them speak two, three, four or five languages or dialects, and have been successively told in the last twenty-five years that they are Hungarians, Ruthenians, and, now, Ukrainians. The proportion of them who have any knowledge of what a Ukrainian is is very small. This is not very important; the only thing that is important for these people is that they should be lifted out of the misery in which they live, and if anything happens to achieve that, whether it be called the Great Ukraine or what not, it will be welcome.

Never have I seen such poverty as reigns in Carpathian-Ukraine, although I believe rather similar conditions existed in Ireland, before the war, before the Irish took their affairs into their own hands, in the days when the land was at the mercy of the absentee landlord. Here, in these remote Carpathian hills and valleys, the peasant has a house without a chimney, without flooring. He builds his fire on the stamped-earth floor and the smoke just rises and filters through the roof. Geese, pigs and goats, if he is lucky enough to have any, share the one room with him and his family. For food, he has insufficient quantities of maize bread, which is only just edible. If he has half an acre of land he may pull a rudely-fashioned plough across it himself, or turn it over with a spade.

Money he never sees. He thinks with regret of the great days when he could at harvest time at least go down into Hungary and work on the big estates and bring back, as his wage, a side of bacon for the winter. That was wealth, to him.

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These peasants, their wives and children, live like animals. Even that is an under-statement. In many districts they are animals. I can see hardly any difference between their life and that of an animal. In one district, round the villages of Svalava and Verezky, where there are a few small factories, inter-marriage and the drinking of methylated spirits has produced a stunted race of deformed and mentally inferior people. Their life is so hard and their wages so small that their only solace is drinking spirits, and as they cannot afford pure Schnapps, at 36 kronen a litre, they buy methylated spirits from unscrupulous dealers at 5 kronen a litre. It brings intoxication and forgetfulness of hunger in half an hour.

Carpathian-Ukraine is a good place to study the persecution of a non-Jewish community by the Jewish one. Here, for the first time, I saw the Eastern Jews in their native habitat. By the time they reach Budapest, Vienna, Berlin or Prague they are already Westernized. Here, as in Poland, you have the raw material of your Hollywood film producers and screen stars, your international bankers, your slick Jewish journalists — for here, in Carpathian-Ukraine, they are learning English, too.

Here you have a peasant population that has been plundered and bled white in centuries of exploitation, that has passed from one tyranny to another, Czars, kings, nobles, the Church, Russia, Poland, Hungary, and is now completely in the thrall of the Jewish community, which according to statistics only comprises about 15 per cent of the whole, but which controls all the money-power, the trade, commerce and banking. It is a grip far more subtle but as vice-like as that of any dictators. There is no escape for the peasant.

In Carpathian-Ukraine you are far more acutely aware of the Jews than in other countries, because they wear the uniform of black hat, caftan, ringlets and beard. In every town and village you enter they thus thrust themselves on your gaze, and your first impression is that they must be numerically predominant, that there must be more Jews than non-Jews in the place. This is not the fact. The reason is that they own all the shops and house-

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property in the main square and in the centre of the town generally. The non-Jews live in the meaner streets and remoter quarters.

The way to test this is to go through one of these towns on Friday evening, when the Jewish Sabbath begins. Nearly all the shops in the place are closed; it is difficult for the non-Jewish population to buy anything on Friday evening or Saturday morning. The squeeze-out of the non-Jews is complete. Only large and financially powerful concerns, like Bata, can hope to compete with the Jewish traders, and perhaps a non-Jewish shopkeeper here and there who keeps going chiefly on what he earns on Friday evening and Saturday morning. The non-Jewish small trader, with little capital, almost invariably goes bankrupt before very long. The Jews quarrel a good deal, and violently, among themselves, but at the approach of a non-Jew they close their ranks with a solidarity impossible to find among any other people in the world, unless it be some remote race in Tibet.

The wholesale trade is almost exclusively in the hands of the Jews, and the downfall of the non-Jewish interloper is achieved by supplying his Jewish competitors with goods at prices which enable them to undersell him. If any Jew fails to fall into line the services of the rabbi are enlisted and heavy punishments may be enforced against him; he may be refused access to the ritual bath, or the Jewish slaughterer may be ordered not to kill his chickens for him.

The peasant is entirely in the hands of the Jews. If he has any money and wishes to buy anything, he must buy it from a Jew. If he has no money, and needs to borrow some for his taxes or his mortgage, he must borrow it from a Jew. If he has something to sell, he can only sell it to the Jewish dealers. If he wishes to hire a plough, he must hire it, at a high rate, from a Jew. Most sinister of all, if he wants a drink — and spirits form his only solace — he must go to a Jew for it, for the great majority of the alcohol licences are in the hands of Jews. If he goes to law, he puts money into the pocket of the Jewish lawyer — for in Carpathian-Ukraine only 19 of the 160 lawyers are non-Jews. To litigate against a Jew, in these conditions, is for him an almost hopeless proceeding.

It is an iron ring, from which there is no escape. It is often said

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that there are many poor Jews in this region. The non-Jews are all poor. There are many Jews who look poor, very few who are poor in the sense that the peasant is poor.

All in all, I came to feel dubious, after looking at Carpathian-Ukraine, about the imminence of the Great Ukrainian coup, under German leadership. Carpathian-Ukraine did not seem to me a good basis either for major military or for major political operations.

Only a few score people, in the little Government and administration, feel Ukrainian and pine for the Great Ukrainian state. The real Ukrainians, the potential Ukrainian nation, live under Polish and Russian rule, and how are you to get at them, without war? After Munich, Poland and Russia seemed to be moving together, against this threat, but after that again came Franco's progress in Spain, and suddenly you found Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, at Berchtesgaden, and Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, in Warsaw, and it looked to me very much as if Germany found the prospects in the West and in the Mediterranean improving so much that she was turning her eyes in that direction and shelving the Ukrainian project for the present, as if she were telling Poland, 'Now, just behave well if anything explodes in Western Europe and nothing will happen to you'.

The only signs of the Great Ukrainian movement that I could find in Chust were the German-backed Government, headed by a cleric, Mgr. Voloshin, and his one Minister, M. Revay, who both count as Ukrainians, and the Ukrainian Storm Troops, the Karpatska Sitch, of whom I saw a few here and there in their grey-green uniforms. A German officer or two had passed that way, a German geologist or two, a German road-surveyor or two. But on the whole, the signs were that Germany was not signalling full-steam-ahead in the Ukraine, for the present.

The Great Ukrainian iron is a good one to have in the fire, and with the creation of this little state the iron is there, ready for use one day. But I fancy the fire will need a good deal of stoking, the iron a good deal of heating. In any case, one Great Power,

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Russia, and one almost Great Power, Poland, are involved, and I cannot see how Germany can for the present get over that.

For the moment, Hungary and Rumania seem to offer less certain prospects of resistance to German expansionism, I thought, after looking at Carpathian-Ukraine. So I burned the remains of my Christmas tree in the little iron stove, packed my bag, and boarded the ancient bus again.

The Carpathians were already deep in snow, as we rattled, hour after hour, along the winding and sometimes precipitous road to Preshov. In the omnibus it was bitterly cold. I had 'flu, and shivered. Soon ice formed on the windows, so that the countryside was hidden. Then darkness fell and I could hardly see the figures of my fellow-passengers, fifty of them packed into an omnibus made for twenty.

Darker and darker it grew, as the rattling box on wheels lurched and bumped along. Of the outer world I could see nothing, of the interior of the omnibus hardly anything. A crash, in that black and crowded box, on that lonely and snowbound mountain road, would have been hell itself. I felt like Jonah in the belly of the whale, so dark was it and so violent were the movements. To heighten the vividness of this illusion, the only things I could see were the ribs in the roof of the omnibus, just perceptible in the gloom. Hour after hour we rattled on. At last the bus stopped; exhausted, frozen and stiff, I got out, found myself in Preshov, found an hotel where I could get a decent bed, and fell immediately asleep.

## CAROL AND CODREANU

THE train travelled slowly through Rumania towards Bucharest, a long journey, and I sat at the window, train-sick, and watched the snowbound countryside move dawdling by. As I watched, the clean white snow took on a faint tinge of pink, that deepened and deepened until the land was covered with lurid red snow, and at the back appeared a core of fire, blazing and painting the land and the heaven crimson, a strange and arresting spectacle. It was not sundown, because the sky was covered with clouds that were still dropping powdery snow. Was it, I thought, a house burning? I asked. It was oil, an oil well, or some stray deposit of oil, that had long been burning, and they could not put it out.

Oil, I thought, as I watched. Oil, the juice that made Rumania an important piece in the European game. The Skoda Works, the great arsenal inherited from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, predestined Czecho-Slovakia, in vassal-dom, to become a gunsmith's shop for the Reich, once more on conquest bound. Czech workmen, among the best in Europe, were marked down as a labour-reserve for Germany. Hungary, with her abundant fields, similarly destined after the fall of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia to pass inevitably under German domination, was to be the granary and poultry-farm. Rumania, next door, was the only European country that had enough oil to feed the mechanized armies of a great Power set on achieving European supremacy either by the use of her armed might or through the fear of it.

I had watched Austria fall and Czecho-Slovakia in subjugation and had seen the process beginning in Hungary, and now I contemplated, with thoughts of the past and the future in my mind, this blood-coloured glow that suffused the Rumanian countryside. Burning oil. I have heard of a man, a technical expert, who was once employed to extinguish a burning oil well. For two years, I think, he fought that blazing and roaring monster. He lost

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several of his best men in the battle. At the end he was unnerved by the days and weeks and months of combat, by the noise and glare and strength of this fire-spitting dragon, laired in the bowels of the earth. When I heard this story I wished I had been there to write it; it seemed to me as well worth telling as that of any seaman's fight with the storm, any peasant's fight with famine, or any explorer's fight with the eternal snows.

Slowly, as the train lumbered on its way, the crimson world paled again into pink and then into white and once more the silent snowfields lay beside the line, with the sagging grey clouds above them. But I was glad that we had passed through that zone of reddened snow. As long as we were in it the wheels of the train said oil, oil, oil, oil, oil, and that, I knew, was the appropriate refrain, for a student of our contemporary times, in Rumania.

A little while later, on the Orthodox Christmas Day, I stood in a Bucharest street and watched King Carol go to the ceremony of blessing the waters. A heavy hussar's busby almost hid his eyes. The voluminous white cloak of the Order of St. Michael the Brave, with its black cross, fell about his shoulders. In his hand, a field marshal's baton. At his side, as always, his son Michael, who has already once been king and yielded the throne to his father when King Carol made that spectacular return to Rumania.

Another strange scene, for the album of our contemporary Europe. In the streets through which King Carol passed, the civilian population had been drained off as if by a pump. No Bucharesters cheered him as he went; a few of them could be seen, in the far distance, down the cordoned-off side streets. The windows of the houses were closed, by order, and, I suppose by order, no faces appeared at them. The cafés and restaurants on the route were closed, and no-one was allowed to enter them. After the religious ceremony in the little church, the King and the Prince, followed by the little group of priests and ministers and officers and officials, passed through troop-lined but otherwise empty streets to the little river Dambavitza, a trickle like the Fleet River, that has already disappeared beneath the roadway for a great part of its journey through the city.

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The King, in his long white cloak, went down the steps and threw the traditional wooden cross into the muddy stream, and four men in long white smocks jumped in it up to their knees and recovered the cross and kissed it and brought it back to the King, who gave it back to the Patriarch, and the waters had been blessed, and the white cloak went up the steps again and the king looked upstream to where, several hundred yards away, behind lines of soldiers, his Bucharesters stood, and raised his field marshal's baton in salute. No responsive cheer came. Perhaps they were too far away to see the gesture. So he saluted again and still there was silence, all round, and he climbed the rest of the steps and went down the roadway to a spot where a little dais had been built and there he took his stand, with the few score military attachés and ministers and officials grouped behind him, and reviewed his troops, who came marching by.

If you can imagine King George reviewing the Guards in a Piccadilly from which the civilian population has vanished, you will have some idea of the scene. The only sounds that broke the silence were the music of the bands and the tramp of soldiers. In their strangely varied uniforms they marched past. King Carol has a Hohenzollern-like weakness for uniforms, and all the armies of the world seemed to have contributed something to this little pageant, in a still and deserted city. There were soldiers who looked like pre-war German cavalymen and infantrymen. Others who looked something like French Chasseurs Alpains. Others who resembled the Italian Bersaglieri, with their feathered bonnets. Others who, with little knobbed shakos, seemed like 1870 French infantrymen. Others, with peaked caps and broad-striped trousers, who came somewhere between American Marines and West Point Cadets. Others whose furry hats recalled Crimean Grenadiers. Others, again, khaki-clad, who looked like war-time British infantrymen.

I don't know what the state of Rumanian armaments is — it is said to be backward — but the raw material inside these uniforms, I thought, was first class. I saw straight features, well-built bodies. In an all-together-against-an-aggressor war the Rumanian army,

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I think, could have played a very useful part. That dream has faded. Now any odds that Rumania might have to face would be too big for this little army to achieve much.

When the last companies had gone, the King stepped into his car and was whizzed away, through those deserted streets, to his palace, with motor-cyclist outriders flanking him and police cars before and behind. Half an hour later Bucharest came to life again, the inhabitants surged forward into the main streets, faces appeared at the windows, the cafés and restaurants opened, the normal city scene returned.

The tide of events, having passed over Austria and Czecho-Slovakia, is lapping at Rumania. Hence this little parade-in-a-vacuum, the closely-guarded King, the segregated population. Those empty streets, those closed windows, those deserted cafés and restaurants, those legions of police and plain-clothes men meant — Corneliu Codreanu, The Iron Guard, Germany.

I told in *Insanity Fair* how the kings of Rumania reigned with the problem of Germany ever peering from behind their throne; how the first king, Carol's great-uncle, saw the best hope for Rumania in alliance with Germany, the country from which he had come and whose triumphs in 1864, 1866 and 1871 he had never forgotten; how he failed, in 1914, to induce Rumania to follow him in that course and how his successor, Ferdinand, brought Rumania in with the Allies so that, after disaster in the spring of 1918, she rose triumphant from her ashes in November 1918, doubled in territory and population.

Now, twenty years after, King Carol is coming face to face with this same eternal problem. But for him it is no longer a straight choice — with Germany or against Germany. For Rumania it may be that. But for King Carol the issue has been complicated. Between him and it stand two figures, one spectral and one flesh-and-blood — Corneliu Codreanu, the dead Fascist leader, and Madame Lupescu, a Jewess, for many years his companion and confidante.

I wrote in *Insanity Fair* that anti-Semitism in Rumania was highly dangerous for Gentiles. Many people thought that this

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was just a smart crack. It was written in all seriousness, and it is true. There have been no pogroms in Rumania, but for several years now Gentiles have been killing each other there in the dispute for and against the Jews. The Rumanians are a gentle-natured people, averse to violence, and political murder had not been known in the country for seventy years before these killings started.

This will show you how bitter are the feelings that have been aroused. Do not think that they are entirely unreasonable, or you will be wrong. In at least three European countries there is, beyond all dispute, a Jewish problem — in Poland, Hungary and Rumania. That is to say, in these countries there are too many Jews and they have too much of the money. Their wealth and influence in these countries is far greater than it ever was in Germany. When the wealth and power of the Jews passes a certain point — and this nearly always happens in countries where there is widespread and wretched poverty among the native population — a bitter and surging resentment begins to form among the non-Jewish inhabitants which may long be repressed but must ultimately break through. It is the age-old instinct of self-preservation.

Now, Rumania is to me one of the most interesting countries in Europe, because here two smashing blows have been dealt against anti-Semitism; the first blow was felt as a setback and the second as a deliberate affront by Germany; and the King's companion is Madame Lupescu. This is a situation which, as I think, is one day likely to produce dramatic consequences.

The first blow, as I wrote in *Insanity Fair*, was dealt against Octavian Goga, the Prime Minister whom King Carol put in power, in response to the rapidly growing strength of the Iron Guard and the clamant public desire, to introduce moderate restrictive measures against the Jews.

M. Goga's moderate anti-Semitism was disastrous, as always in Rumania, to himself. What a Great Power might do, a small power might not. America, France and England formed a diplomatic battle-front against Goga.

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Octavian Goga was the first man to feel the full weight of the international Jewish counter-offensive. He was overthrown with effortless ease. Put into office by the King to do certain things, he was dropped cold after six weeks of doing them, and went, saying bitterly, 'Judah has won'. A few weeks later he died, on the Riviera.

Germany regarded that event as a political setback. Just as she considered Czecho-Slovakia, in alliance with France and Soviet Russia, to be a potential military danger to her, so did she consider Rumania, after the Goga episode, as a Balkan stronghold of the Jewish front against Germany, the main centres of which, as she thought, lay in France, England and America.

But worse was to come.

At this point, you need to consider Madame Lupescu and Corneliu Codreanu. In *Insanity Fair* I deliberately abstained from discussing Madame Lupescu. Men's private lives are their own, and I had neither any personal interest in this matter nor did I think it politically important enough to demand mention. But now things have changed, and you cannot discuss the European line-up, from the Rumanian angle, without mentioning Madame Lupescu.

I have never seen Madame Lupescu. Few Rumanians have seen her. All know about her. I cannot make any categorical statements about her. What is known about her, for certain, is that she has for many years been the King's confidante, that she is the only person with whom he completely relaxes — and that she is a Jewess. The agitation of the Iron Guard, and of many politicians outside the Iron Guard, was directed against her. I cannot say from personal knowledge what influence she wields. People in Rumania who should know say that if a Rumanian official wishes to advance quickly in his career, or a business man in his undertakings, he is more likely to do so if Madame Lupescu is well disposed towards him. If you ask them about her political influence, they either say that they do not know or that they doubt whether she has any (this with the exception of the opposition politicians).

But even this, as it seems to me, is not of paramount importance.

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The decisive thing is that Madame Lupescu is a Jewess, that she stands at the King's side, that the King's major problem is to keep his relations sweet with a fanatically anti-Jewish Reich — and that only in Rumania has an anti-Jewish pro-German leader been killed. Bear in mind that the Reich does not believe in the theory of unpremeditated and sporadic acts of Jewish vengeance, but believes that every Jew throughout the world is working to bring about war between the anti-Jewish Reich and the Powers that are not anti-Jewish, and you will begin to see the great difficulties that lie ahead of King Carol.

This brings us to Corneliu Codreanu, son of a Polish father and a German mother, leader of the Iron Guard, a dark and fanatical figure, whose followers throughout Rumania looked to him with the same mystic adoration that many Germans have for Hitler. Up to the time of Goga's Government the Iron Guard was gaining ground day and night. At the polls, it might in the end have swept the country. When King Carol dismissed Goga and suppressed political parties, Codreanu seemed to think the game was up, or he thought his life to be in danger, or he decided on a bluff.

He announced that he would retire from politics and withdraw to Italy. He was not allowed to leave the country. Instead, he was arrested and put on trial for treason. Evidence was produced that he was in German pay. A man who was present at the trial — a Jew, incidentally — told me that he was dubious about that evidence. It consisted of an incriminating document said to have been found on Codreanu's desk — and such men do not leave treaties with foreign powers lying about. No doubt exists about Codreanu's sympathy for Hitlerist National Socialism, about his wish to introduce a Rumanian form of it in his own country.

He was sentenced to ten years penal servitude, which, as such rigorous confinement goes in Rumania, he was not expected to survive. He disappeared into prison.

Now came the dramatic sequel, a thing unlooked-for and extraordinary, that overclouds all German-Rumanian relations and will yet bear sinister fruit — the killing of Codreanu. This in-

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furiated Hitler and was regarded by National Socialist Germany as the second great victory for the international Jewish counter-offensive, as a Jewish-inspired blow at Germany and the friends of Germany. Nothing will ever make those German leaders believe, if I know anything of them, that this was just a domestic Rumanian episode, a thing done in the sole interests of inner-Rumanian law and order. That may be the truth, who knows? But they will not believe it, and that is the important thing.

When a Gustloff is killed in Switzerland, a vom Rath in Paris, a Codreanu in Rumania, they feel themselves directly menaced — and it makes them furious. Behind the revolver they do not see a half-crazed Jewish youth, or a Rumanian king determined to be master in his own house: they see the Jews of the world, working unremittingly for the downfall of the anti-Jewish Reich.

You will remember how King Carol came to London just before Christmas 1938. You will remember that Guildhall banquet, the great reception at the Rumanian Legation.

Then King Carol went on to Germany, visited Hitler at Berchtesgaden. The pictures showed a most affable Führer welcoming the King on the steps of that historic Bavarian chalet. Rumania was then thought to stand high in the good graces of Berchtesgaden because, while the jackals were busy with Czecho-Slovakia, King Carol had refused to listen to Polish and Hungarian proposals for the complete partitioning of Ruthenia, a small strip of which Germany wished to remain between Poland and Hungary.

Who knows what passed at that interview? Only two or three men. Did Hitler say to King Carol, as he said to Schuschnigg, "The domestic conditions of Rumania, your Majesty, are no concern of mine"? For just at that moment the domestic conditions of Rumania were boiling up. With the obvious intention of embarrassing the King while he was in London and Berchtesgaden, the Iron Guard, to show that they still lived and were strong, had been burning synagogues, breaking shop windows. At Corneliu Codreanu's trial the evidence had been produced which purported to show that he was in German pay. Shadows overhung the Berchtesgaden interview.

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If Hitler did say that, he meant, 'I shall not say what your Majesty is or is not to do about the Iron Guard. That is your Majesty's own affair, and I should never dream of interfering in the domestic affairs of another country. Of course, if your Majesty wishes for my friendship, your Majesty will know what not to do.'

King Carol returned to Rumania. He was met, with full reports about the Iron Guard's exploits, by his Minister of the Interior, Armand Calinescu.

What did the King say, at this second interview? 'Take what measures you think fit,' perhaps. Again, only two or three men know.

Codreanu and his men were shot. While trying to escape. In all the circumstances, a staggering thing. They could have been condemned to death by a court martial, earlier, and shot, after trial. But now? Immediately after Berchtesgaden? For a few days the German press was non-committal. You could almost hear, in that silence, the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin asking itself 'What on earth? What can have happened at Berchtesgaden? Is it possible that — no, perish the thought. What shall we tell the papers to say?'

Then the storm broke, an outburst of furious anger against the King, against Madame Lupescu, against the Jews.

There you have the background of that parade in a vacuum, the closely guarded streets, the shuttered windows.

The Iron Guard is crushed. For the first time, resolute men had shown that a Fascist leader, with his halo of infallibility and almost immortality, was but a man like other men. It was a knock-out blow. Codreanu, as he told in his book, had shot the Police Chief of Jassy, whom he held to favour the Jews. He was shot. Three of his followers had been sentenced to lifelong imprisonment for murdering the Liberal Prime Minister Duca, whom they held to favour the Jews. They were shot. Ten of his henchmen had been sentenced to imprisonment for murdering one of his own former chief lieutenants, Stelescu, whom they held to have turned traitor to the cause. They were shot.

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Only oxygen administered from outside the frontier can revive the Iron Guard. Will it be given?

King Carol means to be master in his own house. The whole lesson of what has happened is that if any Great Power wishes to negotiate with Rumania, it must negotiate with him, not with this or that Leader of the people. All things are possible in politics, and it may be just possible that, if Rumania falls into line, the shooting of Codreanu will be forgotten. But, from what I know of the German leaders, I think it doubtful in this particular case. They felt it too much as a direct challenge to themselves.

If anyone still thinks of Rumanians as weaklings, he is wrong. Consider Armand Calinescu. Theorists say that very small men try by great energy to prove themselves greater than their stature. They may be right, I don't know; I am small myself. Armand Calinescu's story goes to support their theory.

He is very small, always smiles, and for some reason wears a dark monocle over his left eye. It is very difficult to know what a man is thinking who always smiles and of whose eyes you can see only one. But he has certainly given many proofs of resolution. He smashed Communism, what there was of it, in Rumania. He sent troops, in 1932, against sit-down-striking Bucharest railwaymen, and made them sit up; about thirty, if I remember rightly, were killed. At the trials of Iron Guard leaders, when other politicians were hedging and risk-covering by pleading for understanding and talking of patriotic motives, he, a lawyer in his beginnings, delivered a smashing attack on them. He spoke openly, as none other dared to do, of help being given to the Iron Guard by foreign powers.

And now? Now, a camel might as easily pass through the eye of a needle as an unauthorized visitor into the building where the Minister of the Interior sits, guarded by police and soldiers and plain-clothes men.

Great decisions, great changes loom ahead for Rumania, and King Carol approaches his most difficult times. As his latest attempt to weld the State together, he has introduced a semi-Fascist system — as Schuschnigg did, as Hungary is doing — with one

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monopolistic party, uniforms, Fascist salutes, greetings, and all the rest. But these systems, to function successfully, have to grow out of the people, they cannot be grafted on from above. If King Carol's problems were only domestic, the future would be clear; but his problem is external, and it is called Germany.

Germany is angry, about Codreanu. She has many means of squeezing Rumania, if Rumania does not fall into line. She could support Hungary's claim to Transylvania, Bulgaria's claim to the Dobrudja. She could work through the large German minority in Rumania, which has already claimed and obtained a privileged place, under its local Henlein, the former Austro-Hungarian officer, Fritz Fabritius. She might, but whisper this, administer oxygen to the Iron Guard. If Germany decided to embark on the Great Ukrainian project, this would threaten Rumania too, because a small part of that phantom state now belongs to Rumania. German domination inevitably lies ahead. What is King Carol's place in it to be?

The Jews have seen the red light and are learning English, transferring their money to England, preparing in a hundred ways to try and get to England. As yet, nothing has happened to them, apart from insignificant local measures which have made practically no impression on the major problem. The King and his Government are seeking to solve the problem by humane and reasonable measures, by bringing about the emigration of one or two hundred thousand Jews and thus redressing the balance to some extent. Strangely, the Jews will not help in such measures as these. While I was in Bucharest a meeting was called of about thirty of the richest Jews in Rumania, under the chairmanship of a Jewish banker, to discuss means of collaborating with the Government in this aim. The basis of the discussion was that restrictive measures were sooner or later inevitable and that the best thing, in the common interest, would be for the Jewish community to work with the Government in devising, financing and organizing the emigration of a substantial number of Jews. To this end, the banker proposed that the wealthy Jews should contribute ten per cent of their fortunes. If they did not, he said, anti-Jewish meas-

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ures would ultimately come anyway, and it would be better to take the edge off them by collaborating with the Government and getting the thing done in a creditable and efficient manner.

The proposal was turned down flat. None of his hearers would consider it.

Unlike Czecho-Slovakia, which since Munich has come to despise France, unlike Yugoslavia, which distrusted France years ago and acted accordingly, the heart of Rumania is still with France. Still, French newspapers and periodicals outnumber all others, still the *Galleries Lafayette* and *Hachette's* and the *Arc de Triomphe* and the *Hausmann-like* boulevards and the miniature Bois tell of distant Paris, still the little society of Bucharest speaks French when it goes to dine in the evening at *Capsa's*.

But how little relationship has this life of Bucharest to that of outer Rumania, where the peasant masses live in poverty often abject. Of them, the world never hears. Their lot, like that of the English slum-dwellers, the English unemployed, the derelicts in the English distressed areas, the peasant masses in Hungary and Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, the peasants and workers in Spain, the submerged masses in France, this is the thing you should shout about every day and seek to alter. Instead of that, you waste your substance on the irrelevant and infuriating yap for or against the Jews, that goes on and on for ever.

It is a transition period in Rumania, with the shadow of Germany looming ever larger and nearer. When I left Bucharest I travelled by night. The snow was nearly gone, in the darkness the countryside, dazzlingly white when I came, was now black. But as I watched, a faint pink glow spread over it, and this deepened and deepened until a flaming red glow lay over it all, with a ball of fire at the back, and the wheels of the train said oil, oil, oil, oil, oil.

### POSTSCRIPT

Since I wrote this chapter, the war between Gentiles about anti-Semitism has produced further casualties. Codreanu's chief lieutenant and successor, the university professor Vasile Cristescu,

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who escaped from transport to a concentration camp during the summer of 1938 and for months afterwards conducted the Iron Guard's campaign from hiding, was located in a house in Bucharest and shot by police, after killing one and wounding two police officers. His deputy and potential successor, the lawyer David Mircea, also died, and was stated to have committed suicide. A Rumanian army lieutenant, Nicolaus Dumitrescu, who was serving at the Military Chemical Institute, was arrested with seventeen Iron Guards, on a charge of manufacturing flame-throwers for use in civil warfare, and he too was said to have died by his own hand.

## MAGYARLAND AGAIN

ON a January day I sat in a train bound for Budapest and my eyes wandered at random about the carriage I was in. It was an unusually comfortable and pleasant one and the seats were upholstered, not in the dreary and nondescript browns and reds and greens that usually exhaust the resources of the railway-carriage decorator, but in a pleasant grey stuff with a flowered pattern on it. Something in that pattern fixed my attention. Where had I seen it before? It was a pattern of three flowers, red, blue and white. Suddenly I remembered. It was the national device of Austria, something far more fitting as a national emblem for that country than the red-white-red flag which it was wont to hoist on high days and holidays. Gentian, edelweiss, almenrausch. Everywhere in Austria you had seen that motif, on china and glass and textiles, and everywhere you went in Austria you saw those three flowers. I well remember the joy with which I first found them growing, in Austria.

Then I looked about the carriage and saw, on the white cushion-covers, the letters O.B.B. — Oesterreichische Bundesbahnen, or Austrian State Railways. Here, by chance, I had found a little piece of old Austria on wheels.

Old memories sprang to life. I thought of Vienna, of my rooms, of my office, of Linz, of the Wienerwald, of the Salzkammergut. With a shock, I remembered that a year before, almost to the day, I had been in Budapest, and Schuschnigg had then been there too, still as Austrian Chancellor. Schuschnigg! The name now seemed like a dim echo from a remote past.

I thought, as I looked at those three flowers, how much had happened in less than a year. Germany, with a sword in one hand and *Mein Kampf* in the other, was going ahead fast, too fast for the old men in other countries who would not listen to warnings,

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who thought they knew better. England, with an umbrella in one hand and Mein Gamp in the other, was moving as fast to disaster.

Never, I thought, as I contemplated the gentian, the edelweiss and the almenrausch, had a great empire been put in jeopardy with such levity and irresponsibility. The plight of England, at the beginning of 1939, reminded me of that of the drowning Frenchman, who could not master his English tenses, and cried 'I *will* drown, nobody *shall* save me'. England, or at all events England's leaders, seemed implacably bent on self-destruction.

Thinking this, I took up my paper, which told me that Franco was at the gates of Barcelona. It seemed — though in Spain you could never be certain — that nothing could now prevent Franco's victory. With a feeling of hopelessness, I reflected that England's influence, from the beginning of that war, had been exerted to bring about his victory.

In the name of 'sanctions', arms had been withheld from the Abyssinians. In the name of 'non-intervention', arms and food had been withheld from the Spanish Republicans. In the name of 'self-determination', the Czechs had been forced to capitulate. England's leaders said every day that England was in danger, that she must rearm and rearm, and yet they forced ally after ally to capitulate.

It was beyond rhyme or reason. I gave it up, and turned my thoughts to the three flowers, and to days in Austria. I thought of myself, bare-kneed, bare-headed and bare-throated, wandering through Austrian woods, climbing Austrian hills, tobogganing with wild halloo down the run on the Semmering, lying anchored to a boulder in a shallow but swift-running mountain stream, singing in a wine-garden heavy with the scent of flowers. If I had been born in another age, I might have known many years of that. But now, I sat in a railway carriage, with only those three flowers, woven into the cloth, to remind me of all that, and travelled towards a future that held little cheer for any Englishman.

I was glad, at the next halt on that journey, to dip my spirit for a few days into the beauty of Budapest, so that it revived a little.

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Vienna; Prague; Budapest. These are, for me, the three best cities in Europe. The old Austrian Empire was the only one that ever made a success, for long, of governing large areas of Europe, of reconciling peoples of a dozen races and tongues. The wrong empire was broken up, or broke itself up, after the World War, but its legacy still lives on.

What started that process of decay which began with the coming of Napoleon and ended with the coming of Hitler, and why was it inevitable, or was it inevitable? I don't suppose it was inevitable. The war or the humiliation to which England seems to be moving is not inevitable; only the irresolution, the apathy, the obstinacy, the class-obsession, the dogged refusal to do anything about anything, of England's leaders make them inevitable. It was the same with Austria. The condition of England and the Empire to-day are appallingly reminiscent of Austria before the war, as I wrote in *Insanity Fair*. But history teaches no lessons, the old men, armoured in their conceit, go their way and mistake the plaudits of a packed House, the praise of autograph-hunting letter-writers, the hear-hear of a well-wined Guildhall audience, for the verdict of the world that they are right — until disaster proves them wrong, and even then they don't admit it.

What stirring of the emotions, what fluttering of the doves, I found in the Budapest to which I returned. I wrote in *Insanity Fair* that if Czechoslovakia went, Hungary would go too, and earlier in this book I wrote of the feeling of suspense, akin to that I knew in Vienna, which I found in Hungary after the fall of Austria and before the fall of Czecho-Slovakia.

Now Munich lay far behind and in Hungary, although the placid and lovely outer scene remained unchanged, hopes and fears and passions were beating against each other below the surface. Germany was at the gates.

At the dictate of Germany and Italy, Hungary had recovered a large area of territory from Czecho-Slovakia, and you might have expected that this would have strengthened affection for Germany in Hungarian hearts. You would be wrong. I never found in Hungary so much anti-German feeling. Why? Well, the Hungar-

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ians, if they have a fault, tend to give too little and ask too much, and they were very angry that Germany had not given them the whole of Ruthenia, and therewith the common (and anti-German) frontier with Poland, and that Germany had occupied two Hungarian villages on the outskirts of Bratislava, the Slovak capital and the only Czecho-Slovak Danubian port, which before the war had been under Hungarian overlordship.

The clear meaning of this move was that if Bratislava were in future to pass from Slovak into foreign ownership, the new owner would be Germany, and not Hungary, and this made many Hungarians very angry. For Hungary, though not unprepared to be swallowed by Germany, counted on occupying a privileged place in the stomach of the Reich, as she had in that of the Habsburg Empire, with rights of overlordship over Slovaks, Croats and others, and now this expectation seemed likely to be disappointed.

So Hungary, though she had obtained a large piece of territory free, gratis and for nothing and without any personal effort at all, was feeling disgruntled with Germany, and as the first mark of this feeling the veteran Foreign Minister, Kánya, had to go, one of the trio, Horthy, Imrédy and Kánya, of whom I told you earlier, and to whom the aristocrats and the church and the Jews looked to save them from Hitler. He was succeeded by Count Stephen Csáky, a dapper little ex-naval officer with a bristling moustache and a genial smile, who immediately paid the orthodox visit to Herr Hitler. There he was placed in that familiar, rather uncomfortable chair in the middle of the room, while around him, in deep and comfortable chairs, rather like a board of examiners, sat Hitler and Hitler's advisers, and they turned on the heat, as the saying is, and Count Csáky came back to Budapest, and Hungary joined the Anti-Comintern Pact.

To sit in that chair in the middle of the room, with the third-degree men around you, is an experience that I don't envy any Foreign Minister of a small state. Soon after, Dr. Emil Chvalkovsky, the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister, went through it. You feel rather like the lemon in the lemon-squeezer; the pressure

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increases and increases, and the pips squeak and squeak. Eventually, what Germany wants from these states is a full military, political and customs alliance, and she will get it. That means that they must fight for Germany in war, work for Germany in peace, and support all German policy.

With that adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact, Hungary has already taken a decisive step. Politically and militarily, she is already in the position of a German province. But in her home politics, her domestic affairs, the German influence has as yet hardly begun to make itself felt, and this is a thing that interests me very much. I am quite clear that Germany will insist on and obtain full control over these countries; that is, she will have a monopoly of their products and markets, if she wants it, and the use of their armies. But how far will she insist on the application of National Socialist political doctrine and methods within these countries? Will she leave them a certain freedom in this matter, or will she demand the rigorous introduction of the anti-Jewish laws, the abolition of all political parties but one, and the like?

That is not yet clear. In Czecho-Slovakia, Germany has been pressing in this direction, and the slowness of the Czechs in yielding was the cause for several delays in Dr. Chvalkovsky's visit to Berlin. In Austria, the Germans seem to have made all the traditional German mistakes. They have never flattered the Austrian tradition or the great achievements of Austria, never admitted that the Austrians were a separate Germanic people, done none of the things that would have appealed to the Austrian heart. The whole burden of the German song was that the Austrians were indolent and inefficient, that they were Germans, not Austrians, and must learn to be exactly like the Germans in the Reich. The iron hand! With these methods the Germans may breed a mass of subterranean antagonism to themselves which in the long run — but only in the long run — will be dangerous to them.

While Hungary waited to see what Germany would demand in these directions, a remarkable thing happened in Hungary. Béla de Imrédy, the Prime Minister, another of the trio I have just

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mentioned, came out with a Hungarian patriotic and racial movement. He called it 'Hungarian Life', as far as the title can be translated, and the inaugural meeting was just like a Hitlerist meeting translated into Hungarian. There were the banners, the Hungarian national colours with the sacred stag of old Hungarian mythology superimposed. There were the Storm Troops, with befrogged jackets and gold-betasselled black ties and white shirts and knee boots and feathered hats. There was the new-fangled salute — the hand on the heart, rather a good one this, it's at least a change from the upraised arm.

And there, on the platform, was The Leader, Béla de Imrédy, with a programme of land for the landless, and work for the workless, and social betterment for the poor, and the cultivation of the military spirit and Hungarian patriotism and anti-Semitism. Beside him was Andor Jaross, the leader of the Hungarians from recovered Upper Hungary. He, too, was a thorn in the side of the Old Regime in Budapest. In Upper Hungary, under the Czechs, the peasants had been given land, the workers social insurance. Jaross himself, in his campaign against the Czechs, had been the ally of the Henleinists, of Hitler's Nazis. He bluntly intimated, when he came to Budapest, that the liberated Upper Hungarians did not want to be depressed to the level of the masses in Trianon Hungary; they wanted the masses in Trianon Hungary to be brought up to the level of the liberated Upper Hungarians.

A shiver and a shock went through the embattled Old Regime in Budapest, which had so effortlessly re-established its hold on Hungary after the World War. Their bitterness vented itself particularly on Imrédy, who had been called to power as the last hope of saving Hungary from Hitler, and was now coming all over Hitler, and was beginning to have a very good press in Germany. Six months before, they had said 'We put our money on Imrédy', and in reference to his rather aquiline features said that he looked like Savonarola. Now, they went about saying that he was a Jew!

This led to a most interesting development. I wrote earlier in this book that Imrédy is the Magyarised form of Heinrich, and

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that this indicated Germanic origins. Accused of having Jewish blood, Béla de Imrédy, on the public platform, produced wedding and baptismal certificates for three generations back, which showed that his origins were indeed predominantly Germanic. His paternal grandfather was a Heinrich, his maternal grandfather was a Zenger from the Palatinate, his maternal grandmother was a Nepomuk from Herr Hitler's home country, and so on, and, a comic touch, the baptismal certificate of his maternal grandfather, made out in Vienna more than a century ago, bore the remark 'Valid only as proof of Aryan origin'.

So you see that some of Hitler's ideas are not so newfangled.

Hungary is a strangely remote country, in some ways, and I found some amusement, in a grim world, in the stupefaction with which the Old Regime in Budapest regarded this new venture of the man who was to save them from Hitler. Imrédy, they now said venomously, was feeling the call of his German blood. But actually Imrédy was trying to do only what Papen had tried to do in Germany, Dollfuss and Schuschnigg in Austria, what Goga had failed to do in Rumania and what King Carol was now trying to do there — to steal the thunder of the extremists, and retain his hold on power, by doing some things they clamoured for, by making some concession to the undoubted public desire for these things.

It is a device that has always failed until now, but who knows? In Hungary the 'Hungarist' movement (National Socialism on a Hungarian basis) is strong. Its Leader, the ex-officer Major Franz Szalasi, still lies in prison, and since I had left Budapest Count Louis Szechenyi, detested of his class, had gone to join him there. If the fight remained a purely domestic Hungarian one, if the ring were kept, 'Hungarism' was crushed, as the Iron Guard was crushed in Rumania. Oxygen administered from beyond the frontier alone could revive it. Would this be given? There, again, you have the question, how far will Germany go in insisting on the co-ordination of domestic political life, in the countries she dominates, with her own? Coming months will give the answer.

Meanwhile the Old Regime — doughty foes, who have kept

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their hold on Hungary through thick and thin since Hungary was born, with comparatively recent reinforcement by the Jews — were girding their loins to meet the new challenge to their rule. The main opposition to Imrédy came from the Jews, but they did not appear in the open. The visible champions were aristocrats and big landowners, like Count Stephen Bethlen, and clerical publicists. With one accord they raised the cry that racial theories must not be introduced in the land of the Holy Crown and in the thousand-year-old-Kingdom and in Liberal Hungary and this and that. What did the landless peasants in the countryside and the poverty-stricken workers in the towns think about it? Ah, echo answers, what? Surveying the affluence and influence of the Jews, and their monopolistic hold on the trade and commerce of the land, they might have thought, if they thought at all, that theories of racial exclusiveness had already been introduced in Hungary. But their voice is never heard. The battle was joined in Budapest.

When I went back to Budapest, in January 1939, the second anti-Jewish law had been introduced. The first, as I wrote earlier in this book, on paper restricted the share of the Jews in business and commercial undertakings, and in the professions, to twenty per cent. The second purported to reduce it to six per cent, but, when I was in Budapest, seemed likely to be vetoed by the Regent, Admiral Horthy. In practice, nothing had happened to the Jews, who continued to dominate the scene. The power of the Jews is so great that when some mild anti-Jewish law, of little practical effect, is passed in this or that country, the entire world press starts shouting at the top of its voice about 'Anti-Semitism in Hungary', 'Anti-Semitism in Rumania', or the like. In this exasperating and misleading din, the things that ought to be discussed and need to be remedied, like the lot of the poverty-stricken masses in these countries, are completely lost sight of.

I have told you earlier in this book that the pity-the-poor-Jew cry is becoming a dangerous racket. Hungary provides the best possible illustration that I can give you of this. The first anti-Semitic law was introduced in the spring of 1938. It had many

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loopholes, which you would hardly have noticed at all unless you were a student of these things, and it was in any case due to take effect only after four years. Immediately a worldwide shriek of 'Anti-Semitism in Hungary' went up to heaven.

Nothing at all happened to the Jews, and long before the first anti-Semitic bill could take effect, long before it was possible to see whether it was meant to have any effect (for I may tell you, in strict confidence, that it was actually prepared in collaboration between the Government and the Jews), it was cancelled by the second anti-Semitic bill. Immediately a worldwide shriek of 'Even more terrible anti-Semitism in Hungary' arose to heaven. Nothing happened to the Jews. As I write, the bill has not even got through its committee stage and when it reaches parliament seems certain to be emasculated, if not vetoed, by the Regent, Admiral Horthy, himself.

Whether anything ever really happens to the Jews in Hungary depends entirely on Germany, and whether she demands it. Left to herself, Hungary will pass ten anti-Semitic bills, and nothing will happen to the Jews, though the world, instructed by the Jewish press, will grow hoarse in shrieking 'Anti-Semitism in Hungary'.

The fact that the new anti-Jewish bill in Hungary was the second caused the Jews to make preparations to leave. If this was the second bill, they argued, a third bill may come, and a fourth, and at the fifth or sixth something may happen to us. So they were besieging the foreign legations and consulates, and getting acquaintances in England to write them letters inviting them to England for 'a month's visit', and the pengo had slumped on the black bourse from 30 to 60, 65 and 70 and more.

You may not understand this last cryptic remark. Let me explain. The Jews in all these countries have been transferring their money abroad, particularly to England, in recent months. They think that Hitler is coming and they are getting ready to go. But the transfer of their money abroad is illegal; all these countries have introduced legislation against it. A way has to be found. A foreigner is sought, say an Englishman, who has payments to

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make in Budapest, or Bucharest, or Prague. He is given for his sterling, say, 35 pengoes, instead of the official rate of 26. In return, he credits the sterling equivalent to his Jewish acquaintance's account in London. But the competition is great, another Jew offers more, and so the rate rises and rises. In Budapest, as I write, pounds can be sold for 70 pengoes instead of 26, in Bucharest for 1700 lei instead of 850, in Prague for 450 kronen instead of 140, in Belgrade for 310 dinars instead of 250, and so on, and so on.

By this means, you may lose some of your fortune, but you pave a golden road to England, where you may quickly make good the loss.

I sat in Budapest and talked about these things with a Hungarian nobleman, a charming and cultivated man who was in the van of the opposition to Imrédy, who hated the thought of a Hungary in vassaldom to Germany. Under the new law, which provided that Jews and half-Jews should hold a separate miniature election and return six per cent of the members of Parliament, bishops and priests would have to vote, he said, as half-breeds at the Jewish election. The priest of his own parish, he added, was a full-blooded Jew. How could you introduce racial theories in Hungary, he asked? In the aristocracy the blood of a score of races was inextricably mingled. His own family was an example. 'I don't care much about Jews', he said, 'but all my humane instincts revolt at the thought of this discrimination. Where could you find a pure-blooded Hungarian, a pure Magyar? Only in the villages, if at all.'

Now that is absolutely true, and I have written something of the sort earlier in this book. The Hungarians have become inextricably crossbred. As far as pure-bred Hungarians exist, they are among the poor peasantry. But it seems to me that the original inhabitants of the land ought to be the first, not the last, to have a claim on compassion and consideration. Nobody ever thought of protesting when discrimination was exercised against them. Serfdom and bondage were things which revolted nobody's humane feelings — and they are still scarcely free of them.

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A restless, surging, bewildered Hungary, that I came back to in January 1939. The shape of things to come was not yet clear. German domination? Yes, that much was clear. But the Hungarian household itself, the landless peasants, the poverty-stricken workers, the rich Jews, the entrenched landlords, the powerful Church — what was going to happen about them? Were changes, improvements, better times coming at long last for the submerged masses? Or would the ruling class, as in England, by some deft trick keep power in its hands, smother the distress of the masses for another decade, another fifty years, another century?

The answer lies in the hands of Germany, and will soon be clear to see.

With much regret, I came away. If I may not live in Austria, I would like to live in Hungary, at some little Danube-side town, between Budapest and Esztergom. I love those Hungarian skies, those Hungarian fields, now that I know them.

But in *Insanity Fair* you never can stop anywhere long enough to pitch your tent. The four horsemen, war, famine, pestilence and death, are already on the prowl, accompanied by their girl friends, the four horsewomen, envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness. Not more tranquil, but more turbulent years lie ahead. At the end of them—what? As far as I can see, some quite different order of society from that we have known. But in the near future, quite certainly, turmoil, turbulence, tumult — *Insanity Fair* at its craziest. No time for Danubian dreams, Danubian idylls, a white house with a green vine.

## POSTSCRIPT

As this book approaches publication, one of the strangest things has happened that I have ever seen, even in *Insanity Fair* — the resignation of Béla de Imrédy from the Hungarian Premiership because of his discovery that he has Jewish blood. I have told in this book how Imrédy, a man of predominantly German descent, was called to power by the aristocratic-landowning-clerical-

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Jewish regime as the last hope of saving Hungary from some form of National Socialism; how in course of time he himself came to feel strongly that land-for-the-landless, work-for-the-workless, and restriction of the Jewish influence were essential for Hungary; how he then attempted to call into being a movement, 'Hungarian Life', to bring about these things; and how the Old Regime in Budapest, which had effortlessly reimposed its rule on Hungary after a world war, turned on and prepared to rend him.

One of the weapons they used against him was the suggestion that he himself had Jewish blood, and I have also told in this book how he disproved this by producing birth and baptismal certificates for his parents and grandparents. The rumours, however, were not stilled, and a month later Imrédy announced that he had made further researches and had discovered that his maternal great-great-grandparents were actually Jewish and had been baptized Christians with their son, his maternal great-grandfather, in the year 1814. Imrédy stated that he still firmly believed the policy he had advocated to be essential for Hungary. But in these circumstances he would not pursue it further himself, and he resigned. His overthrow, like that of Octavian Goga in Rumania a year earlier, was the result of the powerful Jewish opposition, in Hungary and abroad, and was another setback, for how long cannot yet be foretold, to the German desire to see restrictive measures against the Jews adopted in other countries. By a strange freak of chance, the first man who ever tried seriously to tackle the Jewish problem in Hungary had himself Jewish blood, three generations back.

## BELGRADE BURLESQUE

I stood in a little pavilion in the Kalimegdan Park, in Belgrade, and watched Count Ciano, the son-in-law of Mussolini and incidentally the Foreign Minister of Italy, the man who had acquired a reputation for military valour by bombing Abyssinians, the man who, with his wife, Edda Mussolini, was regarded by the diplomats as the mainspring of the stand-or-fall-with-Germany group in Italy. Young, ruddy-cheeked, energetic, with an artificial strut and an artificial glower, as becomes the son-in-law of a dictator and the representative of a successful Fascist state.

Prince Regent Paul and Milan Stoyadinovitch were there too. They were all smiles and affability as they greeted Mussolini's son-in-law. The little pavilion in the Kalimegdan Park, where Ciano was to open an exhibition of Italian literature, was completely cut off from the population of Belgrade by cordons of police and gendarmes and plain-clothes men, and not one Belgrader in ten thousand saw his country's honoured guest. But within the little pavilion itself all was most bonhomous and genial. Somebody had had a brilliantly original idea: a little girl with a bouquet ('How sweet!') greeted Count Ciano and said a piece in her childish lisp, and he in his deep and manly tones said 'Grazie', and all the stern, we-are-the-men-who-count ministers and officials standing round broke into friendly mankind-loving smiles, and Count Ciano transferred the flowers to one of his body-guard, and the Fascist babies, of both sexes, saluted and hailed him, and Prince Paul and Milan Stoyadinovitch accompanied him into the hall to open the exhibition.

A few yards away from the pavilion, in the same Kalimegdan Park, was another building, and in this you could see the motor car, an ancient and unprepossessing vehicle, in which King Alexander of Yugoslavia was murdered at Marseilles just four years earlier. Normally used, before that time, for bringing the

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higher-grade swindlers and more expensive trollops of Marseilles to police headquarters, it was apparently the best the French were able to find for their royal guest on that October day in 1934, and as its highest speed was twenty miles an hour and the chauffeur had been instructed to keep it in first gear anyway, and it had a convenient running board, Vlada the Chauffeur, the gunman, who had been waiting among the crowd with his pockets bulging with bombs and revolvers, had no difficulty in carrying out his mission, and now that old motor car rusts in the museum in the Kalimegdan Park and you can see the bloodstains.

A fitting sideshow in Insanity Fair, I think, the two buildings in the Kalimegdan Park, with the murdered King's car in the one, and Count Ciano, Prince Regent Paul, Milan Stoyadinovitch, Italo-Yugoslav friendship, in the other.

For some of the assassins, as I have already suggested, were trained and sheltered in Italy, and the chief of them retired to his villa there after the murder, and the request for his extradition was refused. When an outraged Yugoslavia brought her case before the League Council at Geneva, she was browbeaten by England and France into keeping out of it the name of Italy, whose foremost leaders must have known what was afoot, and the matter was written off with a rebuke to Hungary, who had played a comparatively minor part in the affair. For England and France were then determined that nothing should come between them and their efforts to placate Italy and keep her out of the German orbit, and the rights or grievances of a small state like Yugoslavia meant just as little to them then as the fate of Czechoslovakia meant to them four years later. The good Laval sidetracked the demands for justice of the outraged Boshko Yefitch, the Foreign Minister who accompanied King Alexander to Marseilles, with the same effortless cynicism that was subsequently shown at Munich.

'Make friends with Italy,' was their urgent advice to Yugoslavia.

Well, four years have passed, and what have you now? Italy is not with France and England, but solidly in partnership with

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Germany. Yugoslavia, having tasted isolation, having tasted desertion, is the friend of Italy and Germany. She has followed the advice that was given her. She could do nothing else. During the sanctions period she made her last effort to keep in with England and France. At English invitation she joined the group of Mediterranean Powers pledged jointly to resist Italian aggression. Mussolini never forgot that, either, and when Abyssinia was conquered he set about to win the friendship of Yugoslavia, to ensure that he should never again be ringed about with foes in the Mediterranean.

He has succeeded. Do not think that Prince Regent Paul, Milan Stoyadinovitch, or anyone else in Yugoslavia likes the policy which Yugoslavia is now forced to pursue. She can hope for no succour from the west, she is isolated between two great martial dictatorships, her only hope of survival is to be their friend. Thus does the Gadarene Gallop go on, that inexplicable sequence of blunder leading to blunder that has brought England to her present plight.

Italy is now sure of the neutrality, at least, of her eastern neighbour, once the ally of France, in any European conflict. Simultaneously, she is helping Franco, her western neighbour, nearer and nearer to his victory in Spain. If and when that happens, the Mediterranean will probably be closed, in war, to England and France. I cannot see how France, if that happens, can make good her bold undertaking to keep Tunis, which Italy wants, by arms. She will be exposed to attack on three sides, instead of one as in the World War. Italy will sit athwart her troopship routes to and from Africa. The stage, if Franco wins, will be set for a joint Italo-German onslaught, by bluff or by arms, on France and England, which France and England may be too weak to resist.

This favourable development in the Mediterranean may be the reason why, as I write in the early weeks of 1939, Germany seems to be soft-peddalling on her Eastern policy and turning towards the West.

As I came out of the pavilion, the Kalimegdan Park was dark

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and empty, peopled only by the lurking figures of police and plain-clothes men. The adjoining streets were empty, too. The rulers of Yugoslavia, perforce, were making friends with Italy, because they had no choice. The people of Yugoslavia still had no affection for that policy, and did not see the causes which made it necessary. The police were taking no chances with their distinguished visitor, and the population was kept at a distance. Count Ciano, who told a little hand-picked audience that he had come to Yugoslavia to speak to the whole Yugoslav nation, saw very few Yugoslavs as he was escorted through the country inside a ring of police.

But that was not important. The Kalimegdan Park might be empty, the neighbouring streets too, but Reasons of State were making policy inside the little pavilion among the trees, and the Reasons of State were the weakness of France and England and the strength of Germany and Italy.

As this book goes to press Milan Stoyadinovitch has been overthrown by a group of his own Ministers, who resigned on the ground that he had not solved the Croat dispute, which I have discussed in Chapter 17 and which potentially threatens the existence of Yugoslavia. Their action is in itself an admission that the Croat crisis is serious, a thing they have always denied, but whether they will do anything about it is quite another question. For Stoyadinovitch became Prime Minister by exactly the same method: he overthrew his then chief, Boshko Yeftitch, by leading a group of Ministers who resigned on the ground that Yeftitch had not solved the Croat dispute. But in the event they themselves did nothing to solve it. Whether Belgrade now really sees the red light in Croatia, or whether this is just another redistribution of the sweets of office in Belgrade, is the question which the future will answer.

## CHAPTER 35

### BOHEMIA IN BONDAGE

I DROVE out of Budapest, in my hired car, on a foul winter's day, with the roads oozing mud and the rain trying to turn into snow, and set my course for liberated Upper Hungary, for Bratislava, Brunn and Prague, a long, long run, and I was shivering with half-cured influenza, and the fields which had looked so warm and friendly in the summer were now black and brown and bare and hostile, the horizon beckoned no invitation, beshawled peasants trudged along, bent before the wind and rain, the long, straight road lay before me like a muddy canal.

I came to Komarom. The little town lies athwart the Danube, a bridge joining its two halves, and here, until the map-makers of Munich got to work, the frontier had run; the northern half of Komarom had been Czecho-Slovakia, and the southern half Hungary.

I drove across the bridge and looked at liberated Komarom and found myself asking the old question, who whom? Who has liberated whom? Here was no free and laughing town. Here were the familiar signs of keep-your-mouth-shut, of gendarme-rule. In the little dining-room where I lunched, a large portrait of Admiral Horthy had been hung, I suppose in the place where Masaryk's picture had formerly been. I asked the waiter, what languages are spoken here? He looked at me with suspicion at the back of his eyes ('Is this a spy?') and said non-committally, 'We used to speak Slovak, Czech or German; now we speak Hungarian', and hurried away; he had no wish to be questioned.

In the streets the shopkeeper Alexander Klein, good Magyar, had changed the name over his windows to Kiss Sándor. Oh yeah, I thought. The shops of Bata, the great Czech shoemaker, had changed their name to Citka, and I wondered casually whether they had just been expropriated or bought out. A heavy and oppressive atmosphere lay over the town. The people, if you asked them a question in German, replied that they only spoke

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Hungarian, and needed a deal of friendly suasion to admit that they understood you. I thought of Czecho-Slovakia, before Munich, where there were dozens of German-language newspapers, where the Germans had their own German schools in every German district, where the Germans had their own party, were able to demonstrate and meet and discuss. I looked at Hungary, where no German-language newspapers were allowed, though some 600,000 Germans lived in the country, where there were hardly any German schools, no German political party, no political liberty for the Germans.

Yet Hitler had crushed that Czechoslovakia, made this Hungary greater, restored large areas of Slovakia and Ruthenia to Hungarian rule! A strange world.

I drove on, through one of the most desolate countrysides I have ever seen. True, it was a flat and barren land, a despondent winter's day, with the dusk already lurking behind the surly clouds. But apart from all that, the place had a graveyard look. Suppression, oppression, repression, it said to me, as I bumped through it, my car rattling over the potholes, jets of mud spurting from beneath the wheels. The villages were few and far between, you hardly saw a soul. The Hungarians had taken down the Czech name-plates at the approaches to each village and had not yet replaced them with Hungarian ones. They had also taken down the Czech signposts. Presumably they would in time put up new ones, but for the nonce you drove through a nameless countryside. In the villages you saw shuttered shops, and I suppose they were those of Czechs, of Slovaks, or of Jews who had come to these districts from Czecho-Slovakia; the Jews from Hungary had been left alone.

In the villages, too, groups of youths and men stood about, unprepossessing, muttering. I asked the Jew who filled my petrol tank why they were there, if some meeting or demonstration were afoot. He answered briefly 'No work', and busied himself with the pump to avoid further questions.

With relief, as the dusk fell, I came to the frontier. I did not know at first that it was the frontier. It looked like a military

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outpost in Siberia, or something of that sort. The frontiers of Munich and Vienna are not being given much dignity; men do not seem to think they will last long.

The figure of a Hungarian soldier, calling me to stop, loomed up on a long stretch of featureless road flanked by bare fields. I looked at him questioningly, wondering whether some new frontier brawl was in progress. Then he told me that he was the frontier. He had another soldier with him, they lived in a mud-and-log-cabin beside the road, and they were the frontier.

I came then to the Slovak frontier, a real one, with an orthodox customs house, and beyond that, with much relief, I found another world, tidy and prosperous villages, clean and well-built houses, people bustling about, children skating and sliding and tobogganing, lights. This was Czecho-Slovakia, that had been destroyed in the name of 'self-determination'; how much respect, I thought, have our rulers for phrases like 'non-intervention' and 'self-determination' when they advance the cause of great and predatory militarist states, and how little respect they have for other phrases, like 'the League of Nations', 'collective resistance to aggression', 'loyalty and honour', when these threaten to stay the prowess of the grab-dictatorships.

But as I drove on, hoping to reach Bratislava, the Slovak capital, in another half hour, I began to wonder whether I was dreaming, or whether I had by some mischance crossed the wrong frontier. I asked myself if it was possible that I had come to Germany, for I drove through a village called Mischdorf and then through two or three others with German names, and the swastika flag flew from every second or third house in them; Germany was celebrating some Hitlerist festival on that day, and these people were honouring it too.

I was, to all effect, in Germany. I did, in another fifteen minutes, come to Bratislava, but these villages on the outskirts, where many Austrians live, as I subsequently learned, were in effect Reich colonies on Slovak soil. Imagine Italian flags flying from every house in Clerkenwell, or Palestinian flags flying from every second house in Hampstead, and you will have a picture

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of that scene — with the important difference that the parent state, Germany, is here only a mile or two away.

By the occupation of the Danube bridgehead, and by the presence of these German villages on the further side of Bratislava, between the Slovak capital and Hungary, the Germans hold Bratislava in the hollow of their hand, just as they hold Bohemia and Moravia through the construction of the trans-Czecho-Slovakian road. Bratislava is the next downstream key-position on the Danube after Vienna, and the Hungarians hoped to get it after Munich. That dream has faded. It was ludicrous to me, after seeing those staunch German colonies around Bratislava, to think that the Hungarians should seriously hope to obtain it.

I could not help but think, as I drove through those German settlements, independent Hitlerist islands in a foreign land, how good it must be to be a German to-day, to feel that your country watches over you, wherever you may be, that you have at your back a rock of granite.

So I slept for a few hours and started out again, before dawn, for that long overland journey to Prague, and as I went I again felt admiration rising and rising in me for all that the Czechs had achieved in the brief twenty years of national freedom, after so many centuries of struggle, that was vouchsafed them. The best road, to Brünn, had been partly taken by the Germans, and I travelled over the second-best, but even at that it was a marvellous road, perfectly maintained and marked. It ran between vast fertile fields and well-tended forests, nowhere a keep-out-of-here board to be seen, through hamlets and villages and towns and cities each one of which vied with the other in the signs of prosperity and tidiness and thrift and progress. Hodonin, Slavkov, Brünn, Iglau (a German island), Kolin — nowhere in Europe, outside Germany, have I seen towns so well-found and well-stocked and well-built, and even in Germany I have not seen better.

That this state, of all states, should have been sold into bondage by France and England is a crime beyond repair. These people had earned and deserved their liberty, in twenty years they had done more to vindicate it than England in centuries. Here men

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were free, as men are not free in England, because freedom was used for and not against the people, and still the good air of that freedom lingered on. Given another twenty or thirty years the small states of Danubian Europe, with Czechoslovakia in the van, would have been so firmly founded that the age-old rivalry of the predatory great powers to possess them would have ceased, we should have had our brave new Europe, for which so many millions died. Now they are to be reduced to the status of Central American republics, more decades, more centuries of darkness lie ahead, at Munich the light was put out.

I came into Prague, and to the Wenceslas Platz in the dusk, and again my senses quickened in response to the beauty of that cityscape, the noble lines of the Platz — how well the Czechs built and build — the lights, the throngs of people, the teeming traffic.

Again I found that strange paradox — a nation with bitterness buried deep in its heart, a city busier and more prosperous than any other in Europe east of the Rhine. The hotels were full, the shops packed, the streets filled with people. As yet, I cannot tell whether this is a passing phase, a clearance-sale boom, or whether Czecho-Slovakia, by some strange working of the unfathomable laws of trade and commerce, is going to wrest material prosperity from spiritual prostration.

It is, as I write, a mystery, the solution of which will later be seen. Czecho-Slovakia was before Munich, and still is, one of the most abundant countries in Europe. In no other east of the Rhine have I seen, since the creeping paralysis of dictatorship and self-sufficient economies began to spread over Europe, shops so full of good and cheap food, poultry, the pig in all its posthumous forms, cheese, butter, milk, eggs. Slovak liquor is among the best and cheapest in Europe. In quite small towns you could — and as yet you still can — buy English cigarettes, French wines and brandy, Scotch whisky, things long since unprocurable in the neighbouring states, great and small, save in a few luxury shops mainly supported by foreigners. In no other country that I know were clothing, boots, furniture, glass and china so cheap and good. The Czech workman is one of the best in the world, and his needs are modest.

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It seemed to me that Czecho-Slovakia, under German domination, was due to be plundered, that in course of time the same blight would fall upon the shops that I had seen in other countries, and this still may happen. Butter in Czecho-Slovakia costs twelve crowns and in Germany six marks, which is equivalent to seventy-two crowns — and Germany is very short of butter. The same holds good for other foodstuffs of which Czecho-Slovakia has an abundance. Already substantial supplies, payable only in block marks, had been virtually commandeered for the Reich, German troops had casually crossed the border from neighbouring garrison towns to buy supplies of things they could not obtain at home, and this process was likely to continue. But as yet it had left no mark, as yet there was no lack of butter and foodstuffs in Czecho-Slovakia, no great rise in prices.

For the nonce, business was thriving in Prague. One reason was that Prague had become a clearing-house for the Jewish emigration. Jews from all parts of Czecho-Slovakia and from other countries were coming to Prague, as the first stage of their journey to England, America, the British Dominions, or South America. They had even begun to publish, and this is a remarkable instance of their insuppressible energy, a newspaper, *Overseas*, devoted entirely to questions of emigration, and in one of the first numbers of this I found the sinister statement that the British Home Office had 'loyally' refused to publish figures of the number of immigrant Jews in England, 'probably because the immigration is far from finished'.

Loyalty? To whom? To the population of Britain? I do not think so.

These Jews, as a means of exporting some of their capital, were buying everything they could lay hands on in Prague — a dozen suits, twenty pairs of shoes, fur coats, jewellery, everything. This, as far as I could find, was the main reason for that hectic business activity.

When I came to Prague again, 1939 had got well into its stride, Munich already lay months behind, and the process of squeezing Czecho-Slovakia into complete serfdom, at the unspoken threat of open annexation, had progressed further. Indeed, it had gone so

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far that the German technique for reducing these countries is now clear to see, and you may make a fair picture of what will happen throughout Danubian Europe. It is a skilful process of always asking for more, of relentless pressure relentlessly maintained, of squeezing until the pips squeak.

I think you can find the definition of this process in Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*—not in the English edition, perhaps, but in the edition the Germans read. I read in an English newspaper that a London bookseller, at Christmas 1938, said that *Mein Kampf* was to-day the best-selling book in England. This means, I suppose, that the English are seeking after knowledge, and rightly so.

In the German edition you will find these lines: 'A clever victor will always impose his demands on the conquered in parts . . . He can then reckon that a people will feel no sufficient cause in each of these single oppressions for seizing arms again.'

This theory was being applied to the Czechs. Every day was bringing them more and more demands, without any return. After Munich, they thought that they would, as the price of their capitulation, at least be left to live in peace within their frontiers. They were wrong. The first demand was for the cession of a strip of territory for the building of the German Corridor through Czecho-Slovakia. They resisted, they did not want to sign on the dotted line. They were told that the Germans had desired to prove their friendliness by giving them the opportunity to sign an agreement about the road; whether they signed or not, the road would be built. So they signed.

Incidentally, I see that you are once more being led up that dreary garden path in the matter of this road. I suppose it is a waste of time to state the facts, but I will do so once again.

'Sir John Simon stated that the new road would remain part of the territory of Czecho-Slovakia, but he had no doubt that the road itself would be the property of some German company.'

The road will not remain part of the territory of Czecho-Slovakia, it is a strip of territory formally ceded to Germany. The road will not become the property of 'some German company',

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but of the German Autobahn Company, which is the German State, which is Hitler.

The road will be a strip of sovereign German territory laid across Czecho-Slovakia, whether Czecho-Slovakia likes it or not, and by it the Czech lands are brought within the frontiers of the Reich.

After signing that agreement, the Czechs thought that they would now at least be given the guarantee of their frontiers — not the English and French guarantee, which they knew to be an absurdity in the circumstances, a thing never sincerely intended because it could never have been fulfilled, but the German guarantee; Herr Hitler's undertaking to give this was another of Mr. Chamberlain's achievements at Munich.

The Czechs were wrong again. They had expected to send their Foreign Minister to Berlin, to bring home that German guarantee, but now they found that his visit was repeatedly postponed, that new demands rained on them day by day. They must give the Germans in Bohemia full liberty to organize their National Socialist Party, their Storm Troops, their Hitler Youth, and the like — but they must speed up the abolition of all other political parties. They must ban all foreign and home newspapers of an anti-German or anti-Nazi complexion. They ought to hurry along with the reduction of the Jewish influence.

The Czechs fought every inch of the way, but they had to yield, and gradually the land came under the German thrall. At last the Foreign Minister, Chvalkovsky, was permitted to go to Berlin. He was coldly received, and was made to understand, at once, that he was not there to 'negotiate', but to receive orders. Why had not Czecho-Slovakia given notice to terminate her alliances with France and Russia? (after Munich, these had become meaningless scraps of paper, but the Prague Government had not formally denounced them). Why had not Czecho-Slovakia joined the anti-Comintern Pact?

Chvalkovsky answered that Czecho-Slovakia would do these things if Germany would guarantee those frontiers. He was out to save the last thing the Czechs had in the world — to preserve Bohemia from a German occupation.

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He was immediately made to understand, by that ring of grim-faced men about him, that the part of Czecho-Slovakia was not to make conditions, but to do what she was told.

By the time you read this, I suppose, Czecho-Slovakia will have done the things demanded of her. I doubt whether she will get anything at all in return. More and more will be demanded from her, the iron grip will close ever more tightly on this small, brave, hard-working people, their reduction to serfdom will be made complete.

In Prague the German-language university has already been transformed into a Hitlerist citadel. Every day brings some new German move, some new German order, to show that Czecho-Slovakia is a German colony. Hitler is 'imposing his demands on the conquered people in parts'. One day an order is issued that German motor cars crossing into Czecho-Slovakia no longer need to carry the international papers necessary to enter the territory of a sovereign state. The next day an agreement is signed giving German troops right of way on railways passing through Czecho-Slovak territory.

Czecho-Slovakia is a German province. The older generation of Czechs will never become accustomed to that, never overcome the bitterness that is in their hearts. But the younger generation, contemplating with relentless logic the way Czecho-Slovakia was sold into bondage by her friends, are beginning to think differently. They say that the Czech destiny, the only hope of Czech happiness, lies in full acceptance of German domination. In a few years they will come to rule the state. Many of them will work with Germany in peace and fight for Germany in war, not from compulsion, but from conviction. They have seen that the words 'freedom', 'democracy', 'honour', were lies, invented to dupe them. They have seen the fiasco of the states that claimed to stand for these things, they have seen the rise of the dictatorships, they have seen their own desertion.

At this point I should like to interpose one last word on behalf of truth and reason.

Mr. Chamberlain, speaking in the House on February 1st, 1939,

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uttered his familiar rebuke to the doubting souls who do not believe the promises of the grab-dictatorships.

The same Mr. Chamberlain, speaking on March 14th, 1938, told the House that the German Government had given 'assurances' that it considered itself, in its relations with Czechoslovakia, bound by the German-Czechoslovak arbitration treaty.

On January 30th, 1939, the day before Mr. Chamberlain rebuked the doubters, Hitler himself stated that he gave, on May 28th, 1938, the order to prepare a military invasion of Czechoslovakia on October 2nd, 1938.

The Germans may yet sit in Prague. In Austria, the Austrian-born Nazi leader for Vienna, Globocnik, has been dismissed, the German-born Commissioner, Bürckel, put in his place. A German Governor in Vienna! As I know them, the Germans will find it hard to resist the temptation to sit in Prague. They call it 'a German city'. Have they changed? Is Hitler cleverer than his predecessors? Is the lack of resistance to him so complete that he does not even need to do these things? This may be.

Now the rulers of England have awakened to the fact that something is moving in the world. They are telling English people, as if a divine revelation had been granted them, that all is not well, that they may be attacked 'suddenly and continuously', that they must rearm, rearm, rearm.

You may double and quadruple your armament factories, set them working day and night for ever — but you cannot make good the loss of your most valuable armaments, allies. Czecho-Slovakia and Spain. Why, if England is in danger, have these two small nations been sacrificed, why are Englishmen to be sent to be killed in the most unfavourable circumstances possible in any new war, why has everything been done in advance to reduce the chances of victory and of life itself for this new generation of Englishmen that is being told to prepare for the slaughter.

An obscene farce. In the meantime, watch Prague.

## CHAPTER 36

### LOOKING AT ENGLAND

I SAT in the dingy station restaurant at Budapest and read my English newspaper, and as I did so the lights suddenly went out and in the darkness somebody banged twelve times tinnily on a tea-tray, and then the lights went on again and the white-capped cook came in, holding under his arm a squealing sucking-pig, and he took this animal from one guest to another for each to pluck a bristle from it and pull its tail, and pocketed his tip at each table, and I realized that 1938 had died and 1939 was born. It was a lugubrious imitation of a merry New Year's eve, for but half a dozen guests sat in that ill-lit restaurant, and they were only there because the express from Germany, for which they were waiting, was late — for some mysterious reason trains from Germany are getting more and more unpunctual — and they were champing with impatience to leave this dreary place and be gone.

So that was 1938, I thought, as the squeals died away, and I took my mind back to the previous New Year's eve, and thought how happy I had then been, in Vienna, and how my good friend and I had seen the New Year in beneath the tall arches of St. Stephen's Cathedral, and then all the events of 1938 passed in review before me, Hitler's swoop on Austria, the publication of my book, idyllic weeks in Budapest, Bedlam once more, fly, fly, fly again, that noontide rest beneath the bough on the Belgrade road, Prague in vassalage. Well, I thought, 1938 had brought the things I feared in *Insanity Fair*, and now, here I was in a station restaurant in Budapest, with 1939 before me, and small promise of good cheer it held, and I wondered, where should I be when 1939 died?

There is small profit in such wonderings, nowadays, so I took up my English paper again and began to look at England, where

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the British Empire was in course of being lost on the playing fields of Eton. My paper showed me a reproduction of Mr. Chamberlain's Christmas card — just a simple picture of that aeroplane and the proud words 'Munich, September, 1938'.

Well, well. Perhaps it was a famous victory. Mr. Chamberlain seems in danger of ultimate ennoblement as Lord Chamberlain of Munich. But I fancy that English people will before long look back with little affection on that famous flight.

For eleven years before that New Year's Eve in Budapest, and during the weeks that have since elapsed, I have been looking at England from some remote corner of a foreign land, from towns in Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, Switzerland, Hungary. I would have liked to carry the British flag everywhere, but it is difficult. Everywhere I go people long to hear about England, to have some sort of contact with England; centuries of looking to England lie in their blood, as love of England, that England which treats its own people so scurvily, lies in mine. But England becomes ever remoter from them. They no longer understand England. England no longer fits into the picture they formed in their youth, at their parents' knees.

They regard me, because I speak some of their language, understand their problems, like to sit and eat and drink and talk with them, as a strange creature. 'You don't seem like an Englishman', they always say. They are right: I do not feel like the kind of Englishman they know, who usually approaches them with a transparent raincoat of *bonhomie* over an impenetrable hide of repression, whose smiles never have any real nourishment in them (as one of George Belcher's charwomen said), who always looks as if he fears that you might ask him for some favour or bore him with your troubles. Their troubles enthralled me. If I had been an important Englishman, I would have spent much time among these peoples; there would have been none that I knew quite nothing about. If I had been a German or Italian I should have gone to these people with my colours flying, as the representative of my nation, with the whole

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weight of my Embassy and Press behind me. As an Englishman, I am a lonely wanderer, playing a lone hand. My zest in this life grows and grows; I am not so old as I used to be, and I enjoy it. But I am never more, to the people I go among, than a stray Englishman. When they ask 'What does England stand for, what does England think of us, what will England do for us?' I tell them that I don't know, or refer them to Munich, of which England seems to be proud. I can only tell them what I stand for, what I think of them, what I would do if I could.

Yet, how much we could learn from them, how much they could do for us.

To look at England from abroad you must do so through English or foreign newspapers. The foreign newspapers which are now most widely read abroad are the German ones, which constantly draw attention to the worst side of English life, and their circulations are steadily increasing. But even the few English newspapers, to the critical eye of a foreign reader, give an appalling picture of wealth, inhumanity and cant on the one side, and of poverty, hopelessness and destitution on the other.

The picture of England has never been so revolting and incomprehensible as in these recent months. Day by day my English and foreign newspapers have shown me British unemployed lying down in Oxford Circus — removed by the police; unemployed in Downing Street — removed by the police; unemployed at the Palace — turned away by the police; unemployed at the Monument — removed by the police; unemployed at the Labour Minister's home — removed by the police and charged 'with insulting words and behaviour'; unemployed at the Ritz for tea — turned out by the police; unemployed at Victoria Station — removed by the police.

Always the police, the police, the police. I have before me a picture of an unemployed man who took part in a demonstration at Victoria when Mr. Chamberlain went to Rome. He is being 'led away' by the police. That is to say, two policemen have hold of him, as if he were a criminal maniac, three others are all round him, and behind rides a mounted policeman. He is hat-

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less, ill-clad and underfed; but his thin raincoat has been torn to ribbons by the police.

Then I turn to my German newspapers and read mocking and contemptuous articles about the way England treats her own people. 'According to official statistics England has about 1,800,000 unemployed, who with their families form approximately a fifth of the population of Great Britain', begins one such article.

When these men try, by spectacular but still orderly methods, to draw attention to their lot, the police are set at them.

I have been collecting cases from English newspapers during two or three weeks. I have hundreds of them and meant to print some here, but now, in writing, I have myself grown sick and cannot go on. How is England to get out of this slough of despond? The people themselves, after centuries of it, seem to have lost the will or the wish to lift themselves above it. The forces against them are too strong. But minds are stirring and surging in the whole world, and because of these things, which you would not mend, you are soon going to see a volcanic movement of anger and despair in England.

What will happen then? I think I can tell you that too. The same people who have sold the Czechs into serfdom, who are trying to do the same with the Spaniards, who are allowing the Jews to enter England in thousands, who find money and compassion and sanctuary for the Jews, will send soldiers with machine-guns against their own kin. This is the inevitable inference of all they have done in foreign policy. Why, if we are so gravely behind in armaments, if we are in mortal danger from some great power, did they sacrifice so valuable an ally as Czecho-Slovakia? Why are they sacrificing Spain?

Class-antagonism is the only possible answer, and these people will be just as ruthless towards their own countrymen.

As I write, the Spanish tragedy seems at last to be finishing. Perhaps this is wrong, perhaps Barcelona will prove to be another Madrid, but it seems unlikely. After nearly three years the Spanish people seem to have been forced to their knees by the

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Italians, the Germans, the Moors. Franco now seems within reach of victory. Soon you will see what Non-Intervention meant — that Franco must win. Before Mr. Chamberlain went to Rome it seemed that England and France, to ensure his victory, would at last grant him belligerent rights, enable him to starve out the Republicans. As in the cases of Austria and Czechoslovakia, this was contrary to official British foreign policy, but on the eve of the journey to Rome *The Times* launched the usual cautious suggestion that this should be done. That it was not done seems to be due to the fact that it was not necessary; apparently Franco can now win without belligerent rights, unless another miracle intervenes.

As in the cases of Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia, the British influence has been decisive. The French, seeing the deadly danger to themselves of a Franco victory, might at the last moment have opened their frontier and allowed arms to reach the beleaguered Republicans. England prevented this. Mr. Chamberlain deterred the French by informing them of his latest 'assurances' from Signor Mussolini — that Italian troops would not remain in Spain 'after the victory'.

So you see what non-intervention meant. After the victory — and you can believe this — Franco's Spain will become the docile ally of Germany and Italy, in peace and war. Franco Spain will be an entirely Fascist State — in spite of former 'assurances'. You have seen what happened in Czecho-Slovakia: the Skoda Works have passed under German control, they are making arms and munitions for Germany, the Czech army will fight for Germany in any new war. Exactly the same thing will happen in Spain, if Franco wins. Italy will not give up those Balearic Islands.

When Franco wins, your strategic position will be desperate. After Munich, after that unblushing French repudiation of a written pledge, you can no longer count on your French ally. Even if you could, your strategic position would still be desperate. You will be without friends, you will be soon confronted with an imperative demand for the surrender of territory on the most humiliating terms.

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I have just seen in a newspaper a picture of Spanish children, each of whom had lost a limb, in flight before Franco over the mountains to France.

In flight? I have used the wrong term. They only had one leg apiece, and a crutch in place of the other. Each was led by a grown man. There was a little girl, about the age of my daughter, with one leg. A little boy, about the age of my son, with one leg. Behind them other children, each with one leg, each with one crutch, hobbling over the mountains, hurrying to get to France.

Suffer little children! Oh yeah? Not these little children. These little children are insufferable. They are the children of peasant-class, working-class parents, Reds. Blow their remaining legs off. Send the Moors, the Germans, the Italians, to do it. Applaud Franco. Onward Christian soldiers.

Suffer little children? Not these little children. If they were the well-fed and well-clad children of well-to-do German Jews, you would turn out your mayor and his corporation, his gold chain and his band to welcome them, press reporters and photographers in scores would describe and depict their daily doings for you, your warmhearted women welfare workers would hasten to them, your love-your-fellow-man students from Oxford would take train to Dovercourt to pet and pamper them and tuck them up.

But these other little children, with one leg apiece, hobbling over the mountains? Oh no. No primates or prelates burst into protest about this. No Elder Politicians, no peers gathered on platforms to appeal to the conscience of the world about this. No newspapers opened their columns to subscriptions for this cause.

No, this is what the England of 1939 likes to see, this procession of one-legged children, hobbling over the wintry hills to France. These are Reds. Out upon them. Franco, Hitler and Mussolini are saving us from Bolshevism.

At Munich the greatest victory in history was converted into the greatest defeat. We English people of to-day either fought in a war in which a million Britishers were killed or we are the

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sons and daughters of those men. We did not win that war: it is not finished, as we now see. We granted our enemy an Armistice, and now, twenty years later, he is stronger than we are; either hostilities will be resumed in conditions more unfavourable to ourselves than those of 1914 or we must capitulate.

This was not necessary. We could have had the victory. We could have outarmed the rearming adversary, or we could have found allies with whom we should have been stronger than he. We gave our million British lives to save the nation, but also for a wider ideal — the right of poor men to live as freemen, and of small nations to live as free nations.

One after another, all these things have been cast away. We neither have our brave new England nor our brave new world. We have an England more class-ridden and with more slums than ever. We have a world again at the mercy of military adventurers. We have governments that tell us they stand for the old ideals, but in moments of crisis they always betray these ideals. They tell us for years that we have nothing to fear when mortal danger is approaching our door.

For what are we to live, for what to die? We have been sold and betrayed.

You might think there was something foul in the state of England. But no, all is well. We still have an Upper Class, and that is all that matters. Lady Londonderry, the political hostess, writes in a book, 'There is still, what shall we call it, an Upper Class, its ranks diminished and impoverished by the war. They still wield a certain influence behind the scenes and in times of crisis their presence will still be felt, something solid and very British.'

In the countries I know, politicians have attached much importance to that little coterie behind-the-scenes which is so solid and British in moments of crisis. But any attempt to identify its members, to reveal how they work, is sternly repressed, produces loud cries of indignation.

For years I have followed the activities of that little group, of whose impoverishment I have seen little trace. For years I have

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known that they favoured the relinquishment of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia and the other Danubian countries to Germany, the victory of Franco in Spain, and although official British policy, as proclaimed in Parliament, has always been against these things, they have always had their way in the end.

For long enough, this powerful group was known to foreign newspapers and foreign legations and foreign governments as the Something Clique. But this was apparently an illusion, because one day a non-member of this non-existent Clique wrote to a British newspaper to say that it never had existed. It was just a Communist Plot. Until then the belief was widely held in foreign countries that it did exist and was powerful enough, in moments of crisis, always to tip the scales in favour of Germany and Italy.

This was important, because the responsibility for the bewilderment and spiritual despair of English people to-day would have been borne by the Something Clique — if only it had existed. It would have been responsible, for instance, for the change in British policy between the eve and the morrow of Munich — the eve, on which the Prime Minister said, 'If I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force I should feel that it should be resisted', and the morrow, on which Lord Halifax said, 'The German claim was in fact advanced and pressed under an overwhelming show of force, which was impossible to reconcile with the spirit of what we believe must be the basis of international relations', the morrow on which Dr. Goebbels said, 'We were ready to fight had we not got what we wanted', the morrow on which Herr Hitler said, 'This success was only possible because we were armed and determined to use our might if necessary'.

I think this shows you how the little group works. Its members, as far as I know them, are rich, not impoverished, and if disaster falls on England I expect to find that they have vanished to estates in America, South America, the Riviera, or Lord knows where. The logical end of the policy they have pursued would be the submission of England to Germany — and why should they not

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succeed? They seem to achieve much in foreign affairs. I do not perceive that they achieve much in improving our defences or in improving the lot of our under-dogs. In the matter of defences, you will remember the last-minute spade, bucket and sandbag chaos in September. In the matter of our under-dogs, you have but to read your daily newspaper with a discerning eye to see how much is done to better their lot.

While England was moving to that gloomiest of all festivals, the British Christmastide, Mr. Chamberlain told some five hundred odd, no, not odd, I mean more than five hundred guests at a Foreign Press banquet once more what he intended to do in foreign affairs. As some sign of appreciation for his services at Munich, the German Press, in a body, boycotted the banquet. The Germans had been provoked into remaining away by the following brutal passage in Mr. Chamberlain's speech:

I must deplore the present attitude of the German Press which in one case has not scrupled to pour out its vituperation against our most respected statesman, himself only recently the Prime Minister of this country, and in few cases has shown much desire to understand our point of view.

There we are, deploring again. Would you believe it? It's just political hay fever.

Once more  
We deplore  
We deplore  
And abhor  
The German attacks on our worth.  
It is cheek  
But the meek  
Turn the cheek  
Ev'ry week  
And hope to inherit the earth.

But nowadays we may not even deplore. Could German barbarity go further? Soon our last occupation will be gone. What is left to us if we may neither deplore nor deprecate? A world without a wailing wall.

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Mr. Chamberlain also said that the year 1938 had been one of progress in the direction of peace-making and that he was astonished at the pessimism of some critics of the Government.

The destiny of Mr. Chamberlain is to be astonished. He further said that he had chosen his own course and that if he were ultimately to fail 'it would be no consolation to myself or anybody else to be able to say that I had followed the advice of others instead of relying on my own judgment'.

That can be put another way. If Mr. Chamberlain fails, the responsibility will be his, all his, and nobody's but his. When he took office time still remained to stop the rot. He had no personal knowledge or experience of foreign affairs. Did he lend ear to those who had? Seemingly not. Following 'his own judgment', he took on his own responsibility decisions, in great international crises, of incalculable importance to the world and to his countrymen. The result of these decisions will show itself very soon now. The bulk of expert and experienced opinion in foreign affairs was against them. The professional makers of garments did not approve the way this cloth was being cut and stitched. Mr. Chamberlain followed his own ideas. They were also those of the small but influential inner circle, inexperienced in foreign affairs but obsessed by fear of The Reds, that pulls so much weight in England.

If Mr. Chamberlain succeeds all the glory is his. If he fails the whole responsibility is his, but that will not help England.

But anyway, the brain reels before a claim that a policy of peace-making achieved progress in 1938. Look at your world, now. You have arrayed against you three of the greatest, if not the three greatest, military nations in the world, threatening you and your empire from every point of the compass. Peace? Peace-making? Eradicating the causes of war? In China a tragedy is in progress the like of which our world, since we began to keep a record of it, has hardly ever seen, something almost as far beyond human understanding as space itself. Nobody knows how many Chinese have died, but already more than those who died in the whole four years of the World War! Try to imagine the entire

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population of England, Scotland and Wales scrambling for the Hebrides, and you have a faint idea of what is happening in China. After two thousand years of slow progress towards humanity you have that gigantic catastrophe in China. In Europe you have minor tragedies, major ones impending.

In London, on the same day that Mr. Chamberlain deplored, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald told the Constitutional Club, 'Of course, one has to look at the possibility that in our own lifetime this great Empire will crumble and go to pieces'.

You will have to look for that very soon, unless you change your methods, unless your politicians stop playing golf and going to those ridiculous banquets, unless you can compel them to get to work, put your defences in order, mend your social conditions, stop fobbing you off with red-herring statements. Time still is left. Time always is left, until the clock strikes too late. But if no will exists, if prejudice and privilege and preconceived opinions and property-obsession are to outweigh experience and enthusiasm and energy and knowledge and patriotism, then it is too late before the clock strikes.

Where are you now? Italy is demanding territory from France, Germany will soon be demanding territory from England. How do we stand with France? France has declared that she will 'yield no inch of land to Italy, even if the refusal means war'. Then why, in the name of offence and defence, did France sacrifice Czechoslovakia, with its magnificent army. But where does this leave us, the English? Will we, won't we, go to the aid of France, if France is attacked? Will France, won't France, come to our aid, if we are attacked? Who knows, to-day?"

What does Mr. Chamberlain think about it?

On a Monday he said England was bound by no pact or treaty to go to the aid of France if she became involved in hostilities with Italy.

On a Tuesday he said that England's relations with France were so close as to pass beyond mere legal obligations, since they were founded on identity of interest.

On a Wednesday he said an Italian attack on Tunis 'could

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not count on the disinterestedness of England', that the dear old Anglo-Italian Gentleman's Agreement, the ratification of which was one of the rare and refreshing fruits of Munich, and by which Italy undertook to respect the present territorial arrangement in the Mediterranean, 'self-evidently applied to Tunis also', and that 'any action which might be undertaken against the agreement would naturally cause the greatest anxiety to the British Government'.

Which means, I suppose, that we should deplore and deprecate it. But do you now know what you would do if France were attacked? Do you know what France would do if we were attacked? The Germans and Italians have largely succeeded in their greatest operation of political strategy: to weaken Anglo-French collaboration to a point of paralysing uncertainty, so that in a great crisis one of the partners is likely to desert the other, and to shake domestic confidence in France and England to the foundations.

This England. We have travelled a long way from Chaucer, Milton and Bunyan, from Shakespeare and Bacon, from Raleigh and Drake and Nelson, from Dickens and Florence Nightingale, from our once green and pleasant and staunch and sturdy land to the country of ring-fenced mountains, slums, keep-out-of-here and don't-go-there, two million unemployed, under-nourishment, and the new Jewish immigration — to the England of 1939, the land of a bewildered, leaderless, alarmed and cynical people. The spirit of the English is to-day capable of greater things than ever before, but with this leadership — we are finished.

To find consolation in the picture of England to-day you must either have strange standards of judgment or be very comfortably situated yourself, with your nest-egg safely tucked away somewhere and your little house all ready far from the madding bomb.

How are we to get out of this rat-trap into which we have been led, always to a chorus of solemn reproof to the people who doubted the wisdom of the way? This is the question I ask myself when I look at England from afar. Distance lends no enchantment to this view. Do you know that in foreign countries politicians

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and diplomats already openly discuss the possibility of the transference of the Court to Canada, envisage a rump of British Empire grafted on to the United States by some strange process of political surgery?

I doubt whether it will long continue possible for an Englishman who knows something of these matters to write and tell his countrymen about them. Everywhere I see the threat of the suppression of free speech and free writing lurking between the lines of the British Press. Lord Castlerosse, a peer who happens also to be a brilliant journalist, impassionedly wrote against this and implored his 'fellow craftsmen to remember that "We must be free or die, who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake . . ."'

But this, though sincerely meant, is not true, in England to-day. We are not free in England, or our freedom is being misused to destroy us. You have only to stand back a little and look at England to lose your belief in this freedom. If freedom is a synonym for slums, the under-nourishment of the under-dog, the repression of unemployed demonstrations by the police and sanctuary for foreign Jews, it is not worth preserving. What is the virtue of freedom to write against these things, as Englishmen have written for centuries, if they are never mended, but always get worse?

But the great danger is that even this freedom will be taken away from us only in order to perpetuate these age-old evils in England and to prevent any public discussion of them. Even then, suppression and censorship, if they come in England, will come at foreign dictation, they will be the pledges of our servitude to alien domination.

England! How much that name stood for, how little does it stand for to-day!

To-day, England and France look to me like the babes in a very dark wood, and I dimly perceive the figures of the wicked uncles. The babes go on, willy-nilly, clinging to the hands that guide them. What was the end of that tale? If I remember rightly, winged creatures in the sky dropped things on them as they lay.

THE TWILIGHT THICKENS

WE'VE had our picnic, with thunderstorms rumbling in the distance and sometimes drawing near and almost bursting overhead and then receding a little, so that always a little blue remained overhead, and you looked up and said there was probably still enough to make a Dutchman a pair of trousers, but somebody, somewhere, was certainly getting wet, and over there, in the distance, the lightning seemed to have struck, something was burning, but you were still dry and picnicking.

Now the clouds, heavy, black and threatening, are all around. That thunderstorm just will not withdraw, for all your wishing. Everywhere about is the picnic litter. You don't know whether to stay and clear it up or make a dash for shelter.

It's getting dark. Salvoes of approaching thunder. Lightning stabbing from a darkening sky.

The twilight thickens.

## POSTSCRIPT

### DEATH OF A NATION

As my forty-fourth birthday approached, I felt restlessness and apprehension growing in me, and thought continually of that other birthday, my forty-third, which I told about in *Insanity Fair*, the birthday that began with red tulips and ended with German armies roaring into Austria, with the destruction of the short-lived tranquillity and happiness that I had found there after many years of wandering and many hopes disappointed, with the packing of my bags and the resumption of a nomad's life.

Ever since that forty-third birthday I had looked forward uneasily, for some reason, to my forty-fourth. When we, my good friend and I, toasted 'the coming year' in my rooms in Vienna I wondered, as I wrote in *Insanity Fair*, 'where I should be at the end of it'. Now that the day was drawing near again, I wondered more than ever, for once more the pandemonium of *Insanity Fair* was rising around me. I hoped against hope that I should be able in peace and quiet at least to celebrate that particular day, which held such exceptional memories for me. But, as the time shortened, I knew that this would not be so. I was living in Prague, and my inward voice told me that the Germans were soon going to make their next jump, that this would take them to Prague. So I wrote in the *News Chronicle* on March 8th that the coming week would show whether what Munich had left of Czecho-Slovakia was about to split at the hyphen, or whether it would continue to enjoy a vassal independence by the grace of Hitler, and that Germany would decide. And on March 11th I wrote in the same paper that Germany had weeks before threatened the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister, Dr. Chvalkovsky, 'to be in Prague not in forty-eight but in eight hours' if Czecho-Slovakia did not hasten her complete and abject submission to the Reich in all matters of her national life, and I added that Prague now feared the moment to be imminent when that threat would be made good.

## POSTSCRIPT

For my part, I am convinced that the decision to annex Czechia was made months and years before. I was convinced of it when I wrote *Insanity Fair*, and for that reason said 'I hope I am wrong in this, but I think the Germans will sit in Prague'. When I was writing this book, in the autumn of 1938, I wrote 'The Germans will yet sit in Prague. Watch Prague'. When the proofs came to me I altered 'will' to 'may' in a moment of weakness, thinking 'Well, perhaps I, who know, am wrong, and perhaps these morons, who do not know, are right with their blather about The Policy of Appeasement and We Deplore That Eternal Tendency To Distrust The Dictators Which Only Breeds Counter-Suspicion and Hush A-Bye Baby On The Treetop and Don't Listen To The Jitterbugs.'

But I was always certain that the Germans would do this, and possibly Hitler, in some future speech, will admit that he gave orders to occupy Prague six months before, about the time he was saying 'We don't want any Czechs', just as he revealed after Munich that he had given orders for the invasion of Czechoslovakia in May 1938. The only reason that Prague and the rest of the Czech lands were not taken at the time of Munich was that it was better strategy to wait. At Munich the Czech defences were handed over to Germany, so that the annexation could be carried out in an hour or two at any time, anyway. The five months of life which were permitted to rump Czechoslovakia gave time for the preparation of the total annexation, and as yet Hitler's superlatively skilful method has been never to take too much at once.

Being convinced that Germany would do this thing, and wishing to test my theory, I sought and found an opportunity to live and work in Bohemia after Munich. When I hear British politicians or diplomatic representatives say, or hear that they have said, that they did not expect the annexation, I know that they are either stating an untruth or they are culpably unsuited to their jobs and are a danger to their people, for their own best experts told them from the moment Hitler came to power, six years ago, that this would happen, and no man with an ounce of brain

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and personal experience of Germany in recent years could have doubted it. If you could look into the files of the Foreign Office and of newspaper offices, you would find exact forecasts by the score of what has happened.

But the men who have been the leaders of England in this time, unwise in their degeneration, seem determined to get you into those besnouted masks and line you up for the Gadarene Gallop. You are now witnessing the far-retching consequences of The Policy of Abasement — sorry, that's a slip, I am transcribing these notes from shorthand and the outlines for Appeasement and Abasement are very much alike.

But that is by the way; I was talking about my birthday. As March 11th approached, and from the tingling of my political skin I knew that another major crisis was at hand, I became anxious about my birthday celebration and wondered irritably whether somebody had told Hitler about the Ides of March and he had developed an obsession about this particular season of the year. I was determined not to be cheated of my birthday a second time, and at last, feeling that the sands, if you have not heard this one, were running out, I decided to anticipate it and to hold the feast on Monday, March 6th, which, in the light of events, I think was pretty close budgeting.

So in my hotel bedroom in Prague on that Monday I reconstructed my little festival of March 11th, 1938, in Vienna. If I waited, I thought, I might be too late, and the rush of German armies might cut short the hour I wanted for myself. I had, once more, the great cake, with one more candle this year, the circlet of flowers, the tulips, and the bottle of champagne, from which, on the last stroke of midnight, I drank to absent friends, and then I sat and thought of the year that had passed and of all the things that had happened during it. That hour, at all events, I had in peace, but I had to take time by the forelock to achieve it.

For on Saturday, March 11th, I knew at last the answer to the question I had been asking myself ever since March 11th, 1938, 'Where shall I be at the end of the coming year?', and to all the other questions I had asked. I was in the train bound for

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Bratislava, the cauldron was boiling up again, I felt in my bones that the end of Czecho-Slovakia was at hand, that I would soon see yet another German invasion, that Hitler was now irrevocably launched on the Napoleonic period of conquest, and that for my own country the choice I had so long foreseen — war or capitulation — was drawing very, very near.

Now that this great question has been answered — the question, would Hitler stop at the German racial boundaries, as our good leaders always professed to believe, or would he go on and enslave foreign peoples — I ought to interpolate here a brief sketch of the methods which were used, in those five months, to prepare the first annexation of foreign lands. You need to remember one thing before you read it: that you now have for the first time a clear picture of the methods that will be used to enslave other peoples and that will be employed against yourselves.

After Munich, as I wrote earlier in this book, the hope with which you were spoon-fed was that a right little, tight little Czecho-Slovakia now existed, which had satisfied all the grievances of neighbour powers and would be allowed to live in peace, its defenceless frontiers guaranteed by the four Great Powers which had dismembered it.

This new Czecho-Slovakia was a Federation of three home-ruled States or Statelets — the Czech lands, Bohemia and Moravia, with the capital in Prague; Slovakia, with the capital in Bratislava; Carpathian Ukraine, with the capital, save the word, in the hamlet of Chust. Each of the three had full home-rule except that the army, foreign policy and finance remained the province of the joint central Czecho-Slovak Government in Prague, in which all three were represented.

As the Czechs were by far the most powerful of the three partners and predominant in the army, and as the Federal capital remained in Prague, the Czech influence continued to be paramount in the State, and after Munich the Czech politicians set to work to adjust their relationships with Germany.

In the months that followed, the Germans never allowed them to get to grips. They continually warned the Czech Prime

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Minister, Rudolf Beran, and the Foreign Minister, Franz Chvalkovsky, that they were going neither far enough nor fast enough in their domestic rearrangements for the German liking, but they would never say exactly what Germany wanted. When Chvalkovsky went to Berlin, after his visit had been several times pointedly postponed, he was shown a Czech newspaper that expressed some regret for what had happened to Czechó-Slovakia and some hope that the disaster was not final, and told that if 'this sort of thing continues' the Germans would be in Prague in eight hours.

Broadly speaking, the things that the Germans demanded, without ever going into specific detail, were political subserviency, military submission, and tribute. As pledges of these things they demanded that the Czechs should denounce their treaties with France and Russia, which had become scraps of paper but had not been formally torn up. They demanded that the rest of the Czech army should be 'reduced'. They demanded that the Czechs should hand over part of their carefully husbanded gold reserve, though they did not say how much, to cover the Czech notes taken over in the Sudeten German areas; in Germany the Reichsbank notes have practically no gold cover.

The Germans never said exactly what they wanted — because they meant to have everything. When Beran and Chvalkovsky asked for the fulfilment of the promised frontier guarantee, in return for the new sacrifices they were required to make, the German answer was 'First put your house in order'. Hitler in his speech on January 30th made a similar allusion; he hoped for better relations with Czecho-Slovakia, he said, when that State had readjusted its domestic arrangements in accordance with the spirit of the times.

But the Germans simultaneously did everything they could to disrupt the Czecho-Slovak house. I can testify that Czecho-Slovakia survived with extraordinary resilience the shock of Munich and within a few weeks was busily at work organizing the new State. This new State was just as orderly and well ordered as the old one; during the few months that it endured I was

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continually surprised at the way it had emerged from the terrible ordeal of Munich, at the way the people buried their bitterness deep in their hearts and sturdily set themselves to make the best of their lot.

There was nothing to put in order in Czecho-Slovakia. After and in spite of Munich, it continued to be what it had always been, one of the best-founded and best-ordered States in Europe, diligent, thrifty, clean, the living vindication, and about the last living vindication, of the principles for which the World War was fought, and of the Treaty of Versailles. Its merits were so clear that for long I wondered whether Munich might not have been good after all. If only these people could be left alone within their reduced boundaries, I thought, left alone in this little State that they had made with such love and care, then perhaps even Munich would be justified. But I always knew in my heart that they would not be left alone, and that is why Munich, which deprived them even of the chance of fighting, was so contemptible an act.

By January the thing that impended was clear to foresee. The Germans had stopped the work of the commission they had appointed to fix the new frontiers. They gave no reason. They claimed, in addition to the trans-Czech corridor, right-of-way for all German motor traffic on five main trans-Czech roads. The Czechs could only sign on the dotted line. The Germans demanded the Czech gold, and the Czechs agreed to hand over about a third of it. The Germans kept on complaining about the Czech army, and the Czechs began to reduce it from twenty peacetime divisions to ten.

Nothing availed. The Germans would say neither what they wanted nor whether what was done satisfied them. They refused all discussion of the frontier guarantee and continued to demand that the Czechs 'put their house in order': Then they disrupted the house through the German minority and through some of the more purchasable Slovak politicians.

The Slovaks, after Munich, had signed the new Czecho-Slovak Constitution, which left the army, foreign affairs and finance in

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the hands of the Central Government in Prague. Hardly was the ink dry before they were agitating for a separate Slovak army, for a separate Slovak National Bank and finance. Their Ministers paid visits to Berlin without troubling to inform the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister in Prague. The German Press, which desired the Czechs to put their house in order, supported the vendetta of these Slovak leaders against Prague. In Slovakia, which had received home-rule from the hands of Hitler, all parties other than the Slovak Nationalist Party, founded by the late Father Hlinka and now led by another priest, Father Josef Tiso, had been abolished. Hitler had in effect put into power there a little Catholic-Fascist regime strongly reminiscent of the Dollfuss and Schuschnigg regimes in Austria, or even of Brüning's Centre Party in Germany. But he only used these Slovak priest-politicians; they will not last any more than independent Slovakia will last.

When the crisis broke, the flight of these Slovak politicians to Germany, their appeal to Hitler to liberate them, showed who was behind the Slovak separatist campaign and who wanted the Czecho-Slovak house to disrupt.

Meanwhile, Germany accompanied her support of the Slovak politicians by continual demands and complaints, demands and complaints, in Prague. Why had no restrictive measures been taken against the Jews? Why was this or that newspaper allowed to write favourably about Benesh? The Germans remaining in Czecho-Slovakia had not enough rights; why were they not allowed to wear Nazi uniforms, organize their own Nazi Party, demonstrate and so on? The Leader of the few score thousand Germans in the rump Republic, Herr Ernst Kundt, made menacing speeches, threatening the mutilated State with some new but unspecified fate. In the small German-speaking islands in Czechia and Slovakia, such as the Iglau and Zips districts, little organized Nazi communities began a vendetta against the Czechs.

Desperately the Czech leaders tried to keep pace with demands and intrigues that were only meant to be unacceptable and to

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destroy them. Beran and Chvalkovsky made speeches imploring the Czechs not to nourish hopes of a return to their past freedom or 'a second disaster' might befall them. They knew, these two Ministers, of the German threat to be in Prague within eight hours. The people did not. They preserved until the end an almost childish faith and hope that the worst would be spared them, that they would be left to live in peace in their own Czech lands now that everything else had been taken from them.

Then the storm broke, on the eve of the birthday which I had fortunately anticipated. On Friday, March 10th, President Emil Hacha and his Prime Minister Beran in Prague, knowing that the Slovak politicians were planning imminently to declare Slovakia independent, to disrupt the house which Hitler said he wished to be put in order, acted swiftly in the night to avert the danger. The Slovak priest-premier, Father Tiso, was dismissed, and Karel Sidor, commandant of the Hlinka Guard, who had previously counted as a leading separatist but now enjoyed the confidence of Prague, was put in his place. Professor Bela Tuka, the chief separatist, who had spent many years in prison in old Czecho-Slovakia for conspiring with Hungary, was arrested, together with many other separatist leaders. Czech troops and gendarmerie were sent into Slovakia to maintain order. There was little need for them. Once the separatist leaders were out of the way, Slovakia was a picture of calm and order.

The news was telephoned to me in the early morning of Friday, March 10th, and I felt at once that this was the end of Czecho-Slovakia. My paper had suggested that the best place for me to watch events would be Bratislava, and I answered that I doubted this, because if Germany wanted the Czecho-Slovak house put in order and refrained from interference, the crisis was already over, but if Hitler meant to march in, as I thought, Prague was the place for me. But as Saturday was technically a free day, with no evening telephone to worry about and no next day's paper to prepare, I seized the opportunity to dash down to Bratislava on that day, and that is how I came to be in the train on my birthday, filled with thoughts of the past and the coming year.

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When I got to Bratislava, my last doubts vanished. It looked just as Linz had looked a week before Hitler marched into Vienna. There were all the signs of the period immediately preceding a Hitlerist triumph. The Czechs were not to be allowed to put their house in order. One of the dismissed Ministers, Durchansky, was already in Vienna, and from the radio station there was broadcasting incitements in Slovak to the population to refuse obedience to the new Government. Now it was clear who was behind the crisis. The German newspaper in Bratislava, the *Grenzbote*, was publishing fantastic tales of a Slovak countryside that was being laid waste by Czechs horned and cloven-hoofed — that same placid countryside through which I had travelled. Not only that, the Prague Government's action was being described by this newspaper, and at mass meetings by Herr Karmashin, the Nazi Leader of the Germans in Slovakia, as one directed as much against the German minority as against the Slovaks.

From Bratislava I could see that the death-agony of the Czechs was at hand. I walked down to the Danube and looked across at the other bank, where a great illuminated swastika stood. Germany! You could almost have tossed a stone across. You could cross the bridge there in a minute. On the bank young men, Germans and Slovaks, were shouting in chorus 'Come and liberate us! Help us! Give us weapons'.

I walked through the town and found, once more, that indescribable feeling in the air, compounded of fear and excitement and animal passion, that precedes a Hitlerist triumph. There were the young men of the Hlinka Guard, in uniforms resembling those of the Italian Fascists, marching about with rifles and bayonets, entitled to arrest and maltreat. The police, with Hlinka armbands on their sleeves, were no longer the guardians of law and order. Like the Vienna police a year before, they now contented themselves with directing the traffic and looked the other way when the armed Storm Troopers went by. There were German Storm Troopers, too. Their headquarters, the German House, facing the Danube, was full of armed men, and they, not the Slovak Hlinka Guard, were the real rulers of the city. The

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Hlinka Guard were a kind of auxiliary formation, the apprentices of the Storm Troopers.

In the Carlton Hotel, where the Little Entente had once locked me in the lavatory, where a few weeks before I had found in the dining-room a strong clerical fragrance and seen the Slovak politicians who were now acting as Germany's instruments, affably chatting with their acquaintances among the richer Jews of Bratislava, in the Carlton Hotel I found the old, familiar picture of secret police agents, of closed lips and covert glances, of apprehensive people standing about and waiting, waiting. I walked through the ghetto and saw the synagogues barricaded, the Jews whispering together at their doors. Then in the town I saw the Storm Troopers, German and Slovak, marching about and singing, heard the crash of breaking glass, and saw a street of Jewish shops wrecked.

At nine o'clock there was curfew and everything was closed; none might go out save at the risk of being chased by some lunatic youth with a bayoneted rifle. So we sat in a bedroom of the hotel, myself and some colleagues whom I had known in Berlin and Vienna and Budapest, and talked of times past, present and to come, and outside the town was still save for the occasional tramp, tramp, tramp of the Storm Troopers and for mysterious shots and explosions.

We heard that Father Tiso had appealed to Hitler, and the next day he went to Berlin, telephoned from Hitler's office to Karel Sidor in Bratislava instructing him to call the Slovak Diet for the proclamation of Slovak independence and, with the might of Germany behind him, returned, together with the other Ministers who had fled to Germany, to become President of a Slovak Statelet under German protection.

Many men in our time play one part — that of the appellant to Hitler — and the good Father Tiso, with his comfortable corpulence, takes his place among them. I don't know how high he stands in the favour of the Vatican, nor does it concern me, nor is it of any importance, in my estimation. He has passed from the scene, to all effect, and his Slovakia was never more captive

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than it became in the moment when he liberated it. The people of Slovakia, who are far more important than Father Tiso, knew twenty good years and are now about to experience some lean ones, and it was all very glorious, and Father Tiso will occupy his little place in the Slovak hall of fame.

So, for the last time, and feeling that it would be the last time, I travelled through Czecho-Slovakia from Bratislava to Prague, to see the end of the Czechs, and when I got there I wrote 'It is now clear beyond further doubt that some new German territorial aggrandisement immediately impends, at the expense of the Czechs'.

I was glad afterwards that I made that journey, because it enabled me to form my own impression of Czecho-Slovakia on that day, and I never saw a more peaceful countryside. The only unusual thing about it was that the Germans living in it were enjoying a special status unknown to any other minority in any other country, and as the annexation of Austria was in process of commemoration — I sometimes think our only hope of peace is for Hitler to annex a large number of other countries, because then the German calendar will be composed entirely of national holidays — the Germans had all beflagged their houses. Thus a stranger coming into Brünn might almost have thought he was in a German city, and in isolated villages and hamlets too I saw lonely German settlers gaily flying the swastika. But when I got to Prague and read the German newspapers, I learned that Germans were being chased about all over the country and put to the torture by mixed bands of Czechs and Jews, that a 'Benesh Putsch' impended, and so on.

Once again, Prague staggered me by its calm. Only two days of life remained to it, and yet I believe the majority of the population only realized the awful thing that had happened to them when they saw the first German soldiers pass along the street before them. A dying city that did not know it was dying!

Yet all the signs, those old familiar signs, that a new change in the map of Europe was at hand were there, plain to read, for those who know how to read them. In the London office of *The*

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*Times*, for instance, somebody was writing, for publication on Monday morning, March 13th, some thirty-six hours before the invasion, 'If anything distinguishes this year from its predecessor it is the knowledge that Germany has completed those demands upon her neighbours which, by their own professions, they were unable conscientiously to contest . . . In that respect alone there may be said to be a fresh starting-point in foreign affairs. Mr. Chamberlain's policy stands and deserves support from its critics . . .'

In the editorial office of *Punch*, a cartoon was being printed, ready for publication on March 15th, the day of the invasion, that showed John Bull waking upon the morning of March 15th and yawningly exclaiming 'Thank goodness that's over'. Just to make sure that you didn't miss the point of this one, which I think was extremely subtle, almost bad enough for — well never mind about that; anyway, *Punch* published an explanatory footnote: 'Pessimists predicted "another major crisis" in the middle of this month.'

In the editorial office of the *Daily Courier*, a little piece was being prepared on these lines: 'There will be no crisis and no war this year, next year, some time, ever, and don't listen to the jitterbugs.'

In the Prime Minister's office, about five days before the invasion, an 'authoritative statement' was prepared and issued to my dearly beloved old British public, to the effect that, thanks to Munich, Europe was approaching a new dawn, that the Government was in good hopes of getting an agreement for general arms-limitation from Hitler, and that in general the world had seldom looked more promising than it did that day. This statement (which, as I may tell you, in confidence, nearly induced apoplexy in the Foreign Office) led the *Evening Soother* to the following paroxysm: 'Bursting optimism breaks through the clouds. It comes direct from the Foreign Office and it is founded on a solid array of facts.'

So you see that, for anybody who knows how to read such British periodicals, that is by holding them upside down and looking at them in a mirror, the signs that something awful was about to happen in Europe were plain enough. When things

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founded on solid arrays of facts come bursting through optimistic clouds, the time has come to inquire about your ticket for the Hebrides.

But few Czechs read the British Press, and those that do and those that do not are alike of a strangely childlike and confiding nature and tend to believe what they are told, and that is the reason for their troubles.

On these two days, Monday and Tuesday, March 13th and 14th, 1939, when Prague was dying and did not know it, I spent a deal of time in the hall of my hotel, which was on the first floor and had a glass wall on the street side. From there I was able to watch the final act in this tragedy of an unsuspecting people.

It was fantastic. All day long the Pragers went busily about their normal occupations as if nothing untoward were afoot. The trams clanged unconcernedly to and fro before the hotel, at a spot that I never passed without thinking of a morning when the waiter brought me my breakfast and said 'There's a man without a head lying in the street', and I looked out of the window and actually a headless man lay there; one moment he had been one of those thousands of busy Pragers, running for a tram, and his foot slipped and the next moment he lay in the Wenceslas Platz without a head. As the tragedies of individuals, for some reason, register more deeply upon our limited human emotions than those of massacred masses, I carried with me always a picture of that decapitated man and thought of him every time I passed the spot, just as I thought of the blue-faced Venus whenever I passed the Gellert Bridge in Budapest.

Now I sat at my window and watched the busy daytime scene give way to the afternoon promenade. Between what we call tea-time and supper-time, the Wenceslas Platz fills with quietly strolling crowds, mainly of young people; the lads try to pull and crush their cheap hats into the shape of those worn by Robert Taylor, and the girls come fresh from the hairdresser with their hair in the strangest shapes, and they stroll up and down, up and down, and a camel might pass more easily through the eye of a needle than a guest from the hotel who wishes to reach the

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roadway through this turgid stream of chattering, laughing, ogling pedestrians.

Sitting in my elevated observation post, I marvelled as I watched these strolling crowds and thought how different Vienna had been the night before the annexation, how different Bratislava a few days before. Either the Czechs are the most unsuspecting people on earth, or they have nerves of iron. On the Monday night I could detect hardly a sign of anything unusual. The German papers were climbing to their familiar crescendo of complaint about Czech terrorism and German suffering; here before me lay one of the brightest and most peaceful cities in Europe. Only one small sign of what was coming caught my eye. Here and there in the crowd I saw the German Nazis, young men with waterproofs over their kneebreeches and topboots, or wearing the white stockings and Austrian hats that betold the Nazi. By their demeanour I could tell that they had been given the order to be truculent; they were in *ständiger Bereitschaft*, in a state of permanent readiness.

But the confiding Czechs did not realize what the appearance in their midst of those glowering young men meant. They still thought, on that Monday and Tuesday, that the whole trouble was only about Slovakia, that the worst that could happen was Slovakia's secession, and that was the least of their worries. The Catholic-Fascist Slovak politicians in Bratislava, a town on which the Czechs had spent millions, had treated them so badly since Munich, by inciting the people against the Czechs and classing the Czechs with the Jews, that many Czechs would have welcomed the loss of Slovakia.

On Tuesday afternoon — when the German mechanized armies across the frontier were already filling their tanks and massing — the Czechs, who were kept in ignorance to the last moment by their press and radio, first gained an inkling that something was afoot. They were not told that Germany was already demanding the complete disbandment of the army, the withdrawal of all Czech troops from Slovakia, the surrender of more gold, and so on, but they were told, by special editions of the newspapers

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issued in the afternoon, that their President, Emil Hacha, had gone with his Foreign Minister, Franz Chvalkovsky, to see Hitler in Berlin.

I watched, from my vantage post, the crowds tearing the wet sheets from the hands of the newsvendors. They ran their eyes over the news, discussed it with each other for a few moments, and resumed their strolling.

But on this Tuesday evening their stroll was interrupted. From my window I was able to see just how 'bloody Czech terrorism' is manufactured by the shrieking German propaganda-machine.

Suddenly, among the strolling crowds, appeared those young Nazis, in groups of ten or twelve. I saw them, moving along with the rest, just like any other Pragers taking their evening walk. Suddenly, I saw one of them knock a man's hat off. The man looked round, bewildered, not sure whether the thing was an accident or an affront. He opened his mouth to expostulate, and was smacked in the face. Immediately he hit back; immediately the ten were all round him, piling blows on him. Another instant, and they had vanished into the crowd, leaving a flabbergasted Prager to complain to a policeman. The policeman listened non-committally, shrugged his shoulders, moved away. The police had been told at all costs to avoid any kind of friction with the Germans which could be used by the German Press to bolster up stories about 'Czech terrorism'. All over the Wenceslas Platz I saw similar groups of struggling, shouting, gesticulating men, little groups that formed and dissolved, formed and dissolved. After half an hour, the Germans vanished like driven snow. They had carried out their orders.

Prague is a city of a million people. It contains a few thousand Germans. For the first time I saw, in Prague, the terrorism of the million by the few thousand. You can do so much when you have behind you a Reich of eighty millions with the greatest army and air force in the world.

In the hotel, in contrast to the city outside, the atmosphere was insupportable. The residents, other than myself, were almost exclusively Jews, many of them Jews from Slovakia, who had fled

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to Prague. My most unpleasant recollection of the last months of Prague is of the way the Jews, right up to this very night, flaunted their money everywhere, monopolized all the expensive hotels and cafés and restaurants, talked louder than everybody else, went everywhere with the most conspicuous blondes they could find, and generally led a parasitic and provocative existence at a time when their Press throughout the world was filling the heavens with the clamour of complaint about Jewish persecution.

Now, at the very last moment, they began to panic. All over the hotel lounge they stood about in whispering and gesticulating groups, they came and went on mysterious errands and with mysterious mien, they brought in rumours and exchanged information, so that the place became a chattering and fear-laden talk-mart where you could not sit quietly in a chair or read a newspaper or get to the telephone or have a word with the Czech hotel porter without a dozen pairs of ears being cocked all round you.

It was revolting and exasperating. When I reached London a fortnight later, the first letter I received was from one of these pests, of whom I had never heard but who had apparently been staying in that same hotel; in the meantime he, like most of the others, I suppose, had also reached London, and he calmly wrote to me to say that he had deposited with the hotel porter a substantial sum in pounds, dollars and Swiss francs, which he was not allowed to take out of the country, in order that I might bring it out with me for him. To do so would have been a legal offence, for me as for him. His line of thought was apparently that it would be better for me, a complete stranger to him, to commit the offence, on behalf of a man I had never heard of and had no wish to know, than for him. He now proposed blandly that he should call on me and collect the money. I don't think he will, after the letter I wrote him, and I only hope the police, to whom I forwarded his letter, have their eye on this new addition to England's population. The Jews share with the Germans one foremost characteristic; they are as ruthless in prosperity as they are abject in adversity. Their behaviour in Prague during the last

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months of that city's life diminished my already dwindling sympathy for them.

Now, sick of this buzzing cage, I went out into the streets. I went round to the office of a Jewish newspaper. There panic had come too. Yet until the last moment anti-Gentilism had been pursued in the office of this newspaper to such an extent that it was staffed exclusively by Jews. Just before the door closed they brought in half a dozen shop-window Gentiles. Now, on this night, the shop-window Gentiles, who knew what was coming, had walked out, ostensibly in protest against some Marxist publication in the paper, actually because they knew Hitler would be in Prague soon and that they would take over the paper. They did; a complete shadow staff proved to be in existence, and on the day of Hitler's arrival the paper appeared without a hitch and without any alterations other than the complete change of its political colour and the elimination from the back page of those brothel advertisements of which I have spoken earlier in this book.

Now panic reigned in the offices of the paper. The Jews there were worried to death about the brawls in the Wenceslas Platz. This, they thought, would give Hitler an excuse to march in. I told them they were wrong. If he meant to march in, as I told them that he did, he would march in anyway, and these organized street affrays were just part of the familiar technique. If he did not mean to march in, they were unimportant.

I went back to the hotel and on the way bought another special edition that told me the Germans had occupied Mährisch-Ostrau. Midnight had not yet struck. Hacha could not have been in Berlin by the time the invasion began. On this occasion not even the pretence of negotiation was to be observed. This was annexation naked and unabashed.

I noticed this time again, as I had noticed in Berlin and Vienna, how people on such occasions alternate between laughing optimism and deepest pessimism, between hope and despair. This is some curious action of overstrained nerves. One moment men hear a report that promises hope and in a trice they are full of optimism and say 'It's not going to be so bad, he won't occupy Prague', and

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the next moment they overhear a stranger say something and are scurrying to their rooms, burning letters, packing trunks, telephoning to friends, racking their brains for a way of escape.

On this night I found myself falling into this very trap, when I heard that the Germans had crossed the frontier and occupied Mährisch-Ostrau. Perhaps, I caught myself thinking, Hitler is just throwing a screen of troops across Slovakia, south of Poland, to deter the Poles from attempting to seize part of Slovakia. Perhaps he will yet stay out of Bohemia, leave the Czechs at least their own lands. Then I suddenly realized that I was trying to fool myself, that I knew perfectly well what was coming, that the German troops would be in Prague in the morning, and I mentally kicked myself for being dishonest with myself.

Prague went placidly to bed. Only the initiated few suspected the worst. The masses of the people thought that the good Hacha was gently discussing matters in Berlin. An appalling night.

From the hotel window I looked down on the emptying streets, on the boys and girls going home from the pictures, arm-in-arm and laughing, on the great snack-restaurants, beloved of the Prager, where the waitresses were beginning to put the cakes away. For long hours I had been waiting for a telephone call to London and could not get it. At three o'clock I went to bed. I even slept, that same troubled sleep, in which you seem to retain consciousness of what is happening, that I had known in Vienna a year before.

But this was far worse than Vienna. The Austrians were of German stock; many of them wanted Hitler; many evils needed remedying in Austria, which a lethargic vested-interest regime, monarchists, clericals and Jews, would never have altered. But here? Here in Czecho-Slovakia, in Prague? In this orderly and well-conducted country of thrifty and hardworking people, who harmed nobody and wanted only to be left in peace?

At four o'clock I shot out of bed and out of that troubled sleep as the telephone rang. It was my belated call to London. Too late for me to give any news, but at any rate I could learn something. What I heard confirmed all that I feared. The Germans

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were on the move in all directions. It was not yet quite clear that they were going to seize the whole country, but who could doubt it?

At five o'clock I shot out of bed again. Another voice, speaking from Prague, told me 'The Germans are now occupying the country from all sides. The radio is giving out the news every few minutes and telling the population that there must be no resistance'.

'Thanks', I said, and got up and dressed, with the grey not yet gone from the dawn on that morning of March 15th, 1939. I went out. Heavy snow was falling. It was a dreary day.

The first trams were plying. The first workers were afoot, going to their occupations. The first charwomen were getting the cafés ready for the day. Still, as I believe, the vast majority of the Czech people did not know what the day was to bring. Was there ever such a tragedy as this? Three days later it was no longer front-page news in the world's Press. Now, as I write this chapter, a fortnight later, Bohemia is already a news-cemetery, a sealed news-box; you will never again know what the Czechs are thinking, suffering, hoping. The new technique of tyranny enables the lid to be clamped down on a conquered people with appalling finality.

Many times in the past ten years I have been tempted to wish to be a German. I have been sickened more and more by the contrast between the revolting and criminal social conditions in England, which in such places as Shoreditch would disgrace the negro republic of Liberia, and the well-kept, well-ordered and well-found condition of Germany. After all, I have often thought, the Germans at least care for their own people, they give them health and food and houses and sun and light and air, they do not permit these monstrous mass crimes against the community, perpetrated in the interest of the slum landlord. They have a sense of belonging-together, they do not fill the pages of their illustrated papers with pictures of a few grotesquely uniformed popinjays and jewelled dowagers going from ball to banquet while the people rot and starve.

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If Hitler had not done this, I think my respect for that side of Germany would have hardened into an immutable conviction, for it is at least arguable that what Germans have done to Germans is their own affair and may be justified if Germany is in the end better for it. But after the invasion of Bohemia and Moravia on March 15th, 1939, which confirmed all my fears, I would sooner be an Indian untouchable, a South African poor white, or an American negro, than a German.

I wrote in *Insanity Fair* that the new German Army would be impatient to blazon on its maiden standards some honour worthy to rank with those won by its sister services, the new German Navy and the new German Air Force — namely, the massacre of Spanish fisherfolk at Almeria and the massacre of Spanish peasants at Guernica.

Now the new German Army has won its shining spurs. A noble and heroic exploit, a glorious victory, a triumph of martial valour, this conquest of a small and defenceless nation, this invasion of a small and helpless country. God, what a farce, and for this a World War was fought, for this we have listened for years to the babbling of our leaders, tried to confide in their cockle-warming Assurances, bowed our heads as they reproved our Tendency To Suspicion, cowered when they called us Jitterbugs. The great, big, brave, German soldiers clanked about Prague in their heavy boots. Not one of them was ashamed to be put to such a use as this.

But let me describe that entry into Prague. Czecho-Slovakia was a country, the Czechs are a people, of which you know nothing. Now listen, and you will know something about them.

The Czechs, as I have told you, only began to realize the full measure of their disaster when the first German soldiers were already in Prague. Relatively few of them had heard those radio injunctions — The German troops are approaching; there must be no resistance; the population must maintain order; send your children to school, send your children to school, send your children to school.

But the Wenceslas Platz soon filled when the first German troops

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appeared and passed through, on their motor-cycles, in their tanks, in their lorries. And as they came the Czechs whistled. That shrill, ear-piercing whistle is the traditional sign of hatred or disapproval on the Continent; it is the equivalent of the hiss in England. When thousands of people do it all at once the sound is like the howl of a cyclone, it strains the ear-drums, wrenches at the nerves, pierces the brain. Then the Czechs shook their fists at the valorous petrol-driven conquerors, pointed their fingers in the direction from whence they came and told them to go back, for they had not been invited, pelted the tanks with snowballs, shouted 'Wir werden es Euch noch geben' — 'We'll give it to you yet.'

'We'll give it to you yet!' With this mighty army riding into Prague. Defenceless men and women, with the rifles of the motor-cyclists and the machine-guns of the tanks bearing on them. You will see on which side was the valour.

Men sprang forward from the crowd and tried to tear the Germans from the seats of their motor-cycles. The Czech police, acting under the orders of President Hacha from Berlin, drove them back. The soldiers drove on with wooden faces. Women sprang forward and spat in their faces. The police drove them back. They disappeared into the crowd and sprang forward again at another point, spitting. A German soldier went riding through the Wenceslas Platz, looking straight ahead of him, with spittle streaming down his face.

Somebody should paint that picture too. That young, fresh-faced German soldier, with the heavy steel-helmet almost covering his eyes, hands gripping the handle-bars, rifle slung across his back — and the spittle streaming down his cheek. A symbolical figure of the Reich reborn, the Reich of might and chivalry.

In the crowd a German gave the Hitler salute. In a moment the crowd was milling round him, in another he would have been lynched. His face was slapped and slapped until it bled. The Czech police drove into the crowd and hauled him out. He ran for his life across the Wenceslas Platz, and on the other side the crowd waited for him and got him again. Again the police extricated him. Then the crowd suddenly began to sing the Czech

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national anthem, 'My homeland, where art thou?' and the sound rose dirge-like into the air and drowned the roar of the German machines.

They had no chance to fight, the Czechs, even if to fight against such odds were conceivable. From what I have seen of their spirit, I think they might possibly have done even this. But they were without arms. Two hours before the Germans marched in, the army had been ordered to lay down its weapons — by the Head of the State and Commander-in-Chief, by President Emil Hacha, telephoning from Berlin. That is what a Czech staff colonel told me at six o'clock that morning.

An interesting figure, Hacha. Seyss-Inquart and Henlein, after all, were Hitler's men, covertly or overtly, and Father Tiso of Slovakia — well, he doesn't count anyway.

But President Hacha! He was a Czech. I told you earlier in this book how he went riding up the hill behind the red-breeched Czech dragoons to take Benesh's place in the Hradschin, the vassal president of rump Czecho-Slovakia. He had some of the physical characteristics of a dwarf and some of those of a hunchback, and he was some kind of attorney. I thought, when he accepted the Presidency, that he must be a great patriot, for none other, I thought, would have taken that thankless task.

Who knows what he went through in Berlin? He must have known what he had to expect there, with Hitler before him, and von Ribbentrop scowling in the background, and the grim-faced generals all round. They say he collapsed and had to be revived by injections and this and that. I have not yet been able to confirm whether this is true, but I can well imagine how the Nazi third-degree men turned on the heat.

Anyway, he did all they told him, did the inconspicuous Emil Hacha, telephoned to Prague all the orders he was ordered to give, issued statements referring with gratification to 'the military honours' that were paid to him in Berlin, issued other statements, denying that he had been put under 'any kind of pressure' there, and came back to Prague to resume his place in the Hradschin over which Hitler's flag was now flying beside his own, in another

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room of which Hitler was proclaiming himself *Schirmherr* of Bohemia and Moravia. *Schirmherr*, incidentally, means patron or protector, but literally it might be translated umbrella-man, so that if ever Prague regains its freedom I expect it will hold a public bonfire of all umbrellas in the city.

Emil Hacha! Write him off, and form your opinion of him. He was an old man, anyway, and an ill one, by the look of him. I only mention him because of the part he played that day and the way he played it, and in order to give myself an excuse for inviting you to consider what man in England might on a day play the same part as Emil Hacha. You may have as many guesses as you wish. I, for my part, can think of several likely candidates.

I ought to interpolate here a brief discussion of a once famous phrase, 'Do you want to fight for Czecho-Slovakia?' One of the first letters I found awaiting me on my return to England was from a reader of this book who said 'I simply cannot understand how you can work yourself into such a flap about a little tinpot country like Czecho-Slovakia. No one is more ready to fight than myself but not for a country I know nothing about and care less. This country would be a great deal happier if it would keep its fingers out of other countries' pies.'

Well, well. Once more, but I promise it is the last time, I must try and explain. In *Insanity Fair* I wrote 'Czecho-Slovakia means you. If Czecho-Slovakia goes, that means more men and more munitions to be used against you, more aeroplanes one day over the south-east of England.'

It is a simple sum in arithmetic, and nevertheless, as the letter I have quoted shows, people in England cannot add it up.

England is rearming to meet some imminent and deadly danger. What danger? Germany. We are not strong enough to withstand her alone; we can only withstand her if we have allies. Our War Minister has stated that in a European war in which we take part we shall send nineteen divisions to the Continental mainland. Presumably to ensure the victory of the Policy of Appeasement by Non-Intervention in the Sacred Right of Self-Extermination.

The Czecho-Slovak army had forty-two divisions. If we had

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let Czecho-Slovakia fight for us, we should presumably not have needed to send the flower of a new British generation abroad to die in the most unfavourable circumstances, for what we can send is less than half what Czecho-Slovakia had.

Is that a simple sum in addition and subtraction?

Our most deadly peril is the inferiority in which our leaders have allowed Germany to place us in the air, and the danger arising from this — that, in face of a German ultimatum demanding colonies, the fleet, Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, or something of that sort, and threatening in default the immediate bombardment of London, still a relatively unprotected city of eight million people, we should have to capitulate.

The Germans, according to the best information I can obtain, have between 10,000 and 12,000 aeroplanes, the Italians between 5000 and 8000; we have somewhere about 5000, and the French 2500. Goering, who created this gigantic German Air Force, has publicly stated that the lead must be still further increased, that Germany must have aircraft 'in numbers normally inconceivable but attainable for National Socialist Germany'.

On this one day, March 15th, 1939, between 1000 and 1500 Czech military aeroplanes passed into German possession between dawn and noon. 'Czecho-Slovakia means you, means more aeroplanes to be used against you . . .' These aeroplanes could have been fighting for you.

Vast quantities of artillery, tanks, small-arms and military equipment of all kinds passed into German hands.

The Skoda Munition Works, one of the greatest and most efficient weapon-making concerns in Europe, passed into German hands.

For the second time in twelve months your potential enemy, Germany, gained a large amount of gold.

The Czech army, which could have put forty-two divisions into the field for you, is being disbanded. Officers and non-commissioned officers may, under certain conditions, join the German army. Many will, because they must live. Others will because they want to. One Czech soldier, though I think he was an

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exception, told a colleague of mine, 'If Germany fights England now, she can have two million Czech volunteers'.

The rank-and-file of the Czech army are being transferred to labour camps under German control. In *Insanity Fair* I wrote that if Czecho-Slovakia were abandoned, 'Czech hands will be forging weapons for Germany in peace and bearing those weapons for Germany in war', 'the Czechs will be digging reserve trenches for the German armies in any future major war', 'Czech aeroplanes will go to swell the air fleets of Germany', 'Germany will be within grasping distance of the greatest prize of all — the oilfields and wheatfields of Rumania, which would give her at long last everything that an army bent on European domination needs; she would be invincible'.

Within a few days of the annexation of Bohemia, Rumania signed a trade treaty with Germany which lets Germany into the oilfields. Germany will never be satisfied with anything less than physical possession of them, but by this partial capitulation Rumania averted the immediate danger which was threatening — that Germany would support a Hungarian attack upon her.

One last word on this subject. I have been told that I diagnose correctly what is going to happen, but do not say what to do about it. That is not my job, which is to write, but for that matter I believe I can tell you exactly what you ought to do.

The answer is not conscription, for reasons which I cannot explain here; conscription now would be dangerous and would not greatly help. You need large numbers of men, but not for the infantry, and you can get them without conscription.

The answer is now, as it was after the annexation of Austria, when I wrote to this effect to prominent people in England and received either no reply at all or a pooh-pooh reply, that you should with a speed surpassing anything you have ever imagined before increase the number of your aeroplanes and of your anti-aircraft guns to a point where an air-attack on London would be so expensive as to deter Germany from attacking London, with or without an ultimatum.

That is what you should do. That is what you could do.

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Your Government's powers and influence, if it had the energy, are great enough to effect that. It should be done as secretly as possible and more quickly than is possible. You should do in days and weeks what you would otherwise do in months and years. Do that, and you can still avert a war. But every second counts — and is there any proof, any sign, any hope that our defences, active and passive, against air-attack are being improved at even a fraction of the speed that is necessary? I see none, in spite of all warnings. The latest farce, the delivery by public authorities to the masses of pieces of corrugated iron to build air-raid shelters, pieces of corrugated iron which are already being used as chicken-runs or to float paper boats in, is something so staggering in its gigantic futility that the reason quails before it. But even that episode in our Air Raid Precautions has a sinister side, namely, that somebody has presumably made a great deal of money out of those useless and derelict pieces of corrugated iron. Prophets may be without honour in England, but profiteers can usually count on appearing in the honours list.

Back to Prague, with the snow falling and the German armies moving in. I, as the writer of *Insanity Fair*, counted as a man in some danger. I don't know whether this was true, I rather doubt it now, but I acted on a suggestion that I should take shelter in the British Legation, an action which I soon regretted but could not then alter.

I have had the best of relations with British official representatives in many capitals, and deeply respect the knowledge and cool judgment of the Ministers, Councillors, Secretaries and Attachés I have met. Most of them were most creditable representatives of their country. Most of them foresaw precisely to what end British policy was leading and, I think, privately distrusted it and were fearful for Britain. Among others who were kind to me, in Berlin and Prague, was the last British Minister in Prague, the knighted but as yet unaccoladed Mr. Basil Newton. Nothing that I say reflects in any way on him.

But the British Legation in Prague as an entity, the big green house standing on the hillside just below the Hradschin itself,

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somehow came to symbolize, for all British journalists and other students of the scene, the policy which led to the Runciman Mission and to Munich and to the annexation of March 1939, and which will, as I and others think, lead to even worse things. Years ago the outspokenly critical attitude towards the Czechs of one or two of its young inhabitants puzzled me, because I well knew that British diplomatic representatives abroad are expected to be completely impartial and, if anything, to show sympathy and understanding for the country they are in.

This was one of the things that first convinced me that, in the emergency, Czecho-Slovakia would have little to hope for from England, and I was convinced then, as I am convinced now, that the only hope of averting war is a solid combination of the peace-loving countries against aggression. During the crises of 1938 the feeling gained further ground among British journalists that, by and large, the big green house looked on them with disfavour as people who made too much noise about something that should be done as quietly as possible.

So I was not surprised when, in this hour of need, I found myself in an uncongenial atmosphere, when the Submarine Attaché referred contemptuously to myself and my British fellow guests of the Legation as 'refugees', when junior officials put difficulties in the way of our communicating with the outer world, and studiously ignored us when they saw us. Legations, although their inhabitants change, come to have a character and soul, and the green house was like that. What was happening outside in Prague seemed to make relatively little impression within its walls, where life continued on its placid way. I remember that on the day before Hitler marched in I telephoned to one official, asking whether, in view of the situation, any advice was being given to British residents, and he answered composedly, 'If you are registered here and any occasion arises, you will be informed by post'.

I was not alone in my sojourn. These overnight invasions put you in the strangest dilemmas. With me, for instance, was G. E. R. Gedye, who had been expelled from Austria after the Anschluss and forbidden to re-enter Reich territory; he now found himself

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annexed between supper and breakfast. With me, too, was Noël Panter, one of the most talented and most shabbily treated British journalists I know. Imprisoned in and then expelled from Germany for no reason at all many years ago, the British Government of the day eventually succeeded in extracting from the German Government an admission that the whole affair had been a mistake, that he had not been expelled and was at liberty to return to Germany whenever he liked, but when he took this statement in the House of Commons at its face value and went to Germany, the British Embassy in Berlin nearly had apoplexy and sent him out again at once, so that he too, finding himself annexed overnight, had no earthly idea what his present status was.

One of the most boring and humiliating weeks I have ever spent in my life was only made tolerable through his presence there. Gedye, he and I could count as endangered men, but others were there who seemed to me to have little need to be there and not to appreciate the respect they owed to the British sanctuary they enjoyed, and I regretted being put among them and wished I had not come.

We came in while the German armies were still pouring into Prague, and lunched with the Minister, in his room looking out over the city. I shall never forget that lunch. Inside that room was a cathedral hush; not a sound reached up to it from the dying city below. But the thought of what was happening outside was in all our minds, and try as we would oppressive silences fell upon the table, which Mr. Newton valorously tried to banish by asking me, 'Well, Reed, have you been playing any golf lately?'

Then we took up our quarters in some disused rooms on the fourth floor of the Legation. That is, on the one side it is the fourth floor, but on the other side, so strangely does the green house lie, is a garden, and here we paced and paced for hours, between intervals of staring down into Prague from the windows on the other side, and hoped for our liberation.

Those hours at the window, looking down into the courtyard and over the city! In the Legation below, secretaries and attachés

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came and went, called merry quips to each other, went out to lunch, returned, went out to dine, and night closed relentlessly on our loneliness. The even tenor of their days and ways seemed little ruffled. But the courtyard itself was a vale of tears and sighs. Here, every morning early, gathered hundreds of men-on-the-run, men who had already fled before Hitler once, or even twice, and now found themselves in the rat-trap again.

A tragic fate, theirs, for in any other invasion there would at least have been a back-door open for a lightning getaway. At the invasion of Austria those who thought quickly enough were able to run into Czechoslovakia or Hungary before the gates closed. But at the invasion of Bohemia the Germans came in from all sides. There was no loophole of escape.

Have you ever stood by a pond full of minnows and made a sudden movement? One moment hundreds or thousands of those little things are there, basking below the surface; the next, they are gone. You do not see them go, only a flash, and an empty pond.

That is what happened in Prague. In a flash thousands of men-on-the-run went underground. One moment you had a friendly and talkative city; the next, no man trusted his neighbour; the girl at the telephone exchange, the man behind the desk, the amiable porter, all turned out to have been German secret police spies, or if they were not they were thought to be. The city became a rabbit-warren of hunted men.

Among them were pitiful cases. There were a good many German refugees from the Sudetenland, for whose safety the British Government had admitted a moral responsibility but had delayed in granting the visas. Two or three days before the invasion, London suddenly saw the red light and gave orders for their journey to be facilitated. But it was too late, no time remained, they were caught in the trap. So were the wives and families of many who had already gone to England and Canada.

One of the few things I remember with real pleasure from this time is the courage of three English girls, Miss Warriner, Miss Rowntree and Miss Dougan, and of some of their helpers. They had gone out to Prague to help in getting these refugees away,

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and now went on with their work coolly, through all those anxious days, rushing about all over the city, interceding with the Germans, getting passports and visas and tickets. We were all worried that war was coming soon, but they were set to remain and go on with their work even if war broke out.

Slowly the days went by and we sat up there and looked down on Prague. A chipped and ancient enamelled jug of coffee, a rusty old pan full of meat, sometimes appeared as by magic and were left on the central heating for us to discover. We sent inquiries downstairs to know how our cause was faring, and the reply came back that 'everything is being done', but successive mishaps undid everything. One day special aeroplanes stood by in London to come and fetch us, but the Germans would not have it. The next, a fleet of motor cars pulled into the courtyard to drive us to the frontier, but were sent away again.

Our only news of the outer world came through a radio set that a friendly attaché later lent us. We turned the knob and, cooped up there, we heard Birmingham, well fed and secure, singing 'He's a jolly good fellow' for Mr. Chamberlain. Then we heard Mr. Chamberlain himself, proclaiming how good and noble Munich had been and how surprised and disappointed he was that Hitler had not kept faith. If Hitler was not very careful, we gathered, Mr. Chamberlain might soon even *brandish* that umbrella.

At last, after an anxious week, the Germans sent back our passports with a secret police permit to leave the country by the Polish frontier. I went down into the city to get tickets and visas and to look for the last time at Prague.

It was much worse than Vienna. In Vienna the interminable noise was the nerve-racking thing. In Prague the silence was even more depressing and nerve-consuming. Now and again German bombers came roaring over the city, looking like wicked sharks as they swam about the sky with their wheels tucked up into their sleek bellies. The metallic voice of the conqueror's loud speakers from time to time blared his orders to the people. But apart from these and kindred noises Prague was a silent and lifeless city.

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The people were crushed. At the monument to the Unknown Soldier they were still standing, a week after the invasion, with tears streaming down their faces. But then the Germans put sentries before the memorial and deprived them even of this melancholy pilgrimage. Not even their tears were left to them.

Think what it means — never again to be able to take a walk in your native city without seeing German troops, never again to be able to take any major decision in your life without German permission, never again freely to breathe your own air, never again to read a newspaper or a book that has not passed the German censor. I walked past the bookseller's, Topic, where for a few days after the invasion *Insanity Fair* and *Disgrace Abounding* were still to be had. Already the German secret police had cleared the shelves of all books unfavourable to Germany, already *Mein Kampf* was enthroned in the windows.

After four or five hours of it I could stand no more and came back across the lovely Charles Bridge to the Legation, from the windows of which I took my last farewell of Prague. It lay, with a brooding silence over it, in a chilly March sunset. I turned and went through the disused rooms to the garden at the back and looked up at the Hradschin towering above me. The lights were just going on in the rooms where I had talked to Benesh, where Hitler had proclaimed himself Overlord of Bohemia.

We travelled through the night, wondering whether some little local Hitler might refuse to honour that Gestapo pass, but none interfered with us and at noon next day we were in Warsaw. We had hoped for rest, after a week of suspense, but found none there. Everywhere were men with gas-masks, motor-cars with masked lights, anti-aircraft guns. Soon the sirens began to sound. Warsaw was rehearsing for an air-attack. We heard that Hitler had already annexed Memel. The Policy of Appeasement was moving fast. We heard too that Rumania had half-capitulated to a German semi-ultimatum for oil concessions. The Poles and Rumanians were mobilizing. The Hungarians had seized little Carpathian Ukraine, where I had spent Christmas, and this was a most interesting episode, for the Hungarians would never have

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dared to do this without German approval, and it thus meant that Germany was supporting Hungary, at any rate for the moment, in order to use her as a lever against the Rumanians.

Everywhere the fear of war hung in the air, and the fear of Hitler. The Poles, who in the Munich crisis had fallen upon the kindred Czecho-Slovaks, now felt the ring closing relentlessly round themselves. Danzig and the Corridor would soon be lost; was Poland herself lost, due for a fourth partitioning? The atmosphere in Warsaw was oppressive. In the Hotel Europejski, where in the World War German officers had feasted and wined, where I had stayed four years earlier when I followed Anthony Eden on his journey to Moscow, the windows were black-curtained. Before the British Embassy a frying-pan hung from the branch of a tree.

In Warsaw, too, men whom I knew were thinking about giving up their flats, storing or shipping their furniture, selling their effects, making a getaway. Other acquaintances of mine, in Vienna and Prague, had had such thoughts, but had left action until it was too late, and I knew that these men would also wait too long. It is very difficult to nerve yourself to a major decision, to alter your whole life, before the danger actually appears, stark and threatening, at your threshold.

At midnight I groped my way into the darkened street and into a taxi and was driven to the blacked-out station and with relief said good-bye to Warsaw, for there, too, I could feel the gathering shadows of fear, of enslavement. We travelled through the night and in the dawn passed through Danzig, so that once again I marvelled at the gift of the Germans for building noble cities, and a few minutes after that we were in Gdynia.

Poor Poland. At the Peace Conference she succeeded in gaining that lane, leading between two pieces of Germany to the distant longed-for sea, that they call the Polish Corridor, and at the place where it reaches the sea, where there was only a tiny fishing village, she built this great modern port, Gdynia. A State of 35,000,000 people, said the Poles, deserves a port of its own, through which the world's wares can reach its people; why should

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such a State be cut off from the sea by a narrow neck of land and be compelled to pay port and harbour and landing and other dues on everything it imports to the Germans at Danzig?

So the Poles built Gdynia, port and city. They made a poor job of the city. Here was a marvellous opportunity — a virgin site, on the clean Baltic, on which to build a well-planned modern town that would convince the world of the Polish title to national freedom. Instead, they built a poorly-planned and ugly place reminiscent of an American city just emerging from its wild-west period. But the port is good. Here the ships, great and small, can dock and unload and send their cargoes into the heart of Poland, and in these twenty years the traffic of Gdynia has grown until she ranks among the great ports of the world.

The Poles have spent millions on Gdynia — as the Czechs spent millions on Slovakia. The Germans, though they have soft-pedalled on this theme for the last five years, wishing to keep Poland sweet until they could attend to her separately, have always detested Gdynia. They claim that Danzig, as it has grown in the centuries, is the natural port for the Eastern Baltic and its hinterland, and that Gdynia is an unnatural excrescence on the Baltic coast produced to gratify Polish nationalism.

In the main street of Gdynia is an ancient oak, which the Poles, in the days before the World War when they were under German rule, used to regard as the symbol of their hopes of freedom. The tree was there before the Germans came, they said, and would be there after they had gone. To-day the tree, guarded by a protective low wall of brick, stands plumb in the middle of the traffic thoroughfare and chauffeurs have to drive round it.

Like the Tree of Guernica, which symbolized their national freedom for the Basques, this tree is likely soon to have only a melancholy interest for the Poles. Their pathway to the sea, the port they built at the end of it, will soon be lost to them. The most they can hope for is a restricted measure of independence in their own lands. Will Hitler even allow them that? Look at Bohemia.

But perhaps the Poles, people say, will fight. Ah, if they did

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that, much might be different, but Hitler seems not to do business that way. He is showing, as yet, the most extraordinary skill in carrying out that doctrine which he expounds in *Mein Kampf*: 'A wise conqueror will always, if this be possible, impose his demands on the conquered in instalments. In the case of a decadent people — and all peoples are decadent that passively submit — he may be sure that it will never see in each new act of oppression a sufficient ground for recourse to arms.'

The first nation that summons up the courage — and more than courage is needed in face of such a threat as 'Sign on the dotted line or I'll blow Prague to pieces in the next eight hours' — to impale itself on the proffered sword may alter the course of European events.

But for the present the future looks very dark for Poland. Watch Poland.

A dismal, snowy day in Gdynia, made more dismal by the thought of three days on a tiny ship full of emigrant Jews, and by the general feeling of oppression that had spread to this Polish town. But, *Glück im Unglück*, an excellent lunch. We had had little appetite for ten days past, and on the rare occasions when we were hungry the food was not exhilarating. But now, in Gdynia of all places, we found a meal worthy of Paris at its best, Noël Panter and I, and some marvellous vodka, and then we went to the ss. *Warszawa*, contemplated this little 2000-ton craft and our fellow passengers with deep disfavour, and climbed on board, for the last stage of our little odyssey.

I was never more completely deceived than in the matter of the ss. *Warszawa*. It was an incomprehensible vessel, a wonder ship. If I had stayed long on board I should have developed the same feeling of personal affection for it that I had for my Little Rocket. It was tiny, and I expected when I embarked to spend three days on a rattling box that would plunge and tear and eat its heart out and shake its plates and roar with its engines. My fears were increased when somebody told me that it was due to be broken up in a few months' time.

To my astonishment, the little Sunderland-built *Warszawa* was

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the smoothest ship I ever travelled in. The only other ships I know, it is true, are a couple of ocean-going liners and all the Channel steamers, but of them I know none that was not a roaring monster compared with the *Warszawa*. I suppose she was being driven at the most economical speed, but at all events she got along very nicely and I never heard the engines once, nor could detect more than the very slightest tremble of the decks from them. Not only that, but she rode the sea like a queen. We ran into a gale and saw ships to port and starboard burying their noses deep in white seas and indelicately exposing their hindquarters high in the air and taking quantities of water amidships, but the little *Warszawa*, with a stately and composed air, picked her way nicely between the rollers with nothing more than a lullaby-like side-to-side motion too gentle to harm anybody.

I believe she was an old ship, and for all I know the members of her crew may have known other sides to her character and have entertained quite different feelings about her, but I came to have a deep respect for her during this voyage. The other surprising thing about her was the food. I had expected some pretty rough ship's tack, but the stewards put a succession of meals before us that I should have had difficulty in buying in London.

The comfort of the *Warszawa* had one great drawback for me and a few others. Some two hundred people were travelling in the ship, steerage and passenger class. Six or seven of them, perhaps, were British and non-Jewish. The rest were all Jewish emigrants. Below, in the steerage, were the poor ones, and I have a picture in my mind of a mother sitting there and talking to a lady-friend while her two children deloused her hair, a process which she seemed not to notice.

In our part of the ship travelled the bespectacled better-class Jews, who were going, with a song in their hearts, to England. From the beginning of the voyage they manifested their incurable habits. They turned the little saloon into a Karntnerstrasse coffee-house with their interminable loud chatter and jargon-jokes about Hitler, their exasperating political yap about the mistake the Czechs had made in not fighting Hitler, and about the war that

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would come but in which they would not fight. As soon as they got up in the morning they were shouting about in the gangways so that nobody else might sleep. They sought to monopolize the best seats in the saloon, and a concerted effort of the tiny, suffering non-Jewish minority was needed to secure a little corner where it could eat in peace. The deck, the only place for stretching your legs, was very short — thirty-seven paces — but they lay about in deck-chairs all over it, so that even that was curtailed.

We had only one hope — a gale — and we prayed for one. When that did not avail we prayed for a tempest, a blizzard, a cyclone, a tornado. No use. We had a brief respite when we came to the Kiel Canal, which meant eight hours' slow steaming through Germany. Then the tumult and the shouting died a little, and I leaned over the rail in peace and looked at the lights of Kiel and thought of the launch of the *Deutschland*, which was bombed in Spanish waters, of Hindenburg trying to grab the champagne bottle as the ship ran away, of Hindenburg reviewing the remnant of Germany's naval might. Only eight years ago, and already Germany was again the most feared nation in the world.

When we emerged from the Kiel Canal into the North Sea we ran into a gale and for six hours the chatter was stilled, the saloon was empty save for ourselves, blanket-swathed forms lay about the deck, all was peaceful. Our prayers seemed to have been answered. We could enjoy the white-capped rolling seas and the wind. I felt the gale blowing alcohol and nicotine and politics and fears and petty misgivings out of my system every moment, wished I could travel for weeks in the *Warszawa* with a few good friends, watched with wonder the seagulls, that hung motionless in the air and yet kept pace with the ship, as if they were attached to it by invisible threads.

I must make another discursion. Every day these little ships are coming across the sea to England, bearing these hundreds of Jews with them. Every day the aeroplanes bring scores — I have just read in the *Daily Express* that a hundred landed in one day at Croydon. Every day the trains from Warsaw and Bucharest

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and Vienna and Prague and Cracow and Riga are leaving Englandward, full of them. Scores of thousands of these people must have entered England in recent years and months. In this ship I saw them as I have always seen them since the tale of Jewish persecution and suffering began to fill the newspapers of the world every day — cock-a-hoop, loud, monopolistic, implacably set on muscling-in and squeezing-out. They will not be modest and moderate, thankful for asylum in England. They will not fight for England, though they will cry day and night that England ought to fight.

They have no feeling for England in their hearts. If you can talk with them in some foreign language well enough to disguise your nationality, you will hear them, already, talking patronizingly of the English as they talked of the Germans, the Austrians, the Czechs, 'Na ja, es ist ein braves Volk, aber organisieren können die Engländer natürlich nicht' — 'Oh yes, they're all right, but of course they can't organize.' The old story; the Jews must run the country because the natives are too stupid.

These people should never be allowed into England, except under the most rigid control. Not one of them should be allowed into England except under an inescapable obligation to fight in the British Army in any new war — but to fight, not to serve as a canteen orderly in Aldershot or a medical corps sergeant at John o'Groats, or a quartermaster's clerk at Portsmouth, or something of that sort. They are potentially as dangerous for us as the Germans themselves, because their only wish is that we should fight Germany for them. Before Hitler came to power, we had just as many Jews as we can assimilate, and these Jews understood us and our ways and fitted in.

This new influx is the worst thing that can happen for England and for the long-established English Jews.

Chance, and possibly my own sense of timing, enabled me to write additional chapters for *Insanity Fair* immediately after publication, and this time the same thing has happened again. But on this occasion chance has enabled me, in the additional chapter, to give you the best possible example of the way organized

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world-Jewry works and of the immense power it wields in goading world-opinion against Germany. I imagine anybody who has read these two books will realize that I hold Germany to be a menace to England, but that I do not identify the cause of England with that of the foreign Jews.

After I wrote *Insanity Fair* I was swamped by offers from American publishers for my next book. I signed a contract with one firm. When I began *Disgrace Abounding* I did not know that it would be an anti-Semitic book. The anti-Semitic part is the result of my observation of the Jews in the last year and of my conviction that the mass influx of Jews to England is a political mistake and a national misfortune.

The American publisher, after reading *Disgrace Abounding*, declined to publish on the ground that the Semitic part was 'slanderous and libellous'. Read the Jewish part for yourself and see if this is true. I, for my part, declined to have the book published anywhere without the Jewish chapters. The real meaning of that decision is that, in America, you may 'slander and libel' Germany as much as you like, and be paid for it, but you must not discuss the Jewish problem, you must not assert that there is a Jewish problem. Other American publishers declined the book on the grounds that they could not publish the Jewish chapters. One of them, not a Jew, said that an American publisher would court misfortune by publishing it, because 90 per cent of the American newspapers are Jewish, and the Jewish influence extends in similar proportion throughout the whole ring of trades connected with publishing.

I see very little difference between the Jewish and the Hitlerist method, in this matter of free speech and free discussion. The Jews are for free attacks on Germany, nothing else. The same thing happened in some of the Scandinavian countries, where *Insanity Fair* had great success and where publishers were clamouring for the next book — until they saw the Jewish chapters. They asked to be allowed to publish the book without them. I refused. The same thing happened in France even with *Insanity Fair*, where a publisher contracted for the book who apparently could not read

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English and only realized when he saw the French translation that there was a few passages in it which he did not consider sufficiently favourable to the Jews. He demanded their excision, I refused, and he sold the contract to another firm.

So only in England, as yet, and possibly in France — although I do not yet know whether this book will appear in France — may a non-Jew openly discuss the for and against of the Jewish question.

The importance of this, for you, is that you should realize that what is presented to you as 'American approval' or 'American disapproval' of this or that action of British policy is not American but Jewish opinion, and that this puts quite another face on the matter. If you are to fight Germany again, you must do it for England's sake. You must not allow yourselves to be egged on by Jews masquerading to-day as 'German public opinion', to-morrow as 'Czechoslovak public opinion', the day after as 'English public opinion', and the next day as 'American public opinion'. If England suffers disaster in coming years, the Jews who have come to England in these latter years will not suffer that misfortune in like measure; they will not feel it as Englishmen will feel it, they will prosper in chaos, and when they feel that a lean time is coming for them they will make up their minds to sail away.

As I came up the Thames I wondered what my own future would be. I had promised myself to decide within a very few days whether I would continue to write about the daily European scene or whether I would cut loose together, go to Polynesia, Patagonia or Peking, write about other things than Hitler's eternal invasions.

I wondered whether, the next time I left England, I should go in one of those steamers white and gold to some far distant foreign clime. The decision lay before me. I had a few days' time. While I was locked up in the Legation at Prague, *Disgrace Abounding* was published — the most curious things happen to my books. After my departure from Prague I read the first reviews of it. Somebody spoke compassionately of my inferiority complex. I never knew, until I wrote *Insanity Fair*, what an inferiority complex was, or that

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I had one. To understand these things you have to sit at the feet of some venerable Jewish professor in Vienna, who soothes you by telling you that your faults are not your own but the products of your ancestors' hereditary alcoholism, or something of that sort, and this wise counsel gives you new strength. The gins of the fathers. Kraft durch Freud.

I have no inferiority complex, but only the most normal longings for England to be better. I have a heavy foreboding for England, whose rulers have made every mistake they could. I want to see England safe at home and abroad. Safe at home for the British Derelict Areans, not for the Foreign Non-Aryans. Safe abroad from Germany.

Neither of these things is being done. The danger of a German ultimatum has been drawing daily nearer. What shall it profit Britain if she lose her whole Empire and gain only the Jews? Now, at the last moment, a faint hope offers that a stand will be made — over Poland. Then why not for Czecho-Slovakia? Why have we handed over the Czech Army, the Czech Air Force, the Skoda Works, the Czech gold, to Germany? If we were from the beginning prepared to make this stand, we should have made it years ago. Then you would have had none of this trouble. You could have satisfied Germany's just grievances — but you could have compelled her to keep the peace.

But, in point of fact, I do not believe in that firm stand which the British public thinks it is making in the case of Poland. On the contrary, all the signs are that Germany will increase her territory at the cost of Poland, that Poland will either be reduced in area or disappear altogether, that the rulers of England will facilitate this process, and that they will once more help Germany to territorial aggrandizement, make her stronger for her final reckoning with England.

Consider the facts, so that you may not once more be duped and taken by surprise.

Mr. Chamberlain gave the Poles, on March 31st, an Assurance that if, 'during the period of negotiation' there should be 'any action which clearly threatens Polish independence and which

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the Polish Government considers it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power'.

Do you see what it means? That Poland should yield, by negotiation. No more unpleasant overnight invasions. It goes only a little farther than the solemn warning given to Germany in May 1938 about Czecho-Slovakia — and where is Czecho-Slovakia to-day?

Once again, as in the case of Austria, as in the case of Czecho-Slovakia, as in the case of Spain, the real intentions of Mr. Chamberlain's Government were revealed, on the very morning after that Assurance, by *The Times*. 'The new obligation which this country yesterday assumed', it said, 'does not bind Great Britain to defend every inch of the present frontiers of Poland. The key word in the declaration is not "integrity" but "independence".'

So there you have it. The Assurance meant nothing at all, and the Poles will presumably go the way of the Czecho-Slovaks. The same old bluff for the dear old British public.

Unless the Poles fight. That might alter everything. The Poles, too, mean you. They, too, have a large army. They, too, have an air force.

Because I had these forebodings for England, I turned away in distaste from my chattering and gesticulating and joking fellow-passengers that day as we came up the Thames estuary, and leaned on the rail, watching the rain drive over the marshes, heavy at heart. Ships, docks, factories. Gravesend and Greenwich. Water grey and clouds grey, and yet of quite different hues. White ribbons of smoke streaming across this greyness from black factory chimneys. A rare patch of colour here and there — the brown sail of a barge, the red funnel of a steamer.

Have you ever been welcomed to London with open arms? I have. Let me be clear: I am not at all sure that my native city feels like that about me, it is just the whimsical way my mind works. But it certainly looked like that. The little Polish steamer

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came through the Port of London, the ship's siren screeched importantly to announce the return of the wanderer — and London opened its arms. Tower Bridge performed that gesture of welcome. I passed through those open arms and was folded to the bosom of London. It was damp, and bore the name of Somebody's Wharf.

## APPENDIX

### MORT DE BOHÈME

I LIKE this word Appendix. All fashionable people used to have their appendixes out, and all fashionable books have their appendixes in. So here goes.

The repetition of history in the case of England and the Czechs, who lost their independence to the Germans by force of arms in 1620, regained it in 1918, and lost it again, under the threat of war, in 1938, is extremely interesting. It shows, to quote Mr. Chamberlain, 'the continuity of English political thought'.

I owe thanks for the details of the 'Czech crisis in the autumn of 1620' to Count Pavel Skala de Zhoře, a Bohemian nobleman who, as an *émigré* in Paris, wrote a *History of Bohemia 1602-1623* which was published in 1680.

The Czech crisis of 1620 developed in the spring (as did the 1938 crisis). The German Emperor Ferdinand sought allies, in Protestant as well as Catholic countries, against the Czech King Frederick of Bohemia. Frederick also sought allies but was less fortunate; he received 'assurances' but, in the moment of crisis, no help. He hoped, especially, for help from France and England. Frederick's forebears had given help, in money and men, to Henry, the father of King Louis of France (as Czech Legions fought with the French in the World War) and Frederick hoped that Louis would now do as much for him, and not allow him to be crushed by a mighty enemy.

His hopes were vain. His second prospective ally was his own father-in-law King James of England, whose daughter he had married (in 1938 no blood relationship existed between London and Prague, but France and England were the godparents of the free Czech State). James, however, dissuaded Louis from active intervention (in 1938 British counsel to the same effect was given to France).

James of England was in a quandary. On the one hand, the Czech King was his son-in-law and the husband of his daughter. On the other hand, the formidable might of the German Emperor and the King of Spain were arrayed against Frederick. James had no particular

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wish to abandon his son-in-law, but he stood in much awe of the ruler of Germany. He therefore tried to solve the problem by giving protestations of friendship and counsels of peace. In this course he was advised by the agents and Ambassador of Spain, who were always round him and who urged him not to have recourse to arms or to send help to his son-in-law. The nobles and the masses in England were friendly towards the Czechs and were prepared to help them, but the King, though he had no umbrella, stood in the way. He had never since his youth fought a war and had always relied on a policy of appeasement. This was the reason why, when a state of emergency came, he could not decide to take up the sword, as he was advised to do by other counsellors. At that time, according to my Czech historian, it would have sufficed for him to say that he would succour the Czechs — and there would have been no war. He had only to let it be believed in Europe that he was prepared to go to war and Bohemia would have been saved, instead of falling into three hundred years of serfdom. Events, indeed, had already moved so far that the coastal inhabitants of Flanders, then under the Emperor Ferdinand's rule, had in fear of the coming of the English king begun to move their goods and chattels inland and to prepare for flight (evacuation of the civilian population).

The mere threat of England's might would then have been enough to avert the war and save Bohemia.

The Lords of Oxford and Essex (Duff Cooper), distrusting the policy of their King, formed at their own expense a troop of infantry and sent it to the Continent. King James did not sanction this, but looked the other way.

On October 20th, 1620, in the afternoon, there arrived in Prague from Dresden an English mission (Lord Runciman) of eight coaches and twenty persons, headed by Milors Weston and Conway. They were met (as was Lord Runciman) by the highest nobles and officials of the State and by two squadrons of cavalry and escorted with all honour (as was Lord Runciman) to a hostelry. The next morning they had an audience of the Queen and on Sunday, after Mass, they saw King Frederick (Benesh) who had come in from the camp of his army, pitched outside Prague, to meet them. His plans for offering an armed resistance to the aggressor did not meet with the approval of King James, who in letters to Frederick, and now through the mouths of his emissaries, urged him 'to go to the extreme limit of concession'.

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'Peace and negotiation', counselled Milors Weston and Conway in letters which they sent to the King, at his camp, on October 26th and November 3rd. If he could not find a peaceful solution to the quarrel, they intimated, King James might yet be able to help him, though he must always bear in mind that King James was above all concerned for 'universal peace and the commonweal'. While they were still counselling him, the Germans attacked, the Battle of the White Mountain was fought, on November 8th, and that was how King Frederick lost his throne and the Czechs their independence, until 1918.

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'I am an optimist at long range, and that is why I dislike Mr. Reed's *Disgrace Abounding*. I dislike it, but you must all read it. You must read it because Mr. Reed knows his immediate facts, writes well, and is most sincere . . .

SIR HUGH WALPOLE in the DAILY SKETCH

'As a critic, more particularly of his own country, Mr. Reed is devastating . . . Mr. Reed is a very good writer. He can do more than describe brilliantly, he can evoke the very feeling of those places, be they sophisticated town or primitive village, in the South German and Slavonic lands which he loves so well. The Danube, as it flows through his pages, is a stream of living water. And sometimes, forgetting to be polemical . . . he will write a passage of grave and satisfying beauty.'

PUNCH

' . . . Mr. Reed's book is mostly on one theme, but the execution is of sustained brilliance. Reed can write. And so, disagree as we will with his interpretation of politics, it is impossible to deny to what he has written this tribute, that it comes near to being a literary masterpiece of the second rank.'

TRUTH