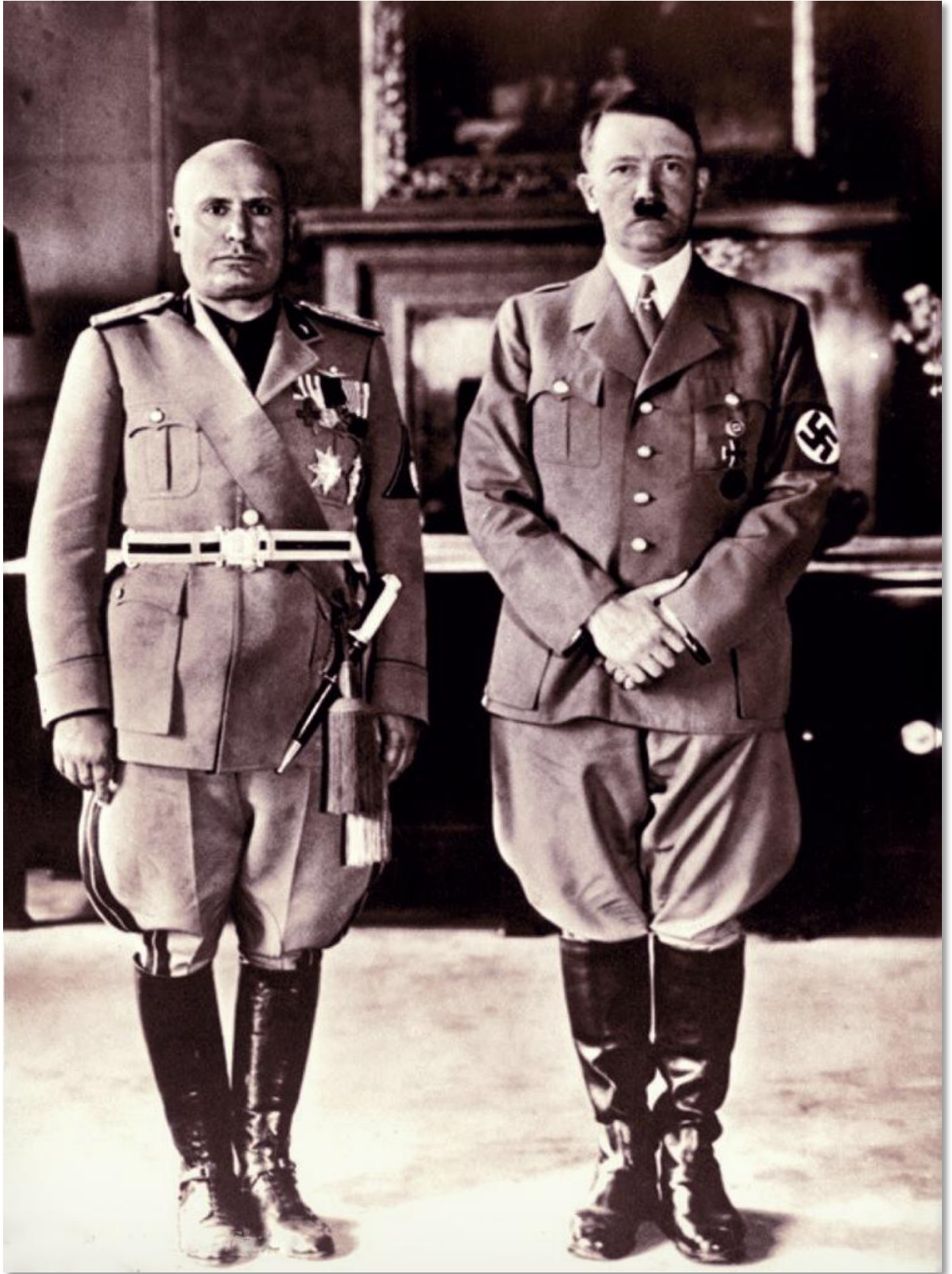


I KNOW THESE DICTATORS

**This is a scan of the original book. Some additional photos have been added
for historical interest.**



Mussolini and Hitler in Munich, September, 1937

(Photo: International Graphic Press Ltd.)

I KNOW THESE DICTATORS

By
G. WARD PRICE

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NEW EDITION REVISED



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CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER I CONTRASTS OF CHARACTER	1
CHAPTER II THE HUMAN SIDE OF HITLER.....	6
CHAPTER IV INITIAL REVERSES	43
CHAPTER V THE RISE TO POWER.....	58
CHAPTER VI THE 'RÉGIME' AND ITS RECORD	69
CHAPTER VII MEN AROUND THE CHANCELLOR	84
CHAPTER VIII HITLER'S AIMS	94
CHAPTER IX THE PRESS AND THE DICTATORS	102

PART II

CHAPTER I THE DUCE AS A MAN	108
CHAPTER II MUSSOLINI' S FAMILY	115
CHAPTER III YOUTH AND EARLY MANHOOD.....	121
CHAPTER IV FROM CORPORAL TO CHIEF OF STATE.....	128
CHAPTER V DIFFICULTIES AND DEEDS	134
CHAPTER VI EARLY DAYS IN POWER	140
CHAPTER VII PEOPLE AND PERILS ABOUT THE DUCE	144
CHAPTER VIII MUSSOLINI AND THE ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGN.....	149
CHAPTER IX THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE 'GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT'	157
EPILOGUE.....	163

I KNOW THESE DICTATORS

PART I

CHAPTER I

CONTRASTS OF CHARACTER

THE world is confronted by a new technique of government. A great development in political history is going on before our eyes.

We should study it with an open mind. The Fascist and Nazi Revolutions are too momentous to be judged with personal bias. Outside their own countries the men at the head of these *régimes* are called 'Dictators.' That term is accurate in the sense that their authority is supreme and overruling, but it does not mean that Hitler and Mussolini have subjected reluctant and resentful peoples to their will.

They are leaders who rose to supreme authority by embodying the national desire to escape from a condition of inferiority. Their functions are defined by the titles of *Führer* and *Duce* that they bear. Both of them have the support and approval of a much greater proportion of their fellow-countrymen than has ever voted for the Government of any democratic State.

They came to power by constitutional methods. Mussolini was invited by the King of Italy to form a Government, and Hitler was appointed to the Chancellorship by the President of the German Republic. Each began his governmental career as the head of a Coalition Ministry.

The external form of the constitution has been preserved in both countries. There is still a Reichstag in Berlin and a Chamber of Deputies in Rome. Parliament in each case handed over its controlling power to the organs of Dictatorship. This change of governmental method has expedited action and produced an abundant record of achievement.

It would be not only unjust but unintelligent to disregard these substantial results and condemn without further investigation administrations which have brought great benefits to the peoples that live under them. The authoritarian *régimes* of Germany and Italy, while restricting individual freedom of thought and action, have set up a high standard of national welfare. To form a fair judgement of them it is best to begin by studying the character of their creators.

Despite resemblances in career, achievement, and situation, there are marked differences of character between the two Dictators.

This dissimilarity is well reflected in their respective senses of humour. Mussolini has a keen, sardonic wit, which is freely applied to his political preoccupations. His lively

eyes dilate still wider when some caustic comment on the international situation suggests itself to his active mind.

Hitler's humour is more ingenuous and personal. He is gay and whimsical in the circle of his close friends, but too earnest in his attitude towards public affairs to be jocular about them.

Mussolini gives the greater impression of vitality. He uses a high arm-chair, but seldom leans back in it. His temperament is too vigorous for him to remain long seated at all. Springing up from behind his heavy oaken work-table, he will carry on a conversation for half an hour standing-his stocky figure bolt upright, sturdy legs straddling wide apart, and massive head held so high that its heavy chin and full, pursed lips are thrust aggressively forward.

Whereas Hitler speaks only German, Mussolini talks to all foreigners in French, which he uses with ease and fluency. Sometimes he will express himself for a few sentences in English, but he began to learn that language after coming to power, and has to talk it slowly and deliberately. He speaks German well, having learnt it during the time he spent as a young man in what was then the Austrian province of the Trentino.

Personal contact with him does not reveal the arrogance and megalomania which many people in other countries believe to be his chief characteristics, unless those terms are to be applied to the emphatic tone and positive manner of one accustomed to impose his point of view. His masterful bearing is a genuine quality of nature and habit, not a pose, and he is too good-humouredly cynical to be a victim of *folie de grandeur*. Businesslike, quick-witted, instantaneous and apt in his replies, he conveys the impression of a successful man of the world who is an expert at his job and enjoys doing it.

The demeanour of Hitler is very different. He does not lend himself so readily as Mussolini to the give-and-take of question and answer, rejoinder and comment. Intercourse with him rather resembles the Socratic form of dialogue; the inquirer propounds a theme, and Hitler enlarges upon it. When more than two people are present, even though they are of his intimate circle, there is no general discourse. Either Hitler talks and they all listen; or else they talk among themselves and Hitler sits silent.

Mussolini is an eager conversationalist. When a caller at the Palazzo Venezia is already known to him, he will sometimes dispense with a greeting and ask an abrupt question as his visitor is still advancing over the twenty yards of empty marble floor that stretch from the door of his room to his desk.

Hitler's manner is more formal. He greets his guest with a handshake, the arm held straight and low. His friendly smile is accompanied by a silence which, to a first-come, is disconcerting. Or, when his caller is already known to him, he may murmur a quizzical "Na ?" - an interrogative interjection which puts the onus of starting the talk upon the visitor.

Mussolini gives the immediate impression of a lively and eager brain reacting to each new stimulus. The temperament of Hitler is more dreamy and introspective

His bearing remains tranquil until his attention is aroused by some political remark. Then his eyes light up, his relaxed frame stiffens, and in a hoarse, sombre voice, he pours forth a voluble reply. Hitler's public speeches are long and digressive, like the style of his

autobiography. The Duce talks to the crowd in short, staccato phrases, and writes as compactly as if his words were to be carved in stone.

Whereas Mussolini is objective and practical, Hitler is subjective and mystical. Mussolini delights in complicated reports and official memoranda. Hitler detests them and shuns discussion of administrative detail. The one is a realist, the other a visionary. Mussolini's mental processes are dominated by facts; Hitler's are governed by ideals. It was a prominent German who once said to me, "You cannot really compare them, for the one is rational, the other intuitive."

The contrast between their temperaments is reflected in their physique. When the Dictators stood side by side during the Duce's visit to Germany in September, 1937, Mussolini, though the elder by six years, appeared the more vigorous and Hitler the more spiritual of the two. Although the Führer has a slight advantage in height, the powerful frame and massive shaven head of Mussolini give him a monumental presence.

To attain power was more difficult for Hitler than Mussolini, but as regards their subsequent achievement of setting up an authoritarian *régime* the position was reversed.

Hitler achieved supremacy in a country where traditions were strong, and where caste-prejudice had always been predominant. That he should have succeeded in winning acceptance of his will and confidence in his leadership from a nation containing such established institutions as the army, aristocracy, Junkers, and manufacturing oligarchy of Germany is the greatest triumph of personality the world has seen for generations. Once that miracle was performed, he had at his command a first-class Government bureaucracy and a disciplined and industrious nation.

For Mussolini the way to power was less obstructed, but after setting up his Government he had to overcome many deficiencies in the administrative machine, and to deal with a people less accustomed to uniformity and co-operation.

Different in type as the two Dictators are, they have the common quality of intense conviction. Both are fatalists. Mussolini believes in his star; Hitler in his call by Providence to the political redemption of Germany.

This certainty that their names and deeds are written in the Book of Fate gives confidence and directness to their utterances. Both of them are emphatic in expressing the desire to be on better terms with Britain. But they have their own ideas of what such terms should be, and their patriotic ardour would transform this attitude into one of antagonism if they became convinced that Britain were an immovable obstacle in the path of their national aims.

To some extent that impression has already been created in their minds as a result of the British Government's devotion to the idealistic principles of the League of Nations Covenant.

If Great Britain had reserved to herself more liberty of independent action, and had used it to negotiate directly with the Dictators, Europe might be a safer place to-day. The wisdom, resource, experience, and prestige attributed by foreign opinion to British statesmen lost their effectiveness on being thrown into the common stock at Geneva.

When the League was brought into existence, these authoritarian states were unforeseen phenomena. Britain would have been in a better position to ensure peace if she had dealt with them by those pragmatism and opportunist methods which she applies to her Imperial affairs, instead of subordinating her international policy to a cosmopolitan council and to the utopian conception of 'collective security.'

Fancies have been allowed to prevail over facts, and only those visionaries who prefer shadow to substance can be satisfied with the result. That result has brought about a combination of two countries, each of which was well disposed towards us and less well disposed towards the other. When Hitler and Mussolini met in June, 1934, it is no secret that their first contact failed to inspire them with mutual regard. Hitler thought Mussolini theatrical; Mussolini found Hitler egotistic. This lack of sympathy developed into an all but open quarrel when, six weeks later, Austrian Nazis attempted a *coup d'etat* in Austria, and killed Chancellor Dollfuss, who had recently been Mussolini's guest, and whose wife and children were staying on the day of his death with the Italian Dictator's family. Italy massed troops on the frontier, and if Germany had then been as strong as now, Austria might have become a battlefield.

The crisis passed, but that first symptom of the ultimate Nazi aim to embody Austria in the Third Reich set Italy seeking the support of France and Britain. Mussolini joined with the British and French Premiers at the Stresa Conference in censuring Germany for her repudiation of the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty early in 1935.

Then came the Abyssinian War, which broke up the 'Stresa Front.' By refusing to join in the sanction- blockade of Italy, the German Government earned Mussolini's gratitude.

In July, 1936, the outstanding issue of Austrian independence which had hitherto separated these two countries reached a state of truce in the form of an agreement negotiated between Germany and Austria. The way was open for a reconciliation between the two Dictators.

The occasion for this was provided by the active intervention of the Soviet Government in the Civil War in Spain. Moscow threw all its energies into the task of fulfilling Lenin's prophecy that Spain would be the next European country to go Bolshevist.

This effort, if successful, would soon have spread to France, bringing a vastly increased Bolshevist menace right up to the frontiers of Germany and Italy. Instinctively and automatically, rather than by design, the two authoritarian States formed a partnership to avert that danger.

Italy's activities in this undertaking raised the question of the naval control of the Mediterranean under a critical aspect. Mussolini is desperately determined that his country shall not be a prisoner in her own home waters. He suspects the British Government of the intention to keep her in some such condition.

That belief is strengthened by the conviction that Britain will never forgive Italy for carrying through the conquest of Abyssinia, undeterred by the concentration of the British fleet at Alexandria and by the League campaign of sanctions. The Italian mind is haunted by the apprehension that the British Government may some day take a 'delayed revenge' for the dispatch of Italian forces against its will first to the eastern and then to the western end of a sea which was so long under the naval domination of Britain.

Necessity makes strange bedfellows, and though Italy still fears Germany's long-standing ambition to reach the Adriatic and extend her influence throughout the Balkans, Mussolini turned to her for support and concluded an agreement for which he invented the indefinite name of the 'Rome-Berlin axis.'

The Germans had also been hitherto reluctant to pledge themselves to co-operation with Italy, whose resources and reliability as an ally they did not overestimate. Pacts with Mediterranean peoples were moreover not contemplated by the Nordic principles of the Nazi

Party. The German Government, like the Italian, would have preferred to reach a solid understanding with Britain, if this could have been arranged on terms acceptable to Germany.

The British Government, however, held firmly to its engagements with France, which were given a more positive form when the German Army reoccupied the Rhineland. France, seeing in Germany her eternal enemy, and being largely influenced by lavish Bolshevist propaganda, had no intention of easing the German position by giving up her military alliance with Russia.

As the Spanish war went on, the Rome-Berlin axis grew constantly stronger. In the Non-Intervention Committee the representatives of Germany and Italy formed a close combination, consulting together before each meeting.

At length, when Mussolini visited Germany in September, 1937, this 'axis' became an alliance in everything but the name. Hitler and Mussolini exchanged public pledges of fidelity before a million Germans assembled in the Berlin Olympic Stadium and on the great open space surrounding it.

The Führer announced that between the two authoritarian countries there henceforth existed not only unity of view but unity of action. The Duce declared that National Socialism and Fascism had everywhere the same enemies, who served the same master - the Third International - and that when he and Fascist Italy had a friend they "would march together with him to the end."

This visit was brought about by the initiative of Germany. The friendly letter which the new British Premier, Mr Neville Chamberlain, sent to Mussolini had aroused the apprehension that Italy might be induced to leave her new association with Germany and return to the 'Stresa Front.' The German Government desired to demonstrate that Germany and Italy must be dealt with as a group, and could not be divided.

The occasion was taken to display to Mussolini the might of Germany, in its political, military, aerial, and industrial aspects, under the most impressive conditions possible. It was indeed announced that he came as Leader of the Fascist Party and not as head of the Italian Government-but in Germany and Italy there is no real distinction between Party and State.

From the German people Mussolini received a flattering reception-all the more congenial to him as this was his first personal contact with any other nation since the year 1922, when his *régime* began. In this friendly atmosphere the frigid relations between the two Dictators resulting from the events of 1934 thawed into cordiality.

A new joint in the highly strained articulation of Europe was formed on that evening of September 28, 1937, when Hitler and Mussolini, under streaming rain, proclaimed their union of sympathies and aims to the vast ocean of faces beneath them, which, in the alternate glare and gloom of the floodlights, looked like a Gustave Dore picture of the Day of Judgement. Mussolini himself has estimated the dead in another European war at ten millions. It was a grim reflection that the huge multitude before one's eyes was but one-tenth of that total.

In the authoritarian countries the only deciding factors are the will and prestige of the two Dictators. These factors Mussolini emphatically associated in a joint international policy, which may well be completed by Italy's adhesion to the already existing anti-Communist Pact between Germany and Japan.

If the exchange of personal pledges between Hitler and Mussolini means that Italy is committed to playing the *role* of a 'brilliant second' to Germany, this new line-up in Europe may lead to war. The only way to mitigate that risk would be to expand the Italo-German Agreement into another Four-Power Pact, such as was signed between Germany, Italy, France, and Britain in July, 1933, and to enlarge it by bringing Poland within its scope.

CHAPTER II

THE HUMAN SIDE OF HITLER

MOST people outside Hitler's own country, and within it too for that matter, know the leader of Germany only by his public record, speeches, and appearance. The picture of him in the world's eye is of an impassioned orator declaiming from a rostrum; a national idol saluted by forests of uplifted arms at huge mass-demonstrations; a stern, statuesque, uniformed figure watching the march past of interminable columns of sturdy, jack-booted young men.

This conception of Hitler as a grim political robot is far from accurate. Behind the forceful character which he displays in public there is a human, pleasant personality known only to his intimates.

Although a passion for Germany was the earliest influence in his life, there is much of the Austrian in Adolf Hitler. The land of his birth and upbringing has endowed him with the artistic, visionary tendencies of the South German type. He makes no effort to control his feelings. When he tells the story of the trials and hardships of his youth and of the early struggling days of the Nazi movement, tears come readily to his eyes.

There is a strong strain of sadness and tenderness in his disposition. The intensity of feeling that imparts such high voltage to his public activities makes him sensitive to private griefs. When a close friend said to him: "You have been so lucky in everything you have undertaken," he replied: "In my political life I have always been lucky, but in my private life I have been more unfortunate than anyone I have ever known."

Though brought up as a Catholic, Hitler is not a professing Christian. Yet he once said very earnestly to me: "I believe in God, and I am convinced that He will not desert sixty-seven million Germans who have worked so hard to regain their rightful position in the world." In his election speeches he often urges his hearers to pray for Divine blessing on the national cause.

The sobriety of Hitler's private life is well known. He is a vegetarian, teetotaller, and non-smoker. His favourite dishes are *Nudelsuppe*, a soup with little dumplings in it; spinach; apples, either baked or raw; and *Russische Eier*, which are cold hard-boiled eggs with mayonnaise sauce. At tea-time, despite anxiety to avoid putting on weight, he is fond of chocolate éclairs. He drinks neither tea nor coffee, but only mineral water and infusions of camomile or lime-flowers.

Sometimes at the end of a hard day, or when he thinks he may have caught a chill, he swallows a little brandy in milk-but with distaste.

He finds the smell of tobacco so unpleasant that no one is allowed to smoke in his presence, even after dinner, which to Germans is a serious deprivation.

Walking at Berchtesgaden is his only exercise, yet his appearance is healthy, his skin of a fresh colour, and his pale-blue eyes are always bright. In Berlin he never leaves his official residence except by motor-car. Despite these sedentary habits, he shows great resistance to fatigue. I have seen him stand upright for five hours on end in his motor-car at Nürnberg, holding the big yearly review of the Storm Troopers, most of the time keeping his arm stretched out stiffly in salute. During the crisis of the Rhineland reoccupation he worked continuously for two days and two nights. On the third evening he invited Frau Goebbels and

some other friends to dinner. They looked at cinematograph-films till 2 A.M., and when Frau Goebbels suggested that the Chancellor should get some rest, : he said : “ If you leave me now, I shall only sit up reading till 4 o'clock, so I hope that you will stay.”

That is about his regular bedtime, most of his study of State documents being done in the small hours. Berchtesgaden is the only place where he can get a night's rest without a sleeping-draught, which he takes in capsule form after his evening meal together with some digestive medicine. Whenever his public engagements allow, he stays in bed till noon. His general health is good, and the operation performed on him by Dr Sauerbruch in the spring of 1935 was only to remove a harmless' polyp' on the vocal chords which is common with people who strain their voices by public speaking.

Hitler is always smartly turned out, his thick brown hair brushed smooth, and his fresh-complexioned face closely shaved. Neither greyness nor baldness has yet touched his head. His teeth are strong. His white, spatulate-fingered hands are well manicured. Particularly noticeable is the big ball of his thumb, which palmists associate with strength of will. The lobes of his ears are large, an indication regarded by physiognomists as a sign of vitality.

There has been little alteration in his appearance during the fifteen years of his public life. His face and form have grown fuller, though not more so than suits his soldierly figure, and his hair, which in earlier days was patted in the middle, has been made to lie in a flat wave over the left temple.

In Germany he has at least one double. While watching Hitler take the march past of the Storm Troopers at Nürnberg in September, 1936, I saw, sitting in an invalid chair among the war-cripples, a man so like him that if both had not been there at the same moment, I could not have believed so strong a natural resemblance possible. This unknown war-veteran had certainly intensified the similarity by brushing his hair in the same way as the Führer , and clipping his bristly moustache to identical style and size. But only Nature could have provided the shape of the head, the facial angles, and that rather whimsical expression in the eyes, as if the brain behind them were occupied with some private joke, which is characteristic of Hitler.

The khaki linen uniform coat of the Nazi Party that forms the Chancellor's usual dress always looks new, and his shirts, generally of white silk, are well cut. He often says that as a poverty-stricken young man in Vienna he made up his mind that when he became rich he would allow himself two luxuries - to have open fireplaces in every room (unusual in Germany) and to change his shirt twice a day.

The sleeve of his tunic carries a red armband with a black swastika symbol, and on its breast are the Iron Cross of the First Class, and the bronze German wound- badge. His khaki tie bears the Nazi emblem mounted as a pin.

Out of doors he wears a Sam Browne belt and military cap, both bought at the Party stores. For reviews and other formal occasions he changes from the black trousers which at home go with his khaki tunic into breeches of brown drill and brown riding-boots, laced in front, with a buckle at the upper edge behind, which fit so loosely that they look ready-made. When I have seen him in plain clothes at his flat at Munich, or at the house of Herr von Ribbentrop, the Chancellor has always worn a double-breasted dark-blue suit with white shirt and soft collar.

Herr Hitler is a widely read man. His closest friends declare that he is familiar with the works of all the leading German philosophers, and has mastered the history, geography, and social and economic conditions of the chief European countries. His days of serious study are past, however, and he finds relief from responsibilities in stories of adventure. Karl May, a writer of the G. A. Henty type, whose books, like *Through the Desert*, are popular with German boys, is one of his favourites.

In works on travel, the maps and plans get most of his attention. He says that if he ever went to London or Paris he would immediately be able to find his way about, and he claims that there is hardly a famous building in the world which he could not draw from memory. Until, in May, 1938, he visited Italy, whose architecture led him to make many changes in his own building plans the only foreign cities he had seen were Brussels and Venice.

Although he plays no instrument himself, music is a passion with Hitler. He never misses an opportunity of listening to Wagner and Beethoven. Grand opera is his favourite entertainment. A State performance of *Die Meistersinger* with all the best German artistes in the cast, is a standing feature of the Party Congress at Nurnberg. Hitler claims to have heard this opera a hundred times.

“ I think I am one of the most musical people in the world,” he says, with a whimsical smile.

He has a great liking for the ordinary theatre and variety, but seldom gets a chance to indulge it.

Art has also a great appeal for him, and he knows a good deal about pictures. He recently acquired a Cranach and two Brueghels for his Munich flat.

The greatest practical interest in his life, however, is architecture. In everything but name he is the Chief State Architect of Germany.

No public building may go up until its style and layout have been submitted to the Chancellor, who examines them with the closest interest and attention. There is a room at the Chancellery in Berlin with a drawing-table, always spread with plans, at which he stands for hours, drafting original designs or modifications to be used in public works. The architectural features of the network of motor-roads which he has brought into existence were all of his contrivance.

The reconstruction of the Chancellor's official residence in Berlin, the enlargement of his house among the Alps on the Austrian border, and the building of the vast and sumptuous new headquarters for the Party on the Königsplatz in Munich were all carried out to his design, including their interior decoration. His taste is thoroughly modern, with a preference for simplicity, symmetry, and spaciousness.

It is his aim to make the two cities of Nürnberg, the scene of the annual Congress, and Munich, the birthplace and headquarters of the Party, into architectural monuments of his *régime*. The gigantic stadiums at Nurnberg, where the various Nazi organizations parade before him in September, are being replaced by others on a vast er scale, and he is building there a huge new Congress Hall, to seat 90,000 people, which is to be the largest modern building in the world. Its facade, three hundred yards long, will be a colonnade of solid granite pillars. For two years work has been going on, yet so far only the foundations have been laid. The building will not be complete till 1943. If it fulfils Hitler's intention, this structure will last as long as the Parthenon or Coliseum. “ Thousands of years hence,” he says, “ people will still be marvelling at it and saying: 'What a great race those Germans were!' ”

Professor Speer, the thirty-year-old architect who works out from the Chancellor's sketches the technical details of these monumental creations, is in constant attendance on him. In the middle of a Wagner Festival at Bayreuth, Herr Hitler suddenly exclaimed to him: “ We must have a new Comic Opera House at Munich. I have thought of an excellent site for it.” And, taking a writing-pad, he began at once to draw the plan and

elevation. During the building of the House of German Art in Munich, he went every day that he was in that city to inspect its progress.

He would like, if it were possible, to create an entirely new capital for Germany, because (1) the climate of Berlin is so dry that it tends to make its inhabitants highly strung; (2) being a business centre, it receives alarmist reports from commercial sources which are at once communicated to the Ministries; and (3) he would prefer a more peaceful and solely political and diplomatic capital, such as Washington provides for the United States.

The cinema is one of Hitler's favourite distractions. All new films arriving in Germany or made there are sent to him. Frequently after dinner he will watch two full length shows in a large drawing-room at the Chancellery. One of his favourite films is *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, which I have heard him say he saw three nights running. As a result of this keen interest in British and American talking films the Chancellor is almost unconsciously beginning to acquire a knowledge of English.

Fondness for children and dogs is regarded by many as evidence of good nature. This is a strong trait in Hitler's character. He keeps several Alsatians at Berchtesgaden, and felt great grief when one of his favourite dogs was poisoned, supposedly by the Communists.

Golden-haired, six-year-old Helga Goebbels is a favourite playmate of the Chancellor, and her mother Frau Magda Goebbels, an extremely intelligent woman whose striking blonde beauty has been passed on to her little daughter, is his closest German friend of the opposite sex. When very young, Frau Goebbels married a rich Rhineland manufacturer, Herr Quandt, who already had a family of grown-up children. The marriage was not a success, and shortly after the birth of her son Harold in 1921, it ended in a divorce. The present Frau Goebbels then spent some time in the United States, where she learnt her excellent English. In 1930 she came back to Germany and joined a Nazi organization in Berlin. It was there she met Dr Goebbels, the head of the Party in the capital, and married him.



Frau Magda Goebbels

Those in Hitler's intimate circle say that he is a very good mimic, and likes relating anecdotes to which added point is given by his impersonations of the characters concerned. After a concert following a State Dinner, I have seen him standing among a group of the performers telling stories in a lively manner which kept his hearers in continual laughter.

The Chancellor' has also a strong mechanical bent. Without any practical experience of engineering he takes particular interest in motor-cars and motor-boats, being familiar with all the latest refinements of the internal- combustion engine, and quick to notice the features of a new model. Herr Wehrin, a director of the Daimler-Benz Company, who is one of his personal friends, has told me that in discussing a forthcoming motor-show, Hitler once described to him an engine of a special type which he had seen at least twenty-five years before in Vienna, and did so with all the accuracy of an expert. 'When there is an automobile exhibition in Berlin he will spend a couple of hours a day there examining each car in turn. He claims to have motored more than half a million miles. " I am grateful to the motor-car, for it brought all Germany within my reach," is one of the Führer s sayings.

Yet he has no desire to drive a car himself. That, he says, is not his job. Mussolini's zest for piloting aeroplanes and driving racing-cars, motor-cycles, and motor- boats is quite incomprehensible to Hitler's more introverted temperament.

He has none of his Italian colleague's love for speed. His special train is not allowed to run at over thirty-five miles an hour, though this is mainly because he is a bad sleeper, despite the comfort of his private coach, which has a marble bathroom opening off the bedroom.

Hitler has a fantastically retentive memory. He can recall the contents of any book he has ever read, the plot of any play or film he has seen. His staff know that whatever they say to him is automatically recorded in his mind and will be quoted against them if, at some later date, they make a statement at variance with it.

His temperament is too individualistic to spare those who work under him. " He does not believe in helping people out of difficulties," said a close collaborator. " It is only when one of his subordinates is on the point of being overwhelmed by his work or responsibilities that he will come to his aid. Even then he does no more than lift the man's chin above the surface so that he can struggle for himself."

Inexorable as Hitler has shown himself upon occasion, his character is not one that cherishes small grudges.

" How many of your personal enemies did you payout when you got to power? " he was once asked.

" None," was the answer. There were many people against whom I had old scores, but when once I became Chancellor they seemed so insignificant. During my imprisonment at Landsberg, one of the warders was very disagreeable. He used to call me a " Dorfler ' (village lout). I dare say he had a few qualms when I became head of the Government, but it would have been ridiculous to do anything to him."

Directly the Chancellor's emotions are touched his generosity is prompt and liberal. In the summer of 1936 he was motoring in Upper Bavaria, and stopped by the roadside to admire a mountain view. An attractive young peasant-girl. of about seventeen tried to approach him, and, on being prevented by his guards, burst into tears. Hitler saw her distress and asked what was the matter. She told him that her fiancé had been expelled from Austria for his Nazi principles, and that as he could not find work. they would be unable to get married.

Hitler promised to look after both her and him, and not only found a job for the young man, but also equipped the couple with a furnished fiat in Munich, complete, as he says with a

smile, down to a baby's cot. In this case the Chancellor had his reward, for when the young woman after the wedding came to thank him, she flung both her arms round his neck and kissed him.

Towards subordinates and servants he is considerate, though capable of flashes of blistering wrath, but his personality and prestige are so strong that, without any effort on his part, he is surrounded, particularly in Berlin, by much awe on the part of his entourage. The atmosphere of his official residence has the unmistakable character of a Court, though its routine and outward appearance are as simple as they can be where the Head of a Government is concerned.

The Chancellor's personal staff consists of three hard-working adjutants, whose duties last until far into the night. Best known of these is Obergruppenführer Wilhelm Brückner, who has been associated with him from the earliest Munich days, and shared his imprisonment at Landsberg. Brückner is a jovial-faced man, close on six and a half feet high and of immense proportions, who, when younger, was one of Germany's best tennis-players. He served as an officer in the War, and has much social charm and elegance. His huge form with its big red face and twinkling, friendly eyes is never far from Hitler's side. The current story in Germany is that Brückner and two or three others of Hitler's immediate staff have formed a sort of 'death pact' not to survive their chief if he should meet with a violent end.



Wilhelm Brückner

Herr Schaub is another adjutant. He is a pale, grave-faced man who always wears the black S.S. uniform, whereas Brückner is usually in the khaki dress of the Storm Troopers. Herr Schaub is a man of Bavarian peasant stock whose first contact with Hitler came about in a romantic way. He was a minor official of the Postal Service, and joined the Brown Shirts in their early days. Before the Munich Putsch of 1923 Hitler noticed that, at parades of his followers, a certain man always marched past him with a limp, the result of a war-wound. When the Chancellor was in prison at Landsberg this unknown man with the limp came one day to ask if he might serve Hitler as personal attendant without pay. There was no mistaking the ardent devotion in Herr Schaub's face, and since then he has shared his Leader's fortunes, first in bad times and now in good.



Julius Schaub

Captain Wiedemann, the other adjutant, is a dark, handsome man, with a record even more unusual, for he was Hitler's company-commander in the 16th Bavarian Infantry Régiment during the latter part of the War. It was in the Party's early days that Captain Wiedemann suddenly realised that the prophet of national recovery whose movement was beginning to attract attention in Bavaria was none other than his former corporal and dispatch-runner. He went to see him and offered his services in any capacity, with the result that to-day he is one of the three men in closest attendance upon his former subordinate.



Fritz Wiedemann

Three valets, all young men belonging to the *Leibstandarte*, or Personal Guard, accompany Hitler everywhere, wearing the black uniform of their corps. They and his chauffeurs are on democratic, almost friendly relations with their master. Travelling by Hitler's special train, I have seen them taking their meals in the dining-car at the next table to that at which the Chancellor sat with Marshal Blomberg, General Fritsch, and Admiral Raeder, the Naval Commander-in-Chief.

Hitler is guarded by a squad of detectives under the command of Captain Rattenhüber, a bronzed, soldierly man who, like his subordinates, is always in the S.S. uniform. When the Chancellor dines in a public restaurant, which at Munich he is fond of doing or in Berlin goes across for tea in the hall of the Hotel Kaiserhof these guards enter a few minutes before him, and after a glance round, take their places at a table close to that at which he will sit.

Yet Hitler has no fear of assassination believing that his fate will protect him. "I always knew I should be a great man, even in my poorest days," he says, "and I feel convinced that I shall live to finish my task."

Stories of his dashing through the streets at high speed in a closed automobile between double ranks of S.S. men are quite imaginary. No head of a State shows himself more freely to the crowd, for he generally stands upright in the front seat of an open car which moves at a walking-pace. At the Party Congress every September he is on the same stand as several thousand spectators, including many foreign guests of the Government. I have seen him arrive unannounced at the Oberammergau Passion Play, and mingle with the crowd of people of all nationalities. In Munich he often has to push his way to his motor-car through a dense throng of delighted admirers. Less than six weeks after the 'Purge' of June 30, 1934, he did not hesitate to appear with all the members of the Government at President Hindenburg's funeral

on August 6, in the centre of the thronged memorial arena at Tannenberg, dominated by seven towers, where he was exposed in a way that gave the secret police considerable anxiety.

Though Hitler, as I am told by those in his confidence, always carries a revolver, his nerves are good. Once when he was entertaining a party of young women, one of them mischievously dropped a *Knallerbse* on the floor. A *Knallerbse* is a sort of cardboard bomb sold in Munich at carnival time, filled with a calcium-and-sulphur powder which goes off on impact with a loud bang that would startle almost anyone, to say nothing of a dictator. Yet Hitler showed no alarm, but only laughed.

At his official residence in Berlin, which is connected by a passage with the Chancellery next door in the Wilhelmstrasse, his household is under the charge of Herr Kannenberg, a former restaurant-keeper whose acquaintance Hitler made many years ago, and who now acts as his major-domo. Herr Kannenberg is a musician and plays the accordion well. He has a repertoire of songs, English as well as German, with which he entertains the Chancellor and his guests. This head-butler, though small, is of imposing corpulence, and when he stands behind his master's chair at an intimate dinner-party, one of Hitler's favourite jokes is to exclaim over his shoulder, "Kannenberg, tell us, how many chins have you really got?"



**Arthur
Kannenberg**

Hitler's flat at No. 16, Prinzregentenplatz in Munich is looked after by a married couple, Herr and Frau Winter. That Hitler keeps on this unpretentious apartment shows that his modest personal tastes have not been altered by high office. It is the sort of home that a business-man with an income of £1500 a year might have. The building is on the outskirts of Munich and stands on the corner of a square. There is a small restaurant next to the entrance.



The flat at No. 16, Prinzregentenplatz in Munich

The house-neighbours of Hitler are tenants whose complete reliability is known to the State Secret Police. They have the advantage of sharing his protection, for the ground-floor flat is a sort of guard-room where detectives are always on duty. Two of them patrol outside, and the street door is opened by an S.S. man in uniform.

A broad wooden staircase leads to the second floor. There is nothing on the door of the flat to mark it as the private residence of the most important man in Germany.

The entrance-hall is wedge-shaped, one end being lined with book-shelves, over which hangs a portrait of Frederick the Great.

The principal living-room is long and narrow, with a similar angle in it to that of the hall. The walls are hung with a variety of pictures. In addition to a fifteenth-century Cranach and the original of the well-known portrait of Bismarck by Lenbach, there are several of those popular paintings by José Frappa, a French artist of the eighteen- nineties, which depict cardinals in scarlet robes dining amid sumptuous surroundings.

The room contains a lot of furniture, all modern, in light-coloured bird's-eye maple, and at one end of it is a sort of alcove-what Germans call an *Erker* - marked off by a low partition and containing a round table, the top of which is of *verde antico* marble. It is at this table that Hitler receives his guests.

'On the Berg,' which is the name that he and his friends use for his house at Berchtesgaden, the domestic arrangements were formerly under his elder, widowed half-sister, Frau Raubal, with whom he lived during the early days of the Party in Munich. She is a strongly built, imposing woman of fifty-four, and there is no family resemblance between them. Two years ago Frau Raubal married again and went to live at Dresden with her new husband, who is of about her own age and a professor at the university. Her brother did not attend the wedding. His friends say that he disapproves of marriage for elderly people.

'The Berg,' or Haus Wachenfeld, as it was originally called, has lately been transformed out of recognition. When Hitler bought the villa in 1923 it was a white Upper-Bavarian summer cottage, with overhanging eaves and carved wooden balconies. It has now been enlarged to palatial size, with State reception-rooms in the modern style, very like those which Hitler devised for the Berlin Chancellery. A feature of the big entrance-hall is an immense single window, filling up one wall, which confronts the arriving visitor with a celestial panorama of the whole array of the Austrian Alps.



Berghof – the Alpine house of the Führer

In this rebuilding Hitler was careful to preserve the original Haus Wachenfeld intact as part of the more extensive plan, for, as he says, the many memorable conferences held and decisions made there have given to it an historic value.

I know these dictators

Among these mountains on the German frontier Hitler finds peace of mind. The restricted surroundings of the Berlin Chancellery, where people are always pressing to see him on official business, sometimes become intolerable. At the shortest notice he will order his aeroplane and fly to Munich, or some other aerodrome near Berchtesgaden, from which he motors to 'the Berg.' As the moods in which he seeks relief from the routine of State business grow more frequent, Berchtesgaden tends to become a second diplomatic capital. Ambassadors have made the journey to this mountain-resort for the purpose of presenting their credentials, and Ministers are quite accustomed to be summoned for conferences 'on the Berg.' A detachment of the Hitler 'Life Guards' is stationed close by, and considerable defensive precautions have been taken in the neighbourhood.



The Führer's style of living there is simple. He generally wears Bavarian peasant-costume or civilian clothes. From the house, which stands on a spur of the hills, a straight drive leads down to the public road, where a post of S.S. guards is always on duty. Here, especially in the holiday-season, a throng of Germans assemble daily in the hope of seeing their Leader, and Hitler is fond of walking down to greet them. He pays special attention to the children, signing the pictures of himself which they hold out to him and sometimes asking them up to the house for lemonade and cakes. Nor does he resent the intrusion of young people when he dines at one of his favourite little Munich restaurants. Parties of the 'Hitler Youth' or the 'League of German Maidens' are allowed to come in and look at him. He generally calls them to his table, shakes hands, and orders ice-creams and chocolates for them.

The flat at Munich and the villa at Berchtesgaden are private property maintained at the Chancellor's own expense. His official residence in Berlin, together with his staff and motor-cars, are kept up by the German Government. His income from the sale of his autobiography, *My Struggle*, the political text-book of Germany, has reached the figure of £50,000 a year.

Although Hitler dislikes being alone and is fond of the company of intimate friends, he takes little pleasure in formal entertainment. For the first two years of his *régime* he was able to avoid this on the ground that his official residence in Berlin was under reconstruction. But

by the end of 1934 this was completed, and I was one of four foreign guests at the first dinner-party which the Chancellor gave on December 19, 1934. The others were Viscount Rothermere; his son, Mr Esmond Harmsworth; and a well-known member of the Anglo-German Fellowship, Mr E. W. D. Tennant.

Two dozen people were present, the rest being either members of the Government with their wives or German operatic singers taking part in the concert which was to follow. Baron and Baroness Neurath, Dr and Frau Goebbels, Herr and Frau von Ribbentrop were there. General Goering was accompanied by his fair-haired *fiancée*, Frau Emmy Sonnemann, whom he has since married.

Herr Hitler himself was in ordinary full evening-dress, though many of his German guests wore the Party uniform. After a little casual talk in the ante-room he led the way into a dining-room, where there was an oval table of light wood decorated with bowls of trailing pink begonias. The Chancellor sat in the middle of one of its broader sides, with Frau von Ribbentrop on his right and Frau Muller, one of the operatic singers, on his left. Opposite to him was Baroness von Neurath, next to whom I was placed. The footmen waiting at table were dressed in short brown mess-jackets with black trousers. The china, glass, and silver were all of modern design.

The menu, too, was of up-to-date simplicity. It consisted of a cup of thick white soup, fish, roast chicken and vegetables, and an ice, and was accompanied by white and red German wine.

“ This is an anniversary in my career,” announced the Chancellor, as we sat down. “ It is ten years today since I was released from prison at Landsberg.”

Not many statesmen refer in public to their early reverses. Hitler, with the simplicity of genius, has made the unsuccessful Putsch of November, 1923, into the proudest anniversary of the Nazi movement. Instead of being passed over as a failure it is celebrated as a glorious martyrdom.

The Chancellor continued his reminiscences of Landsberg during the first part of dinner. “ When I was released after thirteen months,” he said, “ practically the entire staff of the prison, including the Governor, had been converted to the Nazi movement. The Bavarian Government was furious, and sent most of the warders to the Police School as punishment. Before they had been there six months the place had become a Nazi recruiting-centre, and had to be closed. That was a good thing, for it spread about over the whole of Bavaria a lot of policemen who made propaganda for our principles.”

When dinner was over, Hitler rose, saying, “ Will those who don't want to smoke come with me into the room on the right, and the rest go into the room on the left?” Lord Rothermere, who is also a non-smoker, with Herr van Ribbentrop and some of the ladies, accompanied the Chancellor. I went with the smokers and was soon in conversation with General Goering, who wore his blue Air Force uniform with white lapels and a cross-hilted sword which he has specially designed for that Service.

As we stood talking, someone jugged my elbow, and my coffee-cup fell to the floor. A footman picked it up and, so far as I noticed, the incident attracted no attention. Yet later on it provided the basis of a sensational story about Hitler which was widely printed in America.

This resulted from the fact that next day, in the Hotel Adlon Bar, I was questioned about the dinner at the Chancellery, which had been the first of its kind and mentioned incidentally the fall of the coffee-cup. The ease with which commonplace fact becomes picturesque fiction where conspicuous figures like Hitler are concerned is shown by the development of this

insignificant reminiscence into a story that the Chancellor had been entertaining a well-known Englishman at lunch when his visitor knocked over a porcelain vase. Upon the sound of the crash, according to this version, two guards who had been concealed behind the window-curtains instantly leapt out into the room, each with a revolver in his hand.

When the coffee-and-cigar stage of Herr Hitler's dinner was over we were asked to move into the large drawing-room of the Chancellery. The interior of this old home of Prince Bismarck has been so completely modernized that nothing but its facade is left intact. One end of the drawing-room is raised by three or four low steps. The walls are painted in plain cream and hung with a few fine pieces of old tapestry. Wide, low settees and chairs of modern design are spread about, and the carpet in the middle of the room is a very large one of Persian pattern which was originally ordered for the new headquarters of the League of Nations at Geneva but could not be completed in time and was bought by the German Government. A grand piano stood at the raised end of the room, ready for the concert which followed, at which Frau Muller and the well-known baritone, Herr Böckelmann, both of the Berlin Opera, were the chief singers.

As a general rule, Herr Hitler's formal dinner-parties are limited to twenty or thirty people, but during the Olympic Games I attended a large State banquet at which above a hundred were present. This was of a more ceremonious character, and instead of the brown-jacketed young menservants, elderly footmen in blue and silver liveries and white stockings, most of them with a lot of medals, were in attendance. They were under the charge of a major-domo in black livery and knee-breeches, wearing a Court sword, with a cocked hat under his arm, who announced the guests as they entered the ante-room. The major-domo carried a black staff, with which he rapped on the floor to call the attention of the company when Hitler rose at the end of dinner.

The meal was served at a huge horse-shoe table. On the Chancellor's right sat Lady Vansittart, the wife of the British Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who was then visiting Berlin, and on his other side, Countess Baillet-Latour, wife of the President of the French Committee of the Olympic Games.

This dining-room is a new and spacious apartment designed by Hitler for such occasions, built out in what used to be the garden of the Chancellery. It is about 100 feet long by 50 across, with rows of red marble pillars forming an arcade along each side. Windows draped with brown curtains reach up to the lofty roof, which is flat and made of a mosaic of light blue and gold. One of Herr Hitler's staff told me that the colour of this ceiling had been changed half a dozen times before the Chancellor was satisfied. Tall gold candlesticks stood at intervals along the floor, and the room's only adornment was a big Gobelin tapestry on the wall behind the head of the table, which had been brought from the German Museum at Munich.

This being a State occasion, the men present wore their decorations. Except the Iron Cross and other German and Turkish war-insignia, not many members of the Nazi official circles possess any of those stars, cravats, and ribbons which are the customary background of such entertainments, so that the foreigners were the most ornamental figures there. As Sir Robert Vansittart stood in the middle of the room after dinner, laughing and joking with Herr Hess, the Chancellor's deputy, there was a noticeable contrast between the glittering splendour of the star and cordon of the Grand Cross of St Michael and St George worn by the one and the field-service-like simplicity of the khaki uniform of the other.

Perhaps it was this which led Herr Hitler, shortly afterwards, to create a special German decoration for services rendered in connection with the Olympic Games. Since then he has

gone still farther, and established a new 'Order of the German Eagle,' to which Mussolini and Count Ciano were among the first to be appointed.

Another respect in which an entertainment of this kind in Germany differs from the official dinners of most Governments is the dresses of the women. Simplicity is the rigid rule of feminine attire under the Nazi *régime*. As 'make-up' is contrary to its principles, and jewellery almost entirely barred by the Spartan views of the Government, State functions in Germany lack some of the glamour which feminine extravagance confers on them elsewhere.

The patient adoration of the German people for their leader was illustrated as I walked across the square from the Hotel Kaiserhof to this dinner at the Chancellery. A voice said, "Will you please ask the Führer to come out on the balcony? I am from the provinces and do so want to see him." It was a working-class German woman of the middle fifties who spoke. Seeing me in evening-dress, she had guessed where I was going. Nearly five hours later, when I crossed the square again at 1 A.M., the same woman came up. "I am still here," she said. "Do you think there's any chance of seeing him?"

There is no aspect of Herr Hitler's personal character with which gossip and fiction have been busier than that of his relations with the other sex.

Celibacy, in the leader of a country where marriage and prolific procreation are proclaimed a patriotic duty, seems to call for special explanation, and the reasons commonly advanced for it in his case range from the morbid to the romantic.

In the first place Herr Hitler is no woman-hater. He shows a strong predilection for feminine society, in which his manners are marked by an old-world formality.

There can be few European statesmen whose greeting is so gracious as Herr Hitler's. He takes a lady's hand in his own, holds it for a moment as if it were some precious object while his blue, searching eyes smile into hers, and then bends forward in an elegant bow to touch it with his lips. In the company of women Hitler's manner takes on a lively air of interest which has no appearance of being forced. He shows marked appreciation of good looks, but unless a woman is also intelligent he avoids engaging her in conversation. Small talk is uncongenial to him.

Curiously enough, two of his closest friends of the other sex are young and charming members of the British aristocracy. They are daughters of Lord Redesdale - the Hon. Mrs Diana Guinness, and her younger sister, the Hon. Unity Freeman-Mitford.



Diana and Unity Mitford

At most of the recent big ceremonies of the Nazi party these young women have been prominent, not only by reason of their tall, graceful figures and striking blonde beauty, but also, in German eyes at least, because they wear the Swastika badge, conferred upon them as a personal distinction by Hitler himself, with his signature in facsimile on the back as proof of their title to it.

It was the younger sister, Miss Unity Mitford, who first made Hitler's acquaintance. In 1934 she was attending art-classes in Munich and used to lunch at a little restaurant which is one of Hitler's regular resorts when staying at his Munich flat.

No one could sit long in the same room as Miss Unity Mitford without noticing her. Her golden hair, fair skin, and blue eyes attain the highest standards of that Nordic beauty which Germans especially admire.

It was natural that Hitler should eventually inquire who this attractive young woman might be. On hearing that she was an English student he sent his burly adjutant, Herr Briickner, to convey the Chancellor's compliments and inquire whether she spoke German. If so, would she do him the honour to take coffee with his party?

In this informal way began a friendship soon to be extended to Mrs Guinness, Miss Mitford's sister, who came to visit her in Munich.

For Herr Hitler, living under the strain of the leadership of a great nation and the control of a huge Party, the society of these young Englishwomen has an attraction which can be readily imagined. They can talk to him with a freedom which few German women would venture to use. Their outlook on life, derived from a different background and upbringing, is in marked contrast to that of most people whom he meets. They have a lively sense of humour, which is shared by few, except Dr Goebbels and his wife, in the Chancellor's immediate circle. Their keenness and high spirits work as a mental tonic upon a man subject to the varying moods of a highly strung temperament.

No other foreigners, and not many Germans, are so closely in the confidence of Adolf Hitler as the Mitford sisters. Not only are they invited to big festivals of the Nazi Party and to official dinners at the Chancellery, but, since they spend much time in Germany, they are in frequent touch with him.



Lady Unity Mitford



Lady Diana Mitford-Mosley

Their arrival at the Hotel Kaiserhof in Berlin is generally followed by an invitation to go across to the Chancellor's Palace to take tea or dine, or see a film, an entertainment which is succeeded by lively conversation lasting till long past midnight.

There is no more human trait in Hitler's character than the pleasure he takes in the light-hearted company of these typical young Englishwomen of to-day. I remember his delight when they paid him an unexpected visit in Cologne during his General Election campaign in April, 1936.

Hitler had not yet arrived when, walking into the restaurant of the Dom Hotel, I found Mrs Guinness and Miss Mitford lunching there. They asked me to join them, and said they had come over to hear Hitler's big speech that evening.

“The Führer does not know we are here, so it will be a surprise for him,” said Miss Mitford.

While we were at lunch, Captain Rattenhuber, the head of Hitler's bodyguard, came to say that he had orders to drive me down to the station to meet the Chancellor's special train.

“I wonder whether he would take us too,” said the Mitford sisters when he had gone. I went after the officer to inquire.

“I'm afraid I can't,” he said. “It is the Führer's own car, and I have no orders to take any ladies in it, but I will arrange for them to have a window in this hotel, so that they can get a good view of the procession.”

“We don't want to watch the procession,” said the Mitford girls, “but we do want to stand inside the row of guards in the hall of the hotel so that the Führer will see us directly he comes in.”

I know these dictators

I met the Chancellor at the station, drove with him to a ceremony at the Town Hall through the cheering crowds that thronged the streets of Cologne, and then back to the Dom Hotel, where he was to give a tea-party to leading Nazi officials and their wives in a large room upstairs.

The Dom Hotel is the best known in Germany to many Britons, for during the Allied occupation of the Rhineland it was requisitioned for the British Army. In preparation for the Chancellor's arrival, a solid rank of Black Guards, standing shoulder to shoulder, lined each side of its entrance-hall.

Behind them were wedged the guests and staff of the hotel, together with as many local notabilities as could get in, all craning their necks to catch a glimpse of the Führer . But inside the circle of Guards, bare-headed as always, and with a welcoming smile on their comely faces, stood the sisters Diana and Unity.

As Hitler came into the hall, his expression was set and stern. He raised his hand automatically in response to the roar of " Heil ! " that met him, and to the sudden up flinging of arms in the Nazi salute.



*The Hon. Miss Unity Freeman-Mitford and the Hon. Mrs Diana Guinness
at a Nazi demonstration in Germany*

Then his eye fell on the two sisters. His face broke at once into a smile.

“*Was! Ihr beide hier!*” he exclaimed. “You must come and have tea with us.”

And the warmth of the welcome that Mrs Guinness and Miss Mitford received from the leading members of the Nazi Government assembled upstairs was proof of their popularity in the highest political circles of Germany.

Without tact on their part such a friendship with the Führer would not be possible. These young English women keep free from all contact with German politics. By the natural charm of their good breeding and social training they have done much to enlarge Hitler's angle of vision upon Britain and the British character.

Platonic relations with the other sex, of the kind that I have just described, may well represent the full extent of Hitler's taste for feminine companionship. His life is dominated by the conviction that he has a great mission to fulfil. He allows no outside influence to interfere with its achievement. By eliminating such complications as marriage or intrigue, the Führer economizes energy and spares himself perpetual preoccupation. He furthermore adds - though not, perhaps, deliberately - to his mystical prestige with his fellow-countrymen. His single condition consorts well with his *rôle* as High Priest of the German people.

Intensity of purpose is no uncommon cause of celibacy, and, in Hitler's case, the sublimation of sexual impulses in the performance of public duties would be helped by the self-control that he already shows by doing without tobacco and wine and limiting himself to food of monastic simplicity.

It is certain that this disciplined restraint of human instincts implies no lack of human sympathy. One of the most striking features of Hitler's personality is his faculty for putting himself in harmony with others. Men of most varying characters alike receive, in contact with him, the conviction that there is some special bond between them. His mind, like that of many great leaders in the past, has a strong psychic strain. I have been told that the Austro-German borderland where he was born is known, like the Scottish Highlands, to be prolific of people with this gift of intuition.

The susceptibility of the Chancellor's mind to psychic influences is shown in his public oratory. At the outset of a speech his delivery is sometimes slow and halting. Only as the spiritual atmosphere engendered by a great audience takes possession of his mind does he develop that eloquence which acts on the German nation like a spell. For he responds to this metaphysical contact in such a way that each member of the multitude feels bound to him by an individual link of sympathy.

His own awareness of a psychic sense would seem to be indicated by one of the stories he tells of his experiences in the war.

“I was eating my dinner in a trench with several comrades,” he says. “Suddenly a voice seemed to be saying to me, ‘Get up and go over there.’ It was so clear and insistent that I obeyed automatically, as if it had been a military order. I rose at once to my feet and walked twenty yards along the trench, carrying my dinner in its tin-can with me. Then I sat down to go on eating, my mind being once more at rest.”

I know these dictators

“ Hardly had I done so when a flash and deafening report came from the part of the trench I had just left. A stray shell had burst over the group in which I had been sitting, and every member or it was killed.”

CHAPTER III

YOUTH, WAR, AND EARLY POLITICS

IN the opening years of this century a small boy with mischievous eyes was one of the 600 pupils of the 'Modern School' at Linz, an ancient cathedral city standing on the broad Danube in Upper Austria.

To neither masters nor schoolfellows did Adolf Hitler then just entering his 'teens, appear to possess any unusual qualities. The former, in their term-end reports, used to censure him as 'lazy and self-willed.' And though a boy defiant of authority enjoys a natural prestige among his classmates, the youthful Austrians of a generation ago took their studies too seriously for his insubordinate example to impress them. They knew that a good 'school-leaving certificate' would be indispensable as the foundation-stone of their future career. Hitler himself, a few years later, came bitterly to regret his failure to pass this examination. For it led to the refusal of his application for admission to the 'Architectural School' in Vienna, and thus brought him up against the fact that, for a poor boy who had neither learnt a trade nor taken advantage of his educational opportunities, the only means of livelihood was manual labour.

As a schoolboy young Adolf was already a political agitator. His instinct reacted to those racial antagonisms which divided the polyglot Empire of Austro-Hungary into jealous nationalist sections.

Hitler was brought up in the most German corner of the Hapsburg realm. Twenty miles to the north lay the frontier of the German Empire, whose rapid rise to wealth and military power was astounding and disturbing the World.

In a provincial city of German-Austria like Linz there was a strong undercurrent of discontent with the increasing influence which Czechs and other nationalities of the Dual Empire were gaining over a Government which had once been entirely Austrian. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the old Emperor, had even taken to himself a Czech wife, Countess Chotek, although she was not of royal blood, and talked Czech in his home.

Particularly from Professor Potsch, an active member of the German Nationalist Party on the staff of the Linz Modern School, young Hitler used to hear the view that the historic birthright of the Austrians was being distributed by Emperor Franz Joseph among a hungry pack of Slav races - Czechs, Croats, Slovaks, and Slovenes.

It was natural that young Adolf should make comparisons between the debasement of the German race in Austria and the prosperity and pride of the powerful and united German Empire on whose frontier - at Braunau - he had been born.

His admiration for the Germans of the Reich became more highly coloured when there fell into his hands a history of the Franco-Prussian War, illustrated with pictures of the German army sweeping all before it in heroic style.

The swift march to victory of a race to which he was so near by blood and birthplace; its triumph over the self-confident French Emperor and his people; the entry into a conquered capital and the proclamation of the German Empire in the palace which had been built to embody the glory of the French Monarchy - all seemed to his romantic mind the record of a race of supermen. Grievous indeed appeared by contrast the fate of the Germans of Austria - step-children in their own home.

Young Hitler's enthusiasm for Germany and her achievements was further increased when, at the age of twelve or thirteen, he saw from the topmost gallery of the Linz Opera House a performance of *Lohengrin*. The splendour of Wagner's music stirred his soul. In it the boy found the emotional expression of his sense of kinship with a nation to which he felt himself drawn far more strongly than to the patchwork federation of races whose only link was the Imperial House of Austria. The bitterness which is the strength of a successful agitator was already taking root in his heart.

Adolf Hitler certainly did not inherit these anti- Hapsburg sentiments from his father, whose earnest desire was that his son should become an Austrian Government official like himself.

Not until he was forty years of age had Adolf's father, Alois, the son of middle-aged peasant parents, achieved the ambition which had been steadily before him since he began life as a cobbler. By persistence and determination he had obtained appointment to a minor post in the Customs service at the frontier-village of Braunau-on-the- Inn. It was then that he first took the name of his own father, Johann Hiedler, or Hitler, having previously borne his mother's name of Schicklgruber.

In 1884 Alois Hitler married his third wife, a pretty peasant-girl, twenty-three years younger than himself, named Klara Poelzl.

The first two children she bore him, Gustav and Ida, died in infancy, and of the three later ones only Adolf, born on April 20, 1889, and Paula, born in 1896, survived.

There were already two children by the second wife - Alois, born in 1882, and Angela, in 1883 - but of the Hitler family's affairs little is known except what Adolf has since chosen to recall.

The subsequent life of his brother and sisters has thus remained obscure, except in the case of Angela, his older half-sister, who for years kept house for him, first in Munich and afterwards at Berchtesgaden.

Alois Hitler was fifty-two years old when Adolf was born. Four years later he went on pension, and during the ten years that were left to him, the ambition of the retired Customs Officer was to see Adolf qualify for Government service. He was sent to the Modern School in Linz, and nothing caused the father so much wrath and disappointment as his son's obstinate refusal to fall in with this plan. Adolf had made up his mind to be an artist, and idled away his time at school except in such subjects as he liked, which were drawing, history, and geography. Any political topic, however, aroused his eager attention.

Sitting in his Chancellor's Palace as the ruler of Germany to-day, Hitler sometimes tells stories of those boyhood days. One in which he takes delight is that of an Austrian Archduke's visit to Linz for the opening of some public building. A municipal reception was organised, with the garrison lining the streets and the Burgomaster and Bishop waiting at the station. Outside, the school-children were drawn up to receive the visiting member of the Royal House with cheers. Their headmaster had been at pains to rehearse their part in the proceedings. When he raised his hat and shouted, " His Imperial and Royal Highness the Archduke! " the boys were to respond with a triple "*Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!*"

In the complex Austro-Hungarian politics of that day this cheer of "*Hoch !*" had a political significance. It was the official greeting for members of the Hapsburg dynasty, and discontented Austro-Germans took a malicious pleasure in substituting the German cheer of "*Heil !*"

For a day or two before the royal visit, young Hitler was busy canvassing his schoolfellows, and the result was that when the headmaster gave the signal, he was horrified to hear, instead of the official “*Hoch ! Hoch ! Hoch!*” a shrill chorus of “*Heil! Heil ! Heil !*”

Adolf's father dropped dead one January morning in 1903 while reading the newspapers in the local coffee-house at Leonding, a village near Linz where the family had settled after his retirement. Hitler was then fourteen, and in the absence of his father's authority, he neglected his lessons still more. About this time he was, moreover, discovered to have a weakness of the lungs, which kept him away from school for a whole twelve months. During the next five years, which included only a little more schooling at Linz and Steyr, he lived with his widowed mother.

To their neighbours in Linz, where Frau Hitler moved after her husband's death, this young man must have seemed on the way to become a ne'er-do-well. He had had a good middle-class education, but had lost the advantage of it by failing in his school-leaving examination. And now, in his later 'teens, when most youths of his class were already working, he continued to live at home with his mother, supported by her small pension as the widow of a Customs Officer. His affection for her was the happiest feature of his early life, and as a soldier at the front he carried her picture next to his heart.

Hitler had always been accustomed to poverty. He often speaks of the days when as a boy he went barefoot even in the snow. Yet the poor circumstances and precarious outlook of his family did not lead him, as might have been expected, to look for employment. The reason was that he had an instinctive dislike for manual labour, and since he had failed to obtain any educational certificates, nothing else was open to him.

Politics were the principal diversion of Hitler's youth. He would sit in a cheap coffee-house devouring the various party organs which hung in rows, each on its wicker holder, from pegs on the wall. He developed, too, a taste for attending political meetings, especially those likely to be noisy or to attract the attention of the Austrian police by seditious speeches. Frau Hitler's devotion to her only surviving son made her uneasy lest these interests should get him into trouble. She would implore him to keep away from such gatherings, and Adolf would promise to do so - only to find the temptation too strong to resist.

On one occasion, when a German Nationalist speaker was denouncing the Hapsburg dynasty and its alleged betrayal of the interests of the Austro-Germans, a police-inspector stepped onto the platform and stopped the proceedings. The audience made a rush for the doors. They ran into the arms of a strong detachment of gendarmes and were ordered to form up to be marched to the nearest police-station.

Adolf was in a fright. It might be that the prisoners would be released after names and addresses had been taken, but it was also possible that they would be locked up for attending an illegal political demonstration. What would his mother say after he had pledged himself to keep out of such scrapes? He cast anxious eyes around as he stood herded with the others under a police-guard. They fell on one of those circular advertisement-kiosks that stand in Austrian streets. Each time the nearest policeman turned his back he sidled stealthily closer to it. When the constable's attention was distracted for a moment by an order from the inspector, Adolf darted behind the kiosk. Before the policeman had noticed his disappearance, he was running at top speed for home.

Five years were thus dawdled away. Young Hitler had a natural ability for sketching, and till he was eighteen, kept up his mother's hopes with the assurance that as soon as he was old enough he would get into the Art Academy at Vienna and complete his studies there.

In 1907, with four years of indolence already behind him, he accordingly made his first journey to Vienna to apply for admission to the Painting School of the State Academy, where free instruction and a small living-allowance were given to students.

To his dismay his application was refused, the Rector of the Academy deciding that his sketches did not show sufficient talent.

Hitler's taste in drawing was mainly for architectural subjects, and he followed up this failure by a similar application to the School of Architecture. There he came nearer to success. In his book, *My Struggle*, he relates that the Director showed some interest in the specimens of his work, but on learning that he had never passed his school-leaving examination, declared that he was ineligible for admission.

In despair, the young would-be artist took the train back to Linz. His long-indulged dream of a career as a painter had been shattered. The future must have seemed dark indeed. Even to-day, Hitler, talking of those times, holds out his shapely hands and says, "Look at these! You can see they were never made to use a spade."

But it was soon to be a choice between that and starvation. In the following year his mother died, and with her death ceased the little pension upon which she had hitherto provided her now nineteen-year-old son with bed and board.

A few pounds were realised by the sale of the cottage which had been his father's property. Hitler gave up his share of this small inheritance to his younger sister, Paula, and set out with hardly anything but the clothes he stood up in to earn his living in Vienna.

From that time all connection between Hitler and his family ceased for many years. It is characteristic of the man that he has kept himself free from domestic ties. From the first his mind was more occupied with public questions than with personal affairs of any kind. He does not share that family feeling which led Napoleon to provide thrones for his brothers, and which Mussolini displays towards his daughter, Edda, now Countess Ciano.

"If my relatives had deserved better conditions, they would have got on as I did," is a remark attributed to Hitler.

In his autobiography his brother and sisters are not mentioned. The only one of them for whom he seems to have any attachment is his step-sister, Angela. He got into touch with her again when he revisited Vienna after the War. She was then the widow of a man named Raubal, and in domestic service as a cook. Frau Raubal and her daughter, Grete, came to see Hitler while he was a political prisoner at Landsberg in 1924. When the Party was re-founded in the following year and Hitler's finances began to improve, they moved to Munich to keep house for him.

His other sister, Paula, seven years younger than himself, lives in humble circumstances in Vienna. Hitler sends her an allowance, but it is limited to the maximum amount that the currency regulations permit to be sent out of Germany within a given period.

His elder half-brother, Alois, born in 1882, worked for many years as a waiter in Germany and England. His fate is uncertain. Some say that he is dead; others that he is the proprietor of a modest restaurant, known by his Christian name, recently opened on the Wittenbergplatz in the West End of Berlin.

The first four years of Hitler's career after his mother's death were a constant struggle for existence in Vienna. They were the most formative of his experience. The only account of them, however, is in his autobiography. Nor does that story relate events in chronological order. It refers to them merely to provide a vaguely sketched background against which to

depict Hitler's mental reactions to life as one of the most impoverished members of the population of what was then the cosmopolitan capital of a Great Power.

It was no one else's business to note, or even to notice, the squalid experiences of this young man now entering his twenties. He lived the life of the very poor, sleeping in a cheap lodging-house in the working-class suburb of Brigittenau, lining up for free meals at soup-kitchens, doing odd jobs for a few pence, shovelling snow in winter, and perpetually leading a half-starved, hand-to-mouth existence.

He was shabby and unshaven-the smooth, self-confident face which is now the best known in the world then bore a fringe of unkempt beard. For a youth of Hitler's artistic and temperamental nature, coming from a simple but happy home, this must have been like a descent into hell. But the iron that entered his soul in Vienna gave his character a firmness which it had so far lacked. Just as Mussolini has recorded that "The difficulties of life hardened my spirit and taught me how to live," so Hitler has written: "I thank those days for the fact that I grew hard, and can be hard."

The first employment of a regular kind that he obtained was as hod-carrier on a new building. For the young man who had hoped to become either an artist or an architect, this was a degradation to which he refused to reconcile himself. Had he been content to become a regular work-man it would have been necessary to join the Builders' Union. He would not do so, and thereby became unpopular with his fellow-workmen.

In *My Struggle* Hitler depicts his reaction to these uncongenial surroundings. He was a gloomy, embittered youth, filled, no doubt, with the rueful consciousness that he had wasted the opportunities that a good middle-class school had given him. He earned the hostility of his work-mates by keeping sullenly to himself, and when he took part in conversation it was only to denounce their Socialistic sentiments. This soon put an end to his job. In the eyes of his fellow-labourers the youth with such superior airs, who refused to join a Trade Union and criticized Socialism, was an enemy of their class. According to Hitler, they threatened to throw him off the scaffolding. Whether this was seriously meant or not, it set him looking for other work.

He now fell back upon his only marketable talent, which was sketching. Another poverty-stricken artist named Hanisch suggested to him the idea of painting postcards and showcards for shop-windows. To find money for materials Hitler applied to his elder step-sister, Angela, who sent him a small sum to start him in his new trade.

Hanisch sold the cards that Hitler painted, and, for the remainder of his time in Vienna, this young man who was to influence the destiny of Europe more than anyone since Napoleon eked out a meagre and precarious existence.

Had Hitler chanced to stumble upon pleasant and well-paid employment in Vienna, the history of our times might have been different. It was his sense of frustration that filled him with antagonism towards the existing order of society, and prepared him to interpret and inflame the exasperation which defeat and the pressure of the Peace Treaty kindled among the German people. The animosities formed by Hitler in Vienna have become the prejudices with which he has inspired the whole German nation.

Seeking for an outlet of this resentment against his fate, his instinct fastened upon two grievances - the activities of the Jews and the futility of Parliaments.

In his boyhood days Hitler had been unaware of the very existence of the Jewish question.

“Linz possessed only very few Jews,” he writes in *My Struggle*. “In the course of centuries their outward appearance had been Europeanized and become human. I even regarded them as Germans. The folly of this conception was not apparent to me because I regarded them as differentiated only by a foreign faith. That for this reason they should be persecuted, as it seemed to me, sometimes intensified into disgust my disapproval of unfavourable comments on them.”

In Vienna, however, the Jewish question was an issue that dominated economic and political relations alike. A stream of Jews from the ghettos of the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia flowed continually towards the capital. The cheap labour of these immigrants was a constant competitive menace to the Viennese working-man. It was in their capacity as interlopers and rivals for the casual work by which he lived that Hitler first came into contact with the Jewish race.

His observations in the streets of Vienna were, he says, of inestimable service in opening his eyes to the true nature . of the Jewish problem.

“As I was strolling once through the inner town, I suddenly came upon an object in a long gaberdine with black locks of hair.

“Is that a Jew?’ was my first thought.

“In Linz they certainly did not look like that. I observed the man covertly and discreetly, and the longer I stared at his alien face and examined it feature by feature, the more insistently did this question take on in my mind another form : ‘Can that be a German?’ “

This encounter turned his attention to the part played by Jews in the national life. He began to read anti-Semitic pamphlets and to study the Viennese Press, then largely in Jewish hands.

An outstanding figure in this connection was the leader of the Clerical Christian Socialist Party, Dr Karl Lueger, the Burgomaster of Vienna. For him Hitler conceived a constantly growing admiration. He has since described Dr Lueger as “the mightiest German burgomaster of all times.” Hitler's subsequent career has shown that he has never forgotten the tactics by which this anti-Jewish leader would” avail himself of all existing instruments of authority, bringing powerful institutions over to his side in order to gain from these proved sources of power the greatest possible advantage for his own movement.”

Adolf Hitler's vindictive hatred of his wretched and apparently hopeless condition thus found an outlet on which it could be concentrated. The German Nationalist instincts of his boyhood had set him against the Hapsburgs because they gave the other races of the Empire equal standing with its German stock. But here was a more flagrant abuse to arouse his indignation. Investigation of Jewish activities in the Press, art, literature, and the theatre convinced him that they amounted to “a pestilence, a spiritual pestilence, worse than the Black Death of former times, which was affecting the whole nation.” The street-life of Vienna showed him the part played in prostitution and the white-slave traffic by the race which had become the object of his abhorrence. He learnt that the Socialist Press was largely conducted by Jews. He found, in fact, that the controlling spirit and hand behind the things he most hated were almost invariably Jewish.

This was the only period of Hitler's life in which he came into personal contact with the Hebrew race. Jews abounded in the cheap lodging-houses where he lived, and his trade as a designer of showcards obliged him to deal with Jewish shopkeepers. He constantly engaged them in political argument, denouncing the Communist and Marxist principles which they professed. It horrified him, he relates, to discover with what crookedness and equivocation they would defend their case.

“ I gradually began to hate them,” he says. He transferred to the Jews the hostility that he had formerly felt for the Socialist workmen with whom his brief experience as a builder's labourer had brought him into touch. These he now perceived were more to be pitied than blamed. They had been corrupted by the Jewish gospel of Marxism, which “ denied the aristocratic principle of Nature and substituted for the eternal pre-eminence of strength and might the dead-weight of numbers.”

In these days in Vienna were laid the foundations of the fanatical conviction expressed by Hitler more than ten years later when he wrote:

Should the Jew, with the help of his Marxist faith, prevail over the peoples of this world, his crown will be the burial-wreath of humanity, and this planet will once more, as it did millions of years ago, drift through: the ether devoid of life. Eternal Nature ruthlessly avenges the transgression of her laws. I believe therefore that I am acting to-day in the spirit of the Almighty Creator. In fighting the Jews, I am defending the work of the Lord.

The other obsession with which his four years' stay in Vienna imbued the mind of this discontented and critical young man was that of the futility and peril of Parliamentary institutions.

Hitler admits that his youthful newspaper-reading had inspired him with unconscious admiration for the British Parliament, which he had some difficulty in shaking off. He was impressed by the dignity with which the House of Commons fulfilled its task, but for a State made up of such a mosaic of peoples as Austria he found the Parliamentary system totally unsuitable.

It aroused his indignation that the fate of the German element, which he regarded as the *élite* of the country, should be dependent on a Parliament where other national elements were in the majority. He watched debates from the galleries and was disgusted to see with what indifference and lack of discipline they were conducted. It shocked him that some speakers should address the House, not in German, but in their native Slav dialects.

He conceived contempt both for Parliamentary institutions and their members. The main defect of a Parliament, as he saw it, was that no one could be held personally responsible for any measure. He was disgusted that a statesman's artfulness in controlling a more or less corruptly compounded majority should be rated as high as his ability to plan a large-scale policy or take great decisions.

“ Majorities can never replace men,” was his conclusion. “ They represent not only stupidity but timidity. And just as a hundred boneheads are incapable of wisdom, so a hundred cowards will never make a heroic resolve.”

These ideas, now fundamental articles of faith for close on seventy million Germans, were then but the thoughts of an insignificant youth in Vienna. During those years 1908-1912 the attention of Europe was concentrated on the Balkans. The 'Young Turk' revolution in Constantinople, the seizure of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria, and the preparations of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece to combine for the conquest of the Sultan's European dominions were regarded as issues that would shape events for generations to come. Yet not only the fate of a great nation which had never heard the name of Hitler, but the future destiny of Europe, was to be moulded by the musings of this shabby young man lurking in the dingy shadows cast by the glittering life of the gay and rich Vienna of that day.

Disgust with the cosmopolitan capital of Austria led Hitler in the spring of 1912 to move to the more congenial German atmosphere of Munich. In those days frontiers were only Customs-barriers and could be crossed without passport or police permission. As an Austrian subject Hitler remained liable to military service, and during his early days in Munich he

returned to Austrian territory at Salzburg to present himself for enrolment. The doctor rejected him as unfit. It is not surprising that the privations he had endured in Vienna should have lowered his physical condition.

He could still be called up for service on mobilization. By joining the Bavarian Army as a volunteer at the outbreak of the War, Hitler lost his Austrian nationality. Until he became a German citizen in 1932, he was officially classed in Germany as “*Staatenlos*” ' or 'without allegiance.'

In Munich Hitler continued to practise the same trade as in Vienna. His only recreation was still political discussion. The long tables in the beerhouses of Munich, where the workmen gather in the evening, drinking from pewter-lidded mugs and smoking porcelain-bowled pipes, provided him with listeners, just as in later years they were to furnish audiences on a larger scale for his harangues as a party-leader.

Hitler had brought with him to Germany all his anti- Hapsburg prejudices. He never ceased to denounce the Austro-German alliance as a liability for Germany, and he maintained the opinion, which must at that time have been unpopular with German hearers, that the only useful ally for Germany was England.

Germany's territorial expansion, he declared, must be at the expense of Russia, and while that movement was in progress the support of Britain was needed to protect her rear.

To win this, he maintained, no sacrifice was too great. Germany must renounce colonies and sea-power, and moderate her competition with British industry. If Germany were not prepared to do so, the only alternative was to make a pact with Russia against England. In either case the alliance with Austria was folly.

Closer acquaintance with the German nation began to fill his critical mind with misgivings. Not only did German foreign policy appear to him misguided, but he was disturbed by the indifference displayed towards what he regarded as the greatest danger confronting Germany, the spread of the doctrines of Karl Marx.

Of political theorizers and oracles there were many in the Munich beerhouses and wine-cellar. This is no record that Hitler attracted more attention than the rest. He himself felt keenly the futility of his existence. He used to deplore that he had not been born in more stirring times, when men were judged by other standards than financial success.

It was, therefore, with a sense of opening opportunity that he saw the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, followed by the outbreak of the European War.

Having always doubted Austria's loyalty as an ally, he rejoiced that the conflict should have begun by involving her first of all. To Hitler this war seemed a chance offered to Germany by Fate for the further development of the work of national expansion which Bismarck had begun.

The desire to confirm his pro-German sentiments by deeds had long been urgent in his mind. Though his own native land was involved in the struggle now beginning, he felt no call to fight for the Hapsburgs. Instead, on August 3, 1914, he applied to be enrolled as a volunteer in the Bavarian army. He was immediately accepted and attached to the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Régiment. This was a war-formation made up of reservists and volunteers and known by the name of its first colonel as the List Régiment.

In November, 1914, the régiment went into action in Flanders, and remained on the West Front for the whole war. Of his military career, as of his life in Vienna and Munich, Hitler himself has furnished a shadowy record lacking in detail. He was attached as an orderly to

régimental headquarters and showed, throughout his long war-service, a grim and moody courage. In October, 1916, he was wounded by a shell-splinter, and in the hospital to which he was sent at Beelitz, near Potsdam, he had his first contact with the demoralization which had already begun in Germany.

Hitler was disgusted to hear his neighbour in hospital boast of a self-inflicted wound, and to hear expressions of admiration for the artfulness of soldiers who managed to avoid the front.

When his wound was healed he went on leave to Berlin and Munich. Everywhere discontent and grumbling prevailed.

Hitler applied for immediate return to his régiment. He had no friends or family. His war-comrades say that he never received a parcel and hardly ever a letter. The régiment was his only home. "I do not want to be in Munich when my comrades are at the front," he wrote in asking to rejoin at once.



Adolf Hitler with his brothers-in-arms at the Front

The story of Hitler's war-service, as pieced together from the recollections of men who served in the 'List Régiment,' shows him to have been reserved and distant with his comrades, but enthusiastic in the discharge of his duty.

The régimental history records that under heavy artillery fire he jumped in front of his commanding officer to shield him with his body, and pushed him into the shelter of a shell-hole. This devotion to his officers even aroused the jealousy of his fellow-soldiers. He was always on the alert to do them service by looking after their clothes or meals in the trenches. Yet they do not seem to have detected in him the qualities of leadership. His various company-commanders gave him no promotion, despite his experience at the front, beyond the rank of lance-corporal.

It was probably his lack of popularity with the men that barred Hitler from advancement. He took no part in the jokes and grumbles of the trenches. His sullen silence was broken only by violent diatribes on topics of little interest to the ordinary soldier. He would contrast the effectiveness of British war-propaganda with the failure of the German Government to employ similar methods.

He observed how, in the Allied countries, the day of popular leaders like Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Wilson had come. During all those years on the Western Front he was steadily developing a sense of his own superiority to the mass of mankind.

When his companions jeered at his political lectures, Hitler used to assure them that “ you will hear a lot of me yet.” Nor were his propaganda activities confined to words alone. He is said to have used his fists in beating up a telephonist who declared that it was all the same to him whether Germany won the War or not.

The merits of Hitler's military service were proved by the fact that towards the end of the War, on August 4, 1918, he was given the Iron Cross of the First Class.

There is a picturesque story, told by Hitler's former comrades, that this was conferred upon him for an action demanding both courage and decision. They say that during the fighting round the Montdidier bridge-head, Hitler and another orderly, while acting as dispatch-runners, stumbled upon a dozen French soldiers cut off in a trench. Hitler, according to this version, covered them with his rifle, made them lay down their arms, and marched them back to régimental headquarters.

There seems to be no official record of this action, but even without it the recommendation of Hitler for the Iron Cross of the First Class, drafted by his commanding officer, Baron von Godin, is a high tribute to his soldierly qualities. It reads as follows :

Lance-Corporal (Volunteer) Hitler, Third Company,

Hitler has been with the régiment since the beginning of the War, and has given a splendid account of himself in all the engagements in which he has taken part.

As company-runner, he displayed, both in open and trench warfare, exemplary coolness and spirit, and he was always ready to volunteer to carry through messages in the most difficult positions and at great risk to his life.

After the cutting of all communications in a critical situation, it was due to Hitler's indefatigable and self-sacrificing activity that important messages got through despite all difficulties.

Hitler received the Iron Cross (second class) for gallant conduct in the Battle of Wyttschaete on December 2, 1914. I regard him as fully worthy to be decorated with the Iron Cross (first class).

In October, 1918, on the same sector near Ypres where Hitler had received his baptism of fire four years before, his battalion came under a night-long bombardment of ‘Yellow Gas’ shells. At seven o'clock on the morning of October 14 his eyes were so badly affected that he had to be sent down the line, carrying with him, as he says, his last dispatch.

That was the end of the War for him. He had hardly reached hospital at Pasewalk, in Pomerania, when a party of sailors from Kiel, where the naval mutiny had already broken out, arrived in Pasewalk to proclaim the revolution. At first Hitler believed that this was confined to the Fleet. It seemed incredible to him that the whole country, even his beloved Munich, should be infected with treason. But fresher and graver news constantly arrived, and on November 10 the chaplain of the hospital informed its inmates of the facts.

The Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, had asked for an armistice. The Hohenzollerns had been dethroned. The Kaiser had fled to Holland, and Germany had become a republic, at the mercy of its victorious adversaries.

Hitler burst into tears. All the sacrifices and suffering that he had witnessed and shared had been in vain. Germany, his youthful idol and adopted fatherland, lay in ruins.

Gradually his grief gave way to bitter hatred of those Jews and Socialists whom he held responsible for the collapse of the German nation. It was to avenge this betrayal that he determined to take up politics.

Though Adolf Hitler had no perception of it at the time, universal collapse in Germany was an indispensable prelude to his astounding career as a State-builder.

Had defeat and revolution not destroyed traditional authority, this obscure yet self-confident corporal could never have converted the visions of his days of privation in Vienna and nights of vigil at the front into the gigantic political system which is the structure of modern Germany. The ground had to be cleared before his crop of new conceptions could be planted. The chaos which descended on Germany after the War presented one of those rare historical situations where the prophet gains the ears of the people and the dreamer can become a creator.

Under normal conditions a man of Hitler's gifts and early circumstances would be condemned to failure and frustration. In any other time or country his life would almost inevitably have been passed in vain railing against institutions which he was powerless to alter. It was his lack of the more humdrum virtues that fitted him for his great achievements.

In that wild nightmare of civil war and currency inflation, aggravated by semi-starvation, general strikes, unemployment, and foreign occupation, a stage arrived when nothing was too fantastic to be believed. Hitler showed his political sagacity by abstaining from all attempt to remedy or repair the situation as he found it. Instead, he painted a brilliant picture of an ideal Germany, different down to its foundations from the one he saw round him. He preached a new heaven and a new earth with such revivalist fervour that doubters were gradually won over to burning faith, and even antagonists converted.

His speaking talent was, and still remains, his mightiest implement. Hitler is the first real demagogue in German history since Luther. Before him the prevailing style of oratory had been stilted, recondite, and intellectual. Hitler was, the first political agitator in the Nationalist field to address the masses in language which they could understand. He realised, with the instinct of genius, that in a popular campaign assertion is more powerful than argument. His speeches simplified the confused political and social conditions which beset, baffled, and oppressed his hearers. They came as a flash of light to men stumbling among dangers in the dark.

Hitler had a positive explanation for the disasters that had befallen Germany. They were due to no failure on the part of the German people itself. It was on the Jews that he laid responsibility for the country's calamitous condition, and also on those Communist and Marxist heresies which were the poisons injected by the Jews into German politics. Here was a revelation which brought profound relief to a people that had lost confidence in its own powers.

“Get rid of the Jews and the Communists,” declared Hitler, “and the natural genius of the German people will reconstruct its fortunes.” This was the slogan which bore him steadily towards power. Hitler did not even need to present a programme outlining the use he would make of that power when he attained it. His diagnosis of the country's afflictions inspired such faith in his followers that they trusted him unquestioningly to provide effective remedies. After a meeting with Hitler in those early days, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the pro-German English writer who had married into the Wagner family and taken German nationality, made the shrewd comment that he had “a genius for simplification.”

The political dreams and discussions which seemed so unprofitable in Hitler's early career had given him a self-assurance that now stood him in good stead. All doubts and difficulties in his own mind were disposed of. He was so thoroughly convinced himself that he carried conviction to the puzzled and despairing multitude. He realised that in times of confusion and catastrophe men crave to be led rather than persuaded.

The desire for more energetic leadership is strong in every country to-day. It is no wonder that a political creed based on that principle should have found eager adherents in a city which had passed through such desperate conditions as Munich in the years immediately following the War.

The Bavarian character kindles slowly, but burns fiercely when roused. The German revolution was more savage in Munich than Berlin. The Wittelsbachs were turned out before any other German dynasty. First a Republic and later a Soviet were set up in Munich, and in March, 1919, when Hitler got back, Bavaria was under a Red Terror which reached its climax in the cold-blooded murder of the bourgeois hostages in the cellars of the Bayerischer Hof.

He spent the winter at Traunstein, a neighbouring military depot, looking impotently on at the general collapse of the German political system which had once stood so high in his hopes and admiration. The restless endeavour to think of some remedy led him only, as he relates, to the conviction that so obscure a person could do nothing. But though Hitler did not actively attack the Communist dictatorship under which he was living, he somehow aroused its suspicions, and at dawn on April 27 three Red legionaries arrived at his quarters to arrest him. Hitler was armed with a carbine. At the sight of it, he says, his would-be captors fled, and the most formidable future adversary of Communism escaped being one of its victims.

Meanwhile the Republican Government in Berlin had overcome a similar Bolshevik outbreak in North Germany, and had troops available for the restoration of order in Bavaria. After the suppression of the Reds, Hitler joined the Military Intelligence Service, and was attached to an organization for giving civilian training to the troops after their long army service.

It was here that the idea of forming a political party arose in his mind. He discussed it with his comrades and decided that the best name would be 'The Social Revolutionary Party,' because the reconstruction of which they dreamed would amount to a revolution.

There were many people in Munich in those days with the same idea. In Hitler's capacity as a military intelligence agent he was sent to meetings for the purpose of reporting on their activities. Most were no more than casual gatherings of dispirited men without practical capacity for the foundation or conduct of a party.

The contempt which Hitler felt for these futile factions was not altered by a two hours' attendance which he put in one evening at a meeting organised by the 'German Workers' Party,' whose audience of twenty or twenty-five was mainly drawn from the poorest class of the population.

It was held in a large beer-house, standing on one of the principal streets of Munich, and known as the Sterneckerbräu. The results which followed on this obscure but fateful occasion have made the side-room in which it took place one of the shrines of the Nazi movement. Each year the Führer and the oldest members of the Party return to this humble birthplace of their greatness to relish by contrast the tremendous changes that a few years have made in the fortunes of the nation and themselves.

The principal speaker at Hitler's first visit to the Sterneckerbräu was Gottfried Feder, an educated man whose theme was economic reform, based upon the distinction between what he called 'parasitical' and 'constructive' capital. Hitler had already heard him lecture in the civic instructional course for soldiers which he was attending.

An unexpected development prevented this meeting from passing, like so many others, into oblivion, and made it instead a turning-point in European history.

Some unknown professor got up to reply to Feder's arguments. He went on to advocate a national panacea of his own. It was that Bavaria should break away from Prussia and join up with the German part of Austria.

This suggestion stung Hitler's most sensitive convictions. He sprang to his feet in reply, pouring forth such scorn and abuse that his startled opponent did not stay to hear him out.

The rest of the little audience was deeply stirred by this harangue from the stranger in their midst, and, when Hitler left, the chairman, Anton Drexler, hurried after him. He presented him with a pamphlet expressing his personal views, and Hitler, reading these to pass the time as he lay in bed next morning, found them to correspond very closely to his own.

Still only mildly interested, Hitler received by post an invitation to join the party, and attend a committee meeting for that purpose.

In the back-room of another shabby cafe-the 'Alte Rosenbad,' - feebly lighted, as he says, by a broken gas-lamp - he found four young men representing a party without a programme, without any literature, lacking even cards of membership or a rubber-stamp, and with financial resources limited to seven and a half marks.

Hitler hesitated some days before linking himself to this pathetically ill-equipped little group which possessed no other resources than patriotic goodwill. He hesitated because, he says, he has always had an instinctive dislike for people who start things without carrying them through. If he joined this political clique he meant to make its development the chief purpose of his life. The more earnestly he reflected on the matter, however, the deeper his conviction grew that it was in some such in- significant movement that the regeneration of Germany would be begun.

Then doubt would descend on him again as he realised his own deficiencies for the task of a political agitator. He was unknown and poor, and lacking in those educational qualifications to which in Germany so much importance used to be attached.

But after two days of consideration Hitler decided to throw in his lot with the 'German Workers' Party.' By so doing he brought its numbers up to seven.

With Hitler's personality to inspire it, the German Workers' Party no longer remained inactive and obscure. He threw himself into the organisation of meetings, over- ruling the hesitations of his timid associates. Within a few months the German Workers' Party was recognized as a political force in Munich. To broaden its appeal to Right and Left alike, it

added the words 'National Socialist' to its title, which thus became so cumbersome that the people of Munich soon shortened it to 'Nazi.'

In February, 1920, the Party put forward its programme of twenty-five points, of which the outstanding were:

1. The union of all Germans to form a Greater Germany.
2. Equality of rights for the German people, and abolition of the German and Austrian Peace Treaties.
3. Land and colonial territory for the settlement of surplus population.
4. German citizens to be limited to those of German blood. Jews to be excluded.
5. Abolition of unearned incomes.
6. Confiscation of war-profits.
7. Nationalization of all commercial trusts.
8. Land reforms, involving confiscation where necessary.
9. Formation of a national army.
10. Control of the Press in German national interests.
11. Liberty for all religious denominations in so far as they are not a danger to the State.
12. Centralization of State authority over the entire realm.

Though the signatories of this programme pledged themselves to its fulfilment with their lives, some of its more Socialistic aims have remained unfulfilled since the Party came to power. Hitler himself believed in men rather than programmes. His real aim was to secure for himself and a few trusted collaborators complete control of Germany. Once political power and command of the Government machinery were in their hands, they would rule by new authoritarian principles of their own.

To attain this end, popular support was necessary. The original Nazi programme was designed as a net to be cast as widely as possible. Its scope was modified in the light of later experience. With the subsequent increase of the Party in size and influence, alliances with other forces in the nation were made. As a result of such pacts, some of the Nazi aims were tacitly suspended.

The increasing importance of the campaign which Hitler was now conducting in Munich began to bring him stalwart allies. One of the earliest was Captain Röhm, an officer on the staff of General van Epp, the commander of the troops which had suppressed the Soviet Republic in Bavaria. Röhm was valuable not only for his energy as an organizer and for his ability to win recruits for the Party from the vigorous and well-disciplined soldier-class, but because he also opened up connections through General von Epp with rich and influential sections of the public.

Dietrich Eckart was another who played a prominent part in the development of the Party until his death in 1923. He was a former playwright, of strong Nationalist views, with a talent for slogans and propaganda. Eckart was lacking in the qualities of leadership himself, but he

recognized them in Adolf Hitler, and, until his death at the end of 1923, he was, after him, the most influential man in the Party's inner councils.

Goering brought to the Party in 1922 the prestige of a famous airman with the '*Pour le Mérite*' cross - the highest decoration for gallantry, of which only seventy-two were conferred in the War - who had commanded the star German squadron of Baron Richthofen after its famous founder had been shot down. He, too, helped to introduce the activities of the young Party into a new social class.

Rudolf Hess was another airman who joined in these early days. His silent, reserved, and loyal character quickly established him in confidential relations with Hitler, which he has ever since maintained.

Max Amann had been quartermaster-sergeant in Hitler's régiment at the front and became an early recruit. His business training caused him to be put in charge of the paltry finances of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, now the official Nazi newspaper, with the largest sale in Germany, but then an obscure Munich weekly which was bought to become the Party organ. The funds for this were advanced by Nationalist sympathizers through General von Epp. But the property was finally acquired with money lent by Ernst Hanfstängl. Hanfstängl, whose mother was an American, had been at Harvard University. His knowledge of English and experience of the world caused him to be rated as an expert on foreign propaganda. Through his skill as a pianist he was soon on terms of intimate friendship with Hitler, to whom he would often play Wagner until far into the night.



The Führer reads his Party Organ

[Photo: Presse Illustrationen Hoffmann]

Dr von Scheubner-Richter, a rather mysterious Russo-German who maintained a connection between Hitler and White Russian refugees attracted by his anti-Communist propaganda, was also a close adviser of the Party.

Alfred Rosenberg, another Russo-German from the Baltic States, became a vigorous writer of anti-Jewish and anti-Bolshevist books and pamphlets for Hitler's movement. Rosenberg's conception of the Germans as pre-destined to rule by virtue of their Nordic blood added a philosophical theory to the political constitution of the Party.

Particularly conspicuous was Gregor Strasser, an eloquent and commanding figure who ultimately undertook the extension of the Party to North Germany, and who seemed at a later stage to be aiming at its leadership .

Such were the men who began to gather round Hitler. Some of them have disappeared from the Nazi hierarchy, Röhm and Strasser were shot in the Party 'Purge' of June 30, 1934. But the majority of Hitler's early fellow-workers have risen with him to the heights, and despite lack of previous training, have discharged their governmental duties with an efficiency to which its results bear witness.

From the earliest days of the Party's existence Hitler's methods were based on two fundamental beliefs:

- (1) The vital importance of personal leadership, and
- (2) The compelling power of popular propaganda, working on sentiment and prejudice rather than on the minds of the people.

As a soldier at the front he had recognized the effectiveness of British war-propaganda. It taught him two precepts -Simplicity of statement and reiteration of ideas.

The banner and badge of the Party were of his own choice. He took the black, white, and red colours of the old Imperial Germany, and used them in new proportions to represent the very different constitution at which he aimed. He used a lot of red, to allure or antagonize the Socialists-he cared not which, so long as he attracted their attention. Then on a white medallion he placed the novel device of a black swastika. This emblem had a nationalist significance because it had been adopted by those 'Free Corps' of Baltic Troops which, after fighting against the Bolshevik armies, had helped to suppress the Communist rising in North Germany.

Hitler realised that if he depended upon the police for the protection of his meetings they would generally be closed down in the name of public order. He accordingly organised his own corps of stewards, to whom the name of 'Storm Troops' was soon given. These had orders to deal vigorously and at once with interrupters, for Hitler knew that energetic suppression of opposition would enhance his prestige with that part of his audiences which was largely indifferent to both sides, and which it was his special aim to convert.

The Storm Troopers were also used to invade hostile Red areas and hold meetings in defiance of threatening crowds. There were fierce fights on such occasions. Once Hitler led a raid on a meeting in which the Socialist speaker was beaten up. This earned him a sentence of four weeks in gaol, which added to his renown in Nationalist circles.

As soon as funds permitted, he adopted a ritual of flags, music, and patriotic songs to impress the crowd.

Foreigners who hear Hitler at public meetings sometimes profess to find them containing nothing but sound and fury. They listen to him only as an orator, and are concerned with the form rather than the substance of his harangues. But the mood of Hitler's audiences was, and still is, a very different one. It was by ardour, not academic perfection, that he appealed to hearts full of a sense of injustice, national humiliation, and a passionate yearning after better conditions for Germany.

In the first few years after the foundation of the Party, progress was difficult and conditions were unfavourable. There came a flash of encouragement in March, 1920, a month after the publication of the Party programme, but it was brief.

A group of Nationalists, supported by some 'Free Corps,' which had been fighting the Bolsheviks in the Baltic States, turned out the German Government by a surprise coup in Berlin and set up a new Chancellor named Dr Kapp.

Hitler and Eckart flew to Berlin to try to link up with these opponents of the existing *régime*. But the Social Democrat Government of Germany had retired only to Weimar, where it proceeded to organise a general strike against the usurpers, who, faced by the complete stagnation of all public services, had to make an inglorious retreat from the capital.

As regards finance, existence was extremely hard for the new movement. When Hitler gave up his pay and rations as a soldier to work for the Party, he condemned himself for several years to extreme poverty. He used frequently to pass the night in the public waiting-rooms at the Munich railway station, unable to afford a bed. Members of the Party who were in employment used to take turns in asking him to share their meals. Even as late as 1923 a friend who gave Hitler an overcoat saw tears come into his eyes.

Rich Germans, who might have been expected to help the leader of an anti-Communist campaign, provided little, for the simple reason that there were so many similar political organizations, and nothing had yet marked out the Nazi Party as the best one to back.

In Munich itself there existed several other Nationalist formations, led by men of greater reputation than Hitler. They, lacked, however, his tireless energy and genius for talking to the crowd. In numbers the Bavarian Social Democrats were stronger-so much so that their leaders took no trouble to organize any counter-propaganda and did not wake up to the hold that Hitler had upon the people of Munich until it was too late.

Chance rather than choice made the Bavarian capital the birthplace of the Nazi Party. The fact of its being the headquarters of Hitler's *régiment* brought him back to the centre which, among all German cities, was best adapted to be the forcing-house for a Nationalist movement.

If, after the War, Hitler had settled in Berlin, he would have been under the eye of the Central Government, and his movement might have been suppressed in its early stages. Moreover, the tough Prussian Communists of Berlin would have been even more aggressive than those of Bavaria.

Yet Munich was the second capital in the country, and political success obtained there could not be dismissed as a provincial manifestation of no importance.

Hitler's scheme of Party development was simple. He aimed at building up an unshakable position in Munich before spreading outside.

Numbers mattered to him much less than quality. He was confident that if he could form a phalanx of able, determined, and reliable men, the mass-support required for winning elections would follow of itself. To him the machine was everything; for popular opinion he

cared little. To sway the crowd, his own eloquence was all he needed, but to prepare for taking over Germany he required colleagues of proved ability and courage.

New branches were allowed only if the authority of headquarters in Munich was recognized without discussion. No matter how strong the local demand, Hitler forbade extension of the Party to any place where there was not available a thoroughly energetic and loyal man whom he could trust. In Hitler's eyes discipline was of greater importance than intelligence.

The orders of the Leader, now as then, are absolute. Subordinates, in their own departments, have similar autocratic powers. On all matters of Party doctrine Hitler pronounces with the authority of a Pope. "Duty in the lower ranks; authority in the higher ranks" - that is the system which has made Hitler Dictator of Germany.

I know these dictators



Adolf Hitler in 1923

CHAPTER IV

INITIAL REVERSES

WHEN he began to enrol young men and put them into brown shirts to act as stewards at his meetings, Hitler opened up a difference of opinion between himself and some other members of the Nazi hierarchy which was only settled when Röhm and his supporters were executed at the end of June, 1934.

Ernst Röhm was a bulky, boisterous, pugnacious soldier of fortune, with a genius for military organization and a scandalous private life, who started the work of drilling the younger and more militant of the recruits attracted to the Nazi movement by the Führer's fiery eloquence.

Hitler's idea was that these 'Storm Troopers' should provide protection and an impressive setting for his meetings. Röhm and his brother-officers wanted to make them a disguised military force, a reserve and supplement for the Reichswehr, then limited by the Peace Treaty to 100,000 men.

Though Germany had been to a great extent disarmed by an 'International Military Commission of Control,' a large number of weapons, particularly rifles and machine-guns, had been hidden from the Allied officer-inspectors. To Röhm and his friends it seemed natural to use these arms for the secret training of the Brown Shirt battalions into which Herr Hitler's original squads of anti-Red stewards had expanded. Behind this scheme lay the vague idea of some day overthrowing the Peace Treaty by force, or at any rate of turning out the Republican Government in Berlin by an armed uprising.

Hitler was against this project of making his young men into plain-clothes soldiers. It may be that he realised that the practical effect of the proposal would be to transfer them from his authority to that of the army chiefs. He opposed their militarisation with the argument that weekend training on a voluntary basis and without military penalties for slackness was not enough to make an efficient soldier.

As for the other plan of using the Storm Troops for a political coup d'état, Hitler maintained that power in Germany could be won only by peaceful means. The Kapp Putsch had shown, he declared, that armed revolution was doomed to failure.

Political agitation, therefore, was the only effective instrument. Overruling the stubborn opposition of Röhm, he insisted that the Storm Troopers should be used for no other purpose.

Experience in the year 1923 fully established the futility of strong-arm methods. On May 1 Hitler, urged and helped by Röhm, consented to the arming of two thousand Storm Troopers with the intention of breaking up the Labour Day demonstrations of the Social-Democrats and Communists. General von Lossow, Commander of the Bavarian Reichswehr Division, brought the plan to swift collapse by sending troops to surround these Brown Shirts and confiscate their rifles.

The humiliation of this reverse led to a suspension of Hitler's zeal. He spent the whole summer of 1923 at Berchtesgaden, where he had recently acquired a mountain cottage. It was then that he began the writing of that Koran of the Nazi movement which was published four years later under the title of *My Struggle*.

As the summer went on, however, the political situation in Germany took such a tragic turn that Hitler was forced into sudden and strenuous activity.

Catastrophic inflation of German currency was taking place, brought about by demands upon the Government for money to finance passive resistance to the French occupation of the Ruhr. Banknotes, fixed incomes, rents, and mortgages lost their value almost overnight. The most cautious and conservative investors were the first to be ruined. By November, 1923, the equivalent of one gold mark was 1,000,000,000 paper marks.

This disastrous situation brought a new administration into power, pledged to accept French conditions for ending the occupation of the Ruhr.

This, in Hitler's eyes, was a betrayal of Germany.

Hurrying back from Berchtesgaden, he called together the officials not only of his own party but of other Nationalist bodies like the 'Reichsflagge' and 'Bund Oberland,' which had plans for common action. In a burning speech he denounced the danger confronting the country, and persuaded them to elect him to the joint control of their action against it. On September 26, 1923, the 'German Fighting League' was formed, with Hitler as its chief. His authority and the forces at his disposal were thus alike increased.

Surrender to French pressure in the Ruhr was so detestable to patriotic German opinion that even the Bavarian Government and Reichswehr began to contemplate a march on Berlin. It was only twelve months since Mussolini's successful 'March on Rome,' and the swift seizure of power by strong-arm methods commended itself to many Germans who recognized the benefits which Italy had already reaped from Mussolini's action.

Among these was Gustav von Kahr, the President of the Bavarian Provincial Administration. He discussed with von Lossow, the general commanding the Reichswehr Division in Bavaria, a scheme for making Munich the base for a movement against the Central Government.

Hitler gave energetic backing to this scheme. He was not yet clear what kind of administration he wanted to substitute for the Stresemann Government. Some of his supporters were Monarchists; others wanted a dictatorship. He himself favoured a continuance of the Republican régime. It was not so much the form of government as the spirit animating it that he wanted to change.

He had by this time made common cause with General Erich von Ludendorff, one of the German heroes of the War, who lived near Munich, and had already lent his support to the Kapp Putsch. It was Hitler's hope that Ludendorff's reputation in the country would immobilise the resistance of the Reichswehr and make it possible to impose the authority of the Munich Government on that of Berlin. If this could be achieved, he had supreme confidence in his own power to infuse the spirit of National Socialism into whatever new national administration might be set up.

But von Kahr and von Lossow were not of the stuff of which successful rebels are made. They faltered, waiting till news of similar Nationalist movements in other parts of Germany should give them "at any rate a 51 per cent. chance of success."

With impatience Hitler observed their feebleness of purpose. He determined to force their hand by a *fait accompli*. This enterprise led him to the only great reverse of his career.

Hitler's plan was simple. Von Kahr and von Lossow were to address a big meeting on the evening of November 8. He decided to seize the occasion to startle them into publicly associating themselves with a rising against the Central Government.

Several hundred Storm Troopers were secretly mobilized and armed. With these Hitler surrounded the hall. He had previously taken the precaution of securing the neutrality of the police, among whose senior officers his movement had secret sympathizers.

Three thousand Bavarians sat in the Bürgerbräukeller that evening listening to a political address by their General State Commissar, von Kahr, whose friends were beginning to call him "the Bismarck of the South."

Suddenly, at 8.45, there were sounds of disturbance at the entrance. Pushing into the dingy, crowded hall came Adolf Hitler, followed by brown-shirted Storm Troopers, armed with automatic pistols and carbines, who set up a machine-gun in the doorway pointing in upon the startled audience.

These unexpected and threatening preparations reduced the speaker, von Kahr, and his three thousand listeners to startled silence. In that momentary lull Hitler hurried to the low platform at one side of the room, and drawing a revolver from his pocket, fired it into the ceiling. The bullet-hole is to be seen there to-day, marked by a painted swastika. Then he shouted:

"The National revolution has begun. The hall is surrounded by 600 armed men. No one must leave. If there is any disturbance I will put a machine-gun in the gallery. The Reichswehr and police have come over to our side. The Bavarian Government is overthrown. The National Government is overthrown. A Provisional Government will be formed. The Reichswehr and police barracks have been occupied."

It is testimony to the confused and precarious state of Germany's internal politics that none of the three thousand people in the hall for a moment doubted this announcement. Hitler's mastery of the situation was complete. Von Kahr, head of the Bavarian Government, General von Lossow, Commander of the Bavarian Reichswehr, and Colonel von Seisser, head of the Bavarian Police, who were the chief persons on the platform, obeyed at once when he ordered them to leave the hall with him, escorted by Storm Troopers, for a conference in a private room. Lossow afterwards contended that he complied only to gain time, and whispered to his two companions, "Play up to him!"

Directly Hitler's commanding presence was withdrawn, the audience broke into excitement. To regain control of the situation, Goering sprang up on the platform. What they had seen was no wild extravagance, he shouted, but the beginning of national recovery. The Central and Munich Governments had been overthrown, and new administrations were being formed at that very moment. "Anyhow, you needn't worry," he added jovially, "you have still got your beer!"

Meanwhile Hitler had led his three captives to a small dining-hall, about forty feet long, that opens off the stone-floored entrance of the beer-house. "No one leaves this room alive without my orders!" were his first words. Armed Storm Troopers took up their stand as guards at the entrance. Hitler had kept his pistol in his hand, and though he assured von Kahr that there was no personal danger for him, he propounded his plans with the threatening remark, "There are still five bullets in my pistol-four for traitors, and one, if things go wrong,

for myself." Upon this, he nominated himself Head of the National Government; von Lossow to be Reichswehr Minister; Seisser, Police-Minister; von Kahr, Regent of Bavaria.

While the three were still hesitating, Hitler hurried back to the hall and announced that, until Germany had been purged of those who were ruining her, he proposed to take over control of a provisional National Government. He was loudly cheered, then came again to his doubting associates to implore them to fall in with his scheme. At this moment Hitler received a powerful ally. He had sent a messenger to bring General Ludendorff to the scene of the Putsch, and promptly offered him the supreme command of the German army. Despite the fact that Hitler's action was as great a surprise to him as to the others, the General declared that his patriotic feelings left him no choice but to accept. His personality and prestige decided the matter, and the three lesser men followed his example.

Revolution had thus been begun in Germany, and a new Government appointed-but few outside the walls of the Bürgerbräukeller yet knew anything about it.

Hitler left von Kahr and von Lossow directly the meeting broke up. He hurried off to see if his armed Storm Troopers were arriving from the villages round Munich. It was yet only 10.30 P.M. He expected that the men he had just appointed Ministers would begin at once to consult together on plans for making the *coup d'etat* effective.

The news was now flying round the city. Enthusiasm broke out in the streets. The population of Munich at any rate was on Hitler's side. Leaders of the Socialist Party were mobbed or arrested to be held as hostages.

But directly Kahr, Lossow, and Seisser had escaped from the magnetic presence of Hitler and Ludendorff they began to bethink themselves. They took counsel by telephone with other leading men in Bavaria. In these quarters Hitler's reluctant collaborators found the strongest disapproval of the attempt to overthrow the constitution of Germany to which they had committed themselves.

More serious still, the Reichswehr had not come out on the side of the revolutionaries. Under the orders of von Lossow's subordinates, it was co-operating with the police by occupying strategic points in the centre of the city.

Von Kahr and von Lossow. soon made up their minds to repudiate the pledge they had given Hitler. They placarded the streets of Munich with a hastily printed statement that their adhesion to his movement had been extorted by force. They ordered the dissolution of the Nazi Party. They got into touch by telegraph with the Government in Berlin, and were told that the Commander-in-Chief, General von Seeckt, would guarantee the suppression of the Putsch.

The morning of November 9, which has since become one of the solemn anniversaries of the Nazi movement, found the situation growing hourly worse for the revolutionaries,

Hitler had by this time several thousand Storm Troopers assembled under his orders in the suburbs of Munich. They were armed with rifles and even machine-guns mounted in motor-cars. The Bürgerbräukeller was made the head-quarters of the Putsch.

Attempts to seize the Government offices during the night had failed, and of the troops only the cadets of the Infantry School came over to Hitler's side. Captain Röhm with some Storm Troopers, however, succeeded in occupying the Military Headquarters of Munich.

The only hope of success now lay in rousing the friendly population of the city to support the movement. The bold idea was suggested of a propaganda march through the streets by the Storm Troopers, with their swastika flags flying and all the Nazi leaders at their head.

Would the Reichswehr open fire on this demonstration?

Not if General Ludendorff were there, said Hitler. He recalled how the French troops sent to oppose Napoleon's return from Elba had laid down their arms directly he stepped forward to confront them.

At noon the procession began-about three thousand strong, some armed, but many not. The order was given, in any case, to unload rifles. At the head marched the leaders in one rank, sixteen or twenty abreast, determined to show that, unlike the organizers of Communist demonstrations, they were ready to expose themselves. Hitler, wearing the raincoat which had become famous as the costume in which he invariably appeared at open-air gatherings, walked in the middle of the row, with General Ludendorff, also in civilian clothes, on his right, and Dr von Scheubner-Richter, the Russo-German, on his left. As the column approached the centre of the city, vast numbers of cheering townspeople began to join it and, in their enthusiasm, pressed so hard on the marchers that the leaders in the first rank had to link arms so as not to be separated.

At the head of the column was carried a black, white, and red flag-the old German national colours. Close behind followed two swastika flags of the Nazi Party. The actual experiences of the bearer of one of these will be recorded later.

At the foot of the slope on which the Bürgerbräukeller stands is the broad Ludwig Bridge over the River Isar. Here a post of ten to fifteen police was stationed, and as the procession drew near, the policemen ostentatiously opened and closed the bolts of their rifles, making ready to fire.

The demonstrators broke out into the national anthem, *Deutschland über alles*, and some of them shouted, "Don't shoot! Hitler and Ludendorff are here!" The police hesitated, then lowered their rifles and fell back. The marchers passed on.

They reached the heart of Munich without further opposition and amid scenes of strong popular approval. National Socialist flags were hanging from almost every window. The march seemed to have become a triumphal progress. At five minutes past one in the afternoon they were approaching the Odeonsplatz, a large square in the centre of the city, which is flanked on one side by the palace and on another by the Feldherrnhalle, a great loggia in the Florentine style. Here their way was barred at the end of the Theatinerstrasse by another thin cordon of police. To avoid contact with these, the leaders of the march turned sharp right along the Perusastrasse, and then sharp left to approach the Odeon Square along another narrow street, the Residenzstrasse.

Suddenly more police appeared at the end of this street also. They were under the command of an officer who lost his life in the subsequent shooting. Behind them stood an armoured car with machine-guns.

Ulrich Graf, a close associate of Hitler's, sprang forward, pointing at Ludendorff. "Will you fire on your General?" he shouted. Again the police hesitated, but more of them ran up from the rear to bar the way. At this moment a shot rang out, which, according to the demonstrators, came from the police. Then followed a volley from the police-carbines. The citizens who had joined the procession rushed for the shelter of doorways and side-streets. The Storm Troopers flung themselves down on the pavement, and some of them used their rifles to return the fire. In a few moments it was all over, but fourteen of the demonstrators and four of the police lay dead on the ground. The fourteen Nazi dead, together with two others who were killed that day in a skirmish at the Military Headquarters, now lie in stately tombs on the Königsplatz in Munich, and every year, on the anniversary of their deaths, the survivors of the procession, marching in the same order, make a solemn pilgrimage to their

graves. All wear the 'Blood Order,' a medal bestowed on everyone who took part in the Putsch.



The bloody denouncement on 9 November 1923

Von Scheubner-Richter, the Russian Monarchist, who was marching arm-in-arm with Hitler, was among the killed, He pulled Hitler down with him as he fell, dislocating his shoulder. Goering, too, was severely wounded, and rolled for cover behind one of the bronze lions before the palace on one side of the Odeon Square. These two injured leaders were picked up by friends and hurried away in motor-cars - Goering to escape into Austria and afterwards to Italy, and Hitler to take refuge at the Hanfstängl's Villa at Uffing on Lake Starnberg, near Munich, where he was arrested by a strong detachment of police three days later. Ludendorff, at first believed to be among the dead, stalked stiffly on through the firing police and across the Odeon Square, but was arrested on the farther side, being afterwards released on parole.

History is full of odd repetitions. On November 9, one hundred and twenty-four years earlier, had occurred the famous *coup d'etat* of the *18 Brumaire*, in which another coming Dictator made a similar bid for power. The *petit caporal* of the future French Empire had more success than the 'Drummer' of the Third Reich, but his attack upon the Council of the Five Hundred at St Cloud was marked by the same confusion as the Munich *Putsch* of 1923.

The completeness of that confusion is illustrated by an account of his personal experiences given to me by one of the rank and file who took part in it - a man who carried one of the two Nazi flags which were close to the head of the procession.

“ I had been a Storm Trooper for about two months,” he told me, “ and early in the evening of November 8 I received the order at my home to report immediately at a private address in Munich. The place turned out to be a cellar, where there was a stock of rifles. These were served out to my comrades and myself, and we were then marched to the Bürgerbräukeller. It was then about 8 P.M., and a number of us were sent out to seize some members of the City Council to be held as hostages.

“ We brought them back to the Bürgerbräukeller, and waited there throughout the night and the forenoon of the following day. Then we got orders to parade in front of the building

for a march into the town. Our rifles were unloaded and slung over our backs. I was given one of the two swastika flags to carry.

“ After the incident at the Ludwig Bridge, where the police gave way before us, it became very clear that the whole of Munich was with us. Thousands of the citizens joined in. The streets were filled from side to side with a cheering crowd, in the midst of which our formation was almost submerged. Flags were everywhere. We knew that the National Socialists in other cities had been warned to get ready to join in the movement against Berlin, and I had the impression that we were marching to certain victory. We understood that we were making for the Military Headquarters in the centre of the city, which had been occupied by Captain Röhm and his men during the night. I was in the second rank just behind Hitler, Ludendorff, and a long row of other leaders, all arm-in-arm to avoid being separated in the crush.

“ Suddenly, as we were bunched up in the narrow Residenzstrasse, police appeared ahead, and a shot was fired. It was followed instantly by shooting from both sides. The man next to me was hit by a bullet in the head. His blood spurted all over me. I flung myself to the ground, unslung my carbine, and fired one shot.

“ Then came shouts of 'Cease fire!' Everyone seemed to be taking cover, and I hurried with my flag into the Preysing Palace, which stands on the Residenzstrasse, formerly the town house of a rich Munich family, but now a restaurant. Looking out of the window, I saw bodies lying all over the narrow street. One looked to me like that of General Ludendorff, and everyone was saying that he had been killed. Then someone shouted to those of us in the Preysing Palace to come and help carry the wounded.

“ I asked an officer of the Storm Troopers what I should do with my flag. He told me to leave it in the house. When we had finished carrying the wounded into neighbouring houses, another of our officers rushed up and said to several of us, 'Hurry as fast as you can to the Ludwig Bridge, and hold it to the last if the police should advance upon the Bürgerbräukeller. They are going there to try to seize the archives of the Party.'

“ With about a dozen others I ran through the streets to the bridge. I was deluged with blood from the man killed beside me, and some ambulance-men tried to stop me, thinking I was wounded. We reached the bridge and took up position across it, but no police came. Then, after an hour or two, word was sent from the Bürgerbräukeller that the archives had all been removed to safety.

“ We went back there and had something to eat. Then we were told to put the hostages into a lorry and take them out of Munich. They were all very pale, and evidently thought they were being taken to execution. Some miles outside the town the lorry stopped at a wood, and the hostages were ordered to get out. They were marched into the wood, by this time quite convinced that their last hour had come. But the reason turned out to be that the officer in charge wanted their clothes, so that some of his men could go back to their homes in Munich without risking arrest by appearing in the streets in Storm Trooper uniform.

“ I was not one of those who changed clothes with the hostages, but I went on in the lorry to a lonely inn on a country-road some ten miles from Munich, where we found a number of Party members assembled. These believed that the police would soon come in force to arrest them, and it was agreed that we should resist to the last. Sentries were stationed outside. When night fell, my own turn came to mount guard. I was to shoot at once if motor-cars drove up to the inn, and this would be the signal for the defenders inside to open fire from the windows.

“ Nothing happened, however, and in the morning I asked leave to go back to my home in Munich. I went to the nearest station and took a train. When I reached Munich I walked to my home through the streets in my blood-stained uniform. It was an extraordinary experience, for people patted me on the back or cheered when they saw me. Officers of the Reichswehr in uniform saluted me. Though our attempt had been a failure, the popularity of the Party in Munich was as great as ever.

“ A few days later I was sent for by the police and interrogated on my part in the Putsch. I told them exactly what I had done, and was arrested and sent to Landsberg Prison.

“ The flag that I had left in the Preysing Palace had disappeared when I went to look for it, but years later it was found among the possessions of a Munich doctor who died. He had evidently carried it away with him.”

In this way ended the now historic Munich Putsch of November 9, 1923. A 'whiff of grapeshot' had suppressed the scheme for seizing control of Germany. It seemed that the Nazi movement might be written off as a failure.

The outside world took only the most casual notice of the whole affair. To foreign eyes the skirmish at the Feldherrnhalle appeared of no more importance than the many other political street-fights which were a regular feature of German life in those days.

But it did much to shape the future course of German history, for this salvo of rifle-fire convinced Hitler that, rapidly as the Nazi leaven was spreading, the time was not ripe for direct action. As he wrote to Goering after coming to power: “ It was hard necessity that made us act as we did, and a wise Providence that withheld success from us.”

“ I was following Mussolini's example too closely,” the Chancellor told me twelve years after the event. “ I had meant the Munich Putsch to be the beginning of a ' March on Berlin' which should carry us straight to power. From its failure I learnt the lesson that each country must evolve its own type and methods of national regeneration.”

Looking back now upon the strange history of the Nazi Party, it is easy to get the impression that it was automatic and inevitable.

Nazi literature, indeed, has already built up a legend about the movement's early days. It depicts a small band of brothers in the faith, engaged in a constantly victorious fight against the evil powers of Communism. Their progress is represented as continuous and regular. There is no record of those moods of misgiving and discouragement which from time to time descended upon even the most undaunted of them as they faced the formidable obstacles in their path.

Ten years ago no impartial estimate of the Nazi Party's prospect of success would have rated it above that of the many other political movements-under such names as *Stahlhelm*, *Reichsbanner*, *Organisation Consul*, and *Jungdeutscher Orden*-which by diverse methods were aiming at national reconstruction in Germany.

But the Nazis were much the most militant of these leagues. Where others avoided conflict they sought it. Even in their early numerical weakness they set themselves to attack that most formidably organised political force in Germany, the Reds.

Under the depression of defeat and its sequels, a large part of the German working-class had become ardent Communists. The Government of pre-War days had led them only to

disaster. The Emperor and minor royalties round whom the patriotic feelings of the nation had been crystallized gained no new glory during the War and escaped by flight from the consequences of the catastrophe with which it ended. Soured by the collapse of their old patriotic ideals, the majority of the younger working-men hoped for better things from the triumph of world-revolution and the Soviet system, which had not yet defaulted on its promise to build a paradise on earth.

One substantial section of the nation was thus animated by intense antagonism towards the Nazis, and its formidability was increased by the fact that it was concentrated in the great industrial areas.

Berlin, Hamburg, and the Ruhr contained large districts which were solidly and savagely Red. A picture of Lenin hung above the zinc counter of every beer-house. The crossed hammer and sickle were chalked up on all sides.

Red flags alone waved over these Bolshevist enclaves.

They contained large stocks of hidden arms, and most of their male inhabitants in the prime of life had had war- training.

Who, in the opening days of Hitler's campaign, could have conceived that he would work the miracle of converting the great Bolshevist garrisons in the heart of Germany? At that time it was they who seemed more likely to dominate the country. They were organised, armed, and ready. When Hitler was still an unknown agitator addressing audiences of a few hundreds in Munich, the German Communists could pack the largest halls in Berlin or the Ruhr. Their mass-meetings were marked by fanatical enthusiasm, and the police would discreetly withdraw from the streets as the menacing columns of Reds passed by.

At the Reichstag election in 1928, when the Nazi Party began to make itself felt in a wider field than Munich, the Communist vote in Germany amounted to more than 10 per cent. of the total cast. If to these extremists were added the Social Democrats" whose opposition to Nazi doctrines was equally convinced if not as violent, close on one-half of the German nation was whole-heartedly arrayed against Hitler and everything that he stood for, while the majority of the rest were indifferent, contemptuous, or sceptical.

The political gospel which he preached was so radical and novel that it seemed at first to threaten many vested interests. Government officials, especially in the senior ranks, stood by the Republican administration. " They hung on to the food-pail," as Hitler was wont to say.

Other national forces had their misgivings about these young reformers in Munich, whose activities were beginning to arouse attention. Industrialists and capitalists, manufacturers and big traders disapproved of the more Socialistic paragraphs of the original Nazi programme, especially the clauses about the nationalization of trusts, wholesale concerns, and department-stores. Farmers and peasants were dubious about a movement whose published programme contained no reference to their needs and interests.

Above all, Hitler and his associates had to contend with that caste-feeling and social prejudice which, in pre- war Germany at least, were even stronger than in England. The complete disappearance of such distinctions has been one of the most striking results of the Nazi victory. In no other country was so much stress laid upon what used to be called the *Distanzen*, or proper relations between class and class.

The nobility, including everyone entitled to put the preposition ' von ' before his name, was a socially isolated section of the population which excluded anyone in trade or commerce except the very wealthiest industrialists. The officer-class was equally self-contained, and formed a military sub-caste of the aristocracy.

In the middle class a sharp distinction was drawn between those who had been 'academically educated' at a high school or university, and those who had not. Only the former could serve in the army as 'one-year volunteers' at their own expense, thus earning the social privilege of becoming 'reserve officers.' The working-classes were divided into well-marked grades. The postman or police-man was the social superior of the artisan. The skilled workman looked down on the manual labourer.

These class-barriers were obstacles in the path of Hitler's rise to power. Long after he had become the most prominent political leader in the country, old President Hindenburg used to refer to him disdainfully as "the Lance-Corporal." He was of humble birth, not even of German nationality, held no diploma of 'academic education,' had no social connections and no powerful financial backing - yet, with the faith that removes mountains, he set out to make himself ruler of Germany, and succeeded.

Never was this constancy of purpose put to a sterner test than by the failure of the Munich Putsch. Its leaders became prisoners or fugitives beyond the frontiers. The organization and its uniform were prohibited. There seemed every likelihood that the National Socialists would never be heard of again.

Hitler, arrested at the Hanfstangls' villa three days after the Putsch, was at first plunged in black despair. To von Kahr and the others whom he had tried to co-opt by force and who deserted him, he had declared that if he failed he would shoot himself. The idea of suicide was still with him when he was brought to Landsberg Prison to await his trial. He contemplated a hunger-strike like that by which the Lord Mayor of Cork had ended his days some twelve months previously.

But this mood soon passed, for Hitler saw that the charge of high treason which he, Ludendorff, Röhm, and others were now to face would furnish a better platform than he had ever had for preaching National Socialism.

The trial proved to be little more than a public debate on the Nazi movement, lasting several weeks. From the first it was clear that no heavy penalty would be inflicted upon the Party's leaders, even if that had been the practice of Republican Germany. Too many prominent people were compromised. The Nazi leaders, if they found themselves in danger, might make revelations damaging to the Republican *régime*. It was thought wise for the Court to show leniency. In the trial Hitler stoutly defended his cause, and when the attempt was made to represent him as animated by personal ambition, retorted that the only title to which he aspired was that of Destroyer of Marxism.'

"As for myself," he declared, "I wish to be nothing more than the drummer of the Third Reich."

Hitler was sentenced to five years' confinement in Landsberg fortress. Ludendorff, despite his part in the Putsch, tried in the trial to dissociate himself from Hitler. Respect for his past services led to his acquittal.

If Hitler had had to serve his full five years' imprisonment, the Party would have perished. But the sap of National Socialism was rising in Germany. Public sympathy for his patriotic motives worked in favour of a remission of his sentence.

Hitler's release came after only nine months of easy confinement, following upon four months of detention awaiting trial. A dozen of his Party friends were his fellow-prisoners and used to organize sports in the courtyard. He had a comfortable room. The bars across his windows, which looked out over a large stretch of country were the only reminder that it was a cell. He could have books and newspapers, and receive visits from his friends. Admirers

brought him fruit and flowers, sometimes with bottles of wine concealed inside, for Hitler was not yet a teetotaler. On his birthday in April, his quarters were described as 'like a conservatory.'

This retirement from the world was exactly what Hitler needed at that stage of his political development. It gave him a chance to revise and reorganize his plans. He had time to reflect upon past errors.

The other interned Nazis encouraged their Leader to use his leisure to produce a book on his doctrines, and most of *My Struggle* was written at Landsberg. The manuscript of it, which must now be one of the most valuable by a modern author, he presented to Frau Bechstein, wife of the piano-manufacturer, an elderly lady who treated him as a son. She used to come and see him in prison, ostensibly to change his gramophone records, but really to smuggle out what he had written. The Bechsteins are the only people in Germany who call Hitler by a nickname. They address him as "Wolff," a name they used to employ when talking about him on the telephone.



Adolf Hitler in the Landsberg prison

Hitler's absence from the leadership only served to prove him indispensable to the Nazi movement. Ludendorff and Gregor Strasser tried to keep its members together, but with small success. The seed that Hitler had sown remained in the minds of many, but the flow of his eloquence was needed to give it life.

Meetings and propaganda all but ceased, and mean-while the Republican Government was gaining in popularity and power as a result of the evacuation of the Ruhr by the French and the re-establishment of a fixed currency after the nightmare of inflation.

"It will take me five years after I get out of here to get things going again," said Hitler to Hess.

'When he was released at Christmas, 1924, Hitler's work lay in ruins. The only money he had in the world was 700 marks, the proceeds of the sale in pamphlet form of his speech at the trial. He felt a mystical conviction that to rebuild the Nazi movement he must start with nothing. His first act was to distribute the 700 marks among poor members of his Party. Then, penniless, he began his political career again.



Adolf Hitler by his release from Landsberg prison

Hitler, in reminiscent moods, tells many stories of these days of struggle when his only external asset was his name. Self-reliance soon provided the resources that he lacked. A motor-car was indispensable. Hitler hardly had enough money to pay for petrol, but he persuaded a sympathizer to lend him a smart new car for a few hours. In this he drove up to the showroom of a firm of motor manufacturers.

“ The Party is doing very well now,” he said. “ You see I have got a nice car. I shall be wanting another soon, and I am rather inclined to buy one of yours next time. If you will lend me one to see if I like it, I may give you the order.”

By using the trial-run to call on former subscribers, he raised enough to pay a deposit on the car, and the extra donations it enabled him to collect soon provided the remainder.

But anxious times still lay ahead. Fortunate are they who helped him in those arduous days. Heinrich Hoffmann was a small photographer in Munich. His shop was near the Nazi Party's office, and he sometimes asked Hitler in to take a cup of coffee. In the early stages of his campaign Hitler refused to be photographed. He believed it added to the interest of his propaganda that his name should be well known while his appearance remained mysterious. When he spoke in public two or three of his followers were detailed to prevent photographers from getting a picture of him. But as Hoffmann was a friend, Hitler appointed him sole photographer to the Nazi movement and gave him the sonorous title of *Reichsbildberichterstatter*. Since the rise of the Party to power that concession has proved of great value. The sale of Press photographs and picture- postcards has made Heinrich Hoffmann a mark-millionaire. The short-necked, square-shouldered figure of this little man is conspicuous at any great Nazi gathering moving about in his Storm Trooper tunic and black

trousers, photographing his leader and benefactor from every possible angle. He travels everywhere with Hitler's personal staff, and his daughter, Jenny, is married to Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the 'Hitler Youth.'

It was Hoffmann who, without knowing it, took the first photograph ever made of Hitler on a public occasion. When war was declared in Germany on August 2, 1914, he happened to be on the steps of the Feldherrnhalle photographing the cheering crowds. Twelve years later, as he was going through his stock of old pictures, Hoffmann found one that he had made on that historic day. As he looked at it, a face in the middle of the crowd caught his eye. He made an enlargement of the picture and took it to Hitler.

Do you see anyone there you know?" he asked. Hitler scrutinized the photograph and suddenly exclaimed: " Why, that's me !" And there he was, plainly recognisable in the midst of the jostling crowd, unknown and little dreaming that the events of that day would ultimately lead him to the rulership of the country in 'which he was then but an obscure and alien sojourner.

Two months after his release from prison Hitler was in a position to proclaim the second founding of the 'National Socialist German Workers' Party.' He did so on February 27, 1925, in the same Bürgerbräukeller which had seen the start of the ill-fated Putsch.

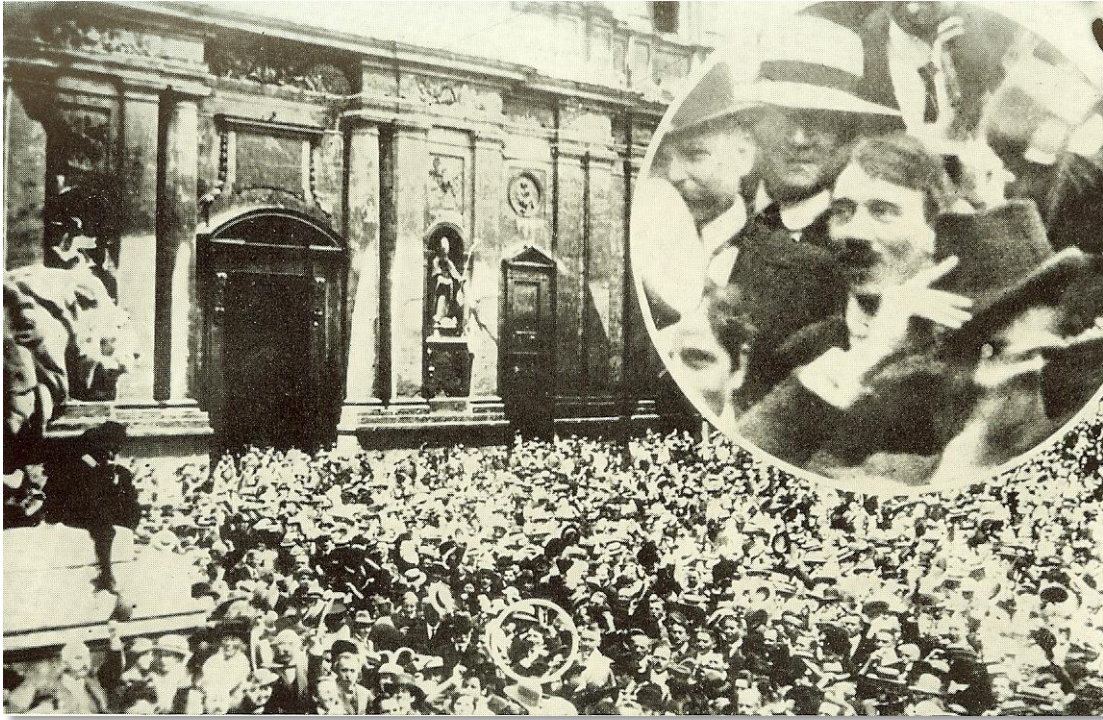
The reorganisation provided an opportunity to revise the membership of the party and confirm Hitler's supreme control.

Every former member had to apply again for admission, and no recruit was accepted unless approved by the central office in Munich.

The Bavarian Government, regretting its clemency too late, forbade all speeches by Hitler. This example was followed by Prussia and several other provincial Governments of Germany. For some years he could deliver public speeches only in Thuringia, Württemberg, Mecklenburg, and Brunswick. In other provinces he would content himself with appearing on the platform. Yet his silent presence there was enough to inspire scenes of greater enthusiasm than any other political leader could arouse. For the Nazi movement came to despondent Germans like a revelation for which they had long waited.

There was magic in its appeal to patriotic pride. For years this great country, which had faced with courage the dangers of war and the hardships of blockade, had been plunged in black despair. Germans had lost confidence in themselves, their leaders, their institutions. The nation was threatened with the permanent financial servitude of reparations. Its citizens, who during the greater part of the War had expected to emerge as the mightiest Power in Europe, with great gains of territory and prestige, found themselves instead at the mercy of their conquerors.

Surrender of territory on every frontier and subjection to humiliating restrictions and controls had made Germany a prisoner and pariah among the free nations of Europe.



Hitler as an unknown unit of the crowd in Munich on August 2, 1914

[Photo: Planet News]

When depression had been still further deepened by the French occupation of the Ruhr, where black Senegalese used to shout orders at German men and women, and by the note-inflation which annihilated savings and plunged millions in to undeserved and uncomprehended poverty, a new voice at last began to be heard in Germany. Across that Slough of Despond rang out a note of hope. "It is not you Germans," declared Hitler, "who are responsible for your own misery. You are the victims of international Jew financiers and those traitor-members of your own race who are trying to enslave you to the world-revolutionaries of Moscow. Rid yourselves of these evil elements! Burn out the canker in your midst! Join me, and make Germany strong again!"

There was no programme or policy to provoke divergence among Hitler's followers. The Nazi movement was not constructive: it was a crusade against Jews and Communists. Like a crusade, it was both mystic and militant. The patriotic feeling of the country, whose old leaders had disappeared or been discredited, rallied round Adolf Hitler. With sure instinct, he gratified that taste for display which is deeply engrained in the German character. Flags, banners, badges, disciplined marches, and above all, uniforms - in a country which loved them but had lost them - persuaded the hearts of the German people even before their heads. In the well-drilled columns of Storm Troopers, flinging up a forest of strong if still empty hands with a hoarse shout of "Heil Hitler!" they saw a symbol of the restored Germany of their dreams.

Slowly at first, but steadily, the reborn Nazi Party grew. At the end of the first year it had 27,000 members. Twelve months later, in December, 1926, they numbered 50,000; in December, 1927, 72,000; by the end of 1928, 108,000.

This 'First Hundred Thousand' of the Party's membership are a privileged class in Germany. They wear a golden badge which only the most conspicuous service can win for those who did not join till later, after the arduous days were over.

The rapid expansion of the Party is recorded by the following totals of membership, taken from an official source:

End of 1929	176,426
“ 1930	389,000
“ 1931	806,294
“ 1932	1,414,975

When Hitler became Chancellor, the Party ranks were closed except to young recruits who have been members of the junior organizations of the movement.

Admission is now a rare privilege for adults. Wealthy Germans have paid heavily to hear the words: “ You will be admitted to the Party as an exceptional favour if you join within twenty-four hours.”

The expansion of the Nazi movement soon required an organization of national scale. The country was divided into thirty-seven Gaus, or districts, with a local leader at the head of each, directly responsible to Hitler.

'Conquer the streets' had been his motto from the first, and sturdy figures in brown shirts and black breeches became conspicuous in every town and village. The rattle of their collecting-boxes grew to be a familiar sound in German ears, and the sale of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, thanks to their efforts, yielded a substantial revenue.

New Party formations were added to these Storm Troopers. A picked body of more military character, known as the 'S.S.' and dressed in entirely black uniform with a death's-head badge and the motto 'My Honour is Fidelity,' was recruited to be the 'inner guard' of the movement. The 'Hitler Youth,' the 'Young Folks,' and the 'League of German Girls' were brought into existence to train the children of members in party principles, and to prepare a constant supply of future recruits.

To these formations has been added since the Party's accession to power a *corps d' elite* known as the *Hitler Leibstandarte*, or personal bodyguard.

This corps may be termed the 'Household Brigade' of Germany. It numbers 10,000 men, divided into four main garrisons. This principal depot is the former Army Cadet establishment at Gross Lichterfelde, a suburb of Berlin. Other detachments are at Munich, Hamburg, and Soltau.

No other troops in the world are selected so carefully as the *Leibstandarte*. The age-limit is from eighteen to twenty-two, and the minimum height six feet. Physically, racially - even aesthetically - a member of the Hitler Life Guards must be beyond reproach. The family history of each applicant is examined to ensure that he is of unmixed Nordic blood. Any physical defect in parents or grand- parents is a bar to acceptance, even if there are no traces of it in the candidate.

After passing both doctor and genealogist, recruits appear before a 'Racial Commission,' which rejects them, however sound their physique and unadulterated their racial origin, if their appearance is not of the 'pure German type.' Everything possible is done to make the *Leibstandarte* a body of German supermen.

CHAPTER V

THE RISE TO POWER

THE financial difficulties of the Nazi movement, though serious when Hitler started to rebuild the Party after his release from Landsberg, did not last long. Each new member had to pay an entrance fee proportionate to his means, and a minimum subscription of one mark a month. The sale of uniforms and badges was organised on a profit-making basis, and the revenues of the *V.B.* and of a constantly increasing array of smaller publications helped to meet the rising expenses of Party headquarters.

Hitler himself was a standing source of income, for when he was announced to speak at a big hall like the Berlin Sport-Palast, ten thousand tickets could be sold, and the demand be still unsatisfied.

As the Party grew in numbers and influence it could draw on fresh elements of support. Germany had had such grim experience of Bolshevism that not only rich capitalists but small owners of property were interested by a political movement which made the crushing of Communism the first plank in its programme. Donations by Bavarian industrialists were followed by subscriptions from employers all over the country, who realised the wisdom of counteracting Russian subsidies to German Reds.

Yet, though revenue increased, outgoings were correspondingly abundant, and it was not until January, 1932, when Hitler met the leading manufacturers of the Rhineland at the Park Hotel, Dusseldorf, under the chairmanship of the great steelmaster, Fritz Thyssen, that a substantial source of supply was found. Six hundred critical business-men assembled at 7 o'clock. Hitler was to speak for an hour, and had asked that there should be no smoking. His speech lasted two hours and thirty-five minutes, At the end of which his cigarless and foodless hearers cheered him to the echo, while Thyssen, springing to his feet, hailed him as the saviour of Germany and announced his own intention of joining the Nazi Party.

Anxious as these early times were, Hitler's assurance of triumph was unshakable. Self-confidence and capacity to wait were the secrets of his success.

Sometimes he said, " Perhaps it is our destiny only to prepare the way. We may be building not for ourselves but for the future." Or again: " It may take twenty or a hundred years to establish our ideas. It may be that those who now hold those ideas must all die before they prevail, but what does a man's life matter in the development of a nation or of humanity? "

Never has any Party prepared for power more thoroughly than the Nazis during the eight years between Hitler's release from Landsberg and his arrival at the Chancellorship. Their campaign was by no means confined to speeches and propaganda, though these were poured out in constantly increasing volume. With German zest for organisation the framework of the Nazi movement was expanded and departmentalised until it had virtually become a ' shadow Government.'

It had its 'Cabinet,' consisting of Hitler and his intimate advisers; a political department, with sub- divisions gradually extending throughout the country; a Press and propaganda organisation; and bureaux for dealing with labour questions, agricultural interests, and financial matters.

There were technical corps for the Party's motor and aerial transport; supply-services which passed large contracts for uniforms, banners, and Party equipment; an insurance fund for the dependents of members killed or injured in clashes with the Communists. A legal branch conducted the law-suits in which the Party was frequently involved, and lastly, the defence departments of an actual Government were represented by the Storm Troopers and the 'Protection Guards' organised on military lines under their commanding officers, Ernst Röhm and Heinrich Himmler

The headquarters of the Nazi Party is the Brown House at Munich, designed by Hitler when still several years from power with all the spacious dignity of a Government building. In its entrance-hall hang, as sacred trophies, the flags which have been borne in famous street-fights. Most cherished of them all is the 'Blood Flag,' which was at the head of the Putsch procession on November 9, 1923. This banner has become the Nazi *palladium*. It accompanies Hitler on all State occasions, treated with the veneration due to a hallowed relic. At the Party congress in Nurnberg each September the Chancellor consecrates the standards of freshly formed local branches by a solemn ritual in which he grasps the folds of the 'Blood Flag' with one hand while laying the other upon the new colours.

An imposing council-room is one feature of the Brown House, and it also contains a vast card-index system recording the origin, character, and career of every member of the Party. Hitler's room in the building is simply decorated in the modern style. Its only ornaments consist of two portraits of Frederick the Great, together with his death-mask hanging on the wall, and a bronze bust of Mussolini mounted on a pedestal.

The experience of this vast organisation enabled Hitler, on reaching power, to lay his hands on tried and trusty Party members accustomed to administrative work. The well disciplined German bureaucracy was already there to continue its routine under these new Nazi chiefs as faithfully as for their predecessors.

But the progress of the Nazi Party, though swift and sure, was vigorously opposed. The Communists, especially in the large cities, where numerical strength made them aggressive, met the growth of the Hitler movement by a campaign of terror.

“Strike down the Nazi wherever you meet him!” raved the Red agitators.

Thousands of Nazis were injured every year in fights with Communists. The relief organisation of the Party recorded two hundred members as killed in clandestine civil war during the ten years before Hitler came to power.

Terror and counter-terror coupled themselves with Hitler's campaign for the conversion of Germany. Young Brown Shirts were often set upon at night by a rush of Reds. The corpse of a Nazi youth, stabbed or clubbed to death, would infuriate his comrades to make reprisals. Ferocity on both sides grew, until the Nazis became the Government and too dangerous to touch.

Some developments that seemed adverse to the Nazi movement were indirectly working in its favour.

There is a professor, since then a lecturer at Oxford, whose name has passed out of the public mind. Yet in 1930, as Chancellor of Germany, he unwittingly helped to prepare the way for Hitler.

Heinrich Brüning, a new leader of the Catholic Centre Party, was called by President Hindenburg to form the first Cabinet after the disappearance of the Social Democrats from the Government. His task proved even more difficult than it looked by reason of the world depression, which had begun in the previous autumn and was slowly strengthening its stranglehold on Europe.

Brüning's proposals for new taxation to deal with the financial emergency were thrown out, and he opened the way to Hitler's first big electoral success by asking Hindenburg to order new Reichstag elections for September 14, 1930.

The election campaign lasted eight weeks, and the number of meetings held by the Nazi Party was 34,000. Hitler himself toured the country day and night, in aeroplane and motor-car, demanding support with a passionate eloquence which roused his audiences to fanatical enthusiasm.

At this time his cause received a valuable and influential recruit in Dr Schacht, whose keen mind realised that the Nazis could not long be kept from office. As President of the Reichsbank he was able to obtain for them financial support from the big interests in Germany which, in the slump, were becoming increasingly scared of Bolshevism.

The results of the election of September, 1930, held at Brüning's request, raised the Nazis from a dozen seats in the Reichstag to 107, making them the second strongest Parliamentary party.

This result startled not only Germany but the world. Here was the writing on the wall. For more than a decade disunion and dejection had kept the German people weak. Now it had thrown up a new and powerful movement with an aggressively nationalist and constructive creed. In many European countries, and among the Left and Centre Parties of Germany, a shiver was caused by the realisation that the leader of the Brown Shirts, whose frenzied speeches and pseudo - military parades they had derided, would henceforth be a serious competitor for the Chancellorship.

Their alarm was increased when, ten days after the election, Hitler grimly defined his future governmental policy in addressing the Supreme Court at Leipzig, while giving evidence for three young Reichswehr officers charged with spreading Nazi propaganda in the army.

“ Within ten years,” he said, “ our movement has won a place as the second strongest political party in Germany. In three years it will be the strongest party, and in the ultimate future thirty-five millions of the forty million voters will support us.”

Then followed a note of menace: “ When I reach power,” he said, “ a Nazi Supreme Court will be established. Then will the crimes of November, 1918, be avenged. Then will heads roll in the sand! “

With this ruthless and self-confident party already the second in the Reichstag, the Chancellor, Dr Brüning, was soon forced by the financial crisis into a policy which prepared public opinion for acceptance of Nazi methods.

When the Darmstadt Bank failed on July 13, 1931, Brüning, though in career, character, and appearance he resembled a priest rather than a politician, proceeded to prove the efficiency of authoritarian methods as advocated by the Nazi Party.

He met the financial emergency with brief, peremptory decrees issued under a dormant clause of the Weimar constitution. These closed the Stock Exchange, suspended the banks,

limited cash withdrawals, prohibited exports of currency under pain of penal servitude, and restricted imports.

Such measures prolonged Dr Brüning's period of office, but they also revealed that the German people liked an energetic leader. The more vigorously Brüning acted, the more popular he became. With both Communists and Nazis against him, he won a two-thirds majority in a plebiscite on his policy held in Prussia. Had he been, like Hitler, in close touch with the people, Dr Brüning might have anticipated the Nazi *régime* by establishing a more moderate dictatorship of his own. But Brüning had no popular contacts. He worked always in a vacuum.

Though Hitler had done so well in the general election, the Chancellorship was still outside his grasp. Yet he was able to follow up his electoral success by standing for the supreme post of President of the Republic. Hindenburg's seven-year term expired in the spring of 1932, and to the surprise of Germany and indignation of the Marshal, Hitler came forward as a candidate. This office, if he could win it, would give him control of the Reichswehr and of Parliament.

He had first to overcome the disqualification of his Austrian nationality. This was easy, for the Nazis held majorities in several minor State legislatures of Germany, and, in Thuringia and Brunswick, Nazi Provincial Governments already held office. It was enough for Hitler to have himself appointed to the nominal office of attaché to the Berlin Legation of the State of Brunswick in order to become a German citizen.

He proved a formidable rival for the old Field-Marshal, who in the first presidential ballot failed to get the requisite absolute majority of votes. Hitler was second on the list of five candidates, with 11,000,000 to Hindenburg's 18,000,000.

In the second election Hindenburg increased his poll sufficiently to retain his office, but Hitler's vote also went up by 2,000,000.

This election campaign revealed Hitler's invincibility as a prophet of the multitude. His ceaseless journeys from meeting to meeting were always made by air, whatever the weather conditions.

Once he had a forced landing and arrived six and a half hours late at Stralsund to address an open-air gathering of 40,000 people at 2.30 A.M. instead of 8 P.M. It was a night of teeming rain, yet the whole vast audience, soaked to the skin, patiently waited for him. He spoke till 4 A.M., and the meeting, still enthusiastic, broke up just before dawn.



**The Führer after three-hour speech
during an election campaign**

Hitler's career nearly ended during another of these flights. But for one of those sudden inspirations which so often decide him, his fate might have been a lasting mystery, and the history of Europe have taken another course.

Hitler had set out in a large three-engined Junker machine hired from the *Lufthansa*, to fly from Stettin to Hamburg, westward along the Baltic coast. The weather grew thicker as the machine drew near to the peninsula of Schleswig-Holstein, separating the Baltic from the North Sea. In those days there was no directional wireless, except at the Tempelhof aerodrome in Berlin, and the pilot was flying by compass and dead-reckoning.

The time went on, and Hitler's staff, as they sat shivering behind him in the chilly cabin of the aeroplane, began to glance at their watches. Surely they must be getting near their journey's end. Outside, the damp, grey curtain of the Baltic fog hid everything beyond the wing-tips of the machine. Pilot and passengers alike strained their eyes in vain for some break in the cloud-bank, through which they might get a glimpse of the ground below, and take their bearings.

Still the aeroplane droned on through the baffling, leaden-coloured murk, and uneasiness at length became anxiety. Hitler looked restlessly at the gold watch that he carries on a black silk ribbon. At last he scribbled on a piece of paper, "How much more petrol?" and passed the message through the narrow doorway to the pilot.

It came back a moment later with the words "Enough for half an hour" written below. Then Hitler got up and put his head through the opening behind the helmeted and goggled figure at the steering-column.

"Where do you think we are?" he shouted amid the noise of the engines.

"We must be between Lübeck and Hamburg."

"I believe your compass is wrong. Turn round, and fly back along the course by which you've come. We may be flying straight out to sea."

The pilot turned to say something in reply.

"Do as I tell you at once," exclaimed Hitler. His tone enforced obedience. The pilot turned the machine, and for a quarter of an hour the blind-flying aeroplane with its nine passengers drove back in the reverse direction through the whirling mist, the pilot's eyes darting constantly from the sinking petrol-gauge to the grey curtain that hid sky and earth alike. In a few minutes more he would have to dive down through the clouds and perhaps hit the ground before seeing it.

But almost at the last moment there came a rift in the fog-blanket. Through it the machine sank slowly to within sight of the rain-soaked earth. A city lay near. It was Kiel, and, to his amazement, the pilot found himself approaching it from the direction of the sea.

With ten minutes' petrol still in its tanks the Junker landed. Until the pilot had turned right round on the course he was formerly following, the machine had been heading out north-eastward over the Baltic.

But for Hitler's sudden intuition that the compass was out of order, his aeroplane, like many before and since, would have come gliding down, with engines stopped for lack of gas, onto the sullen, hungry waves. The man who was already Germany's greatest political figure, and was soon to become the most prominent statesman in the world, together with eight of his closest helpers and comrades, would have vanished, leaving his fate to guesswork and his fellow-countrymen to other leadership.

Only nine months now separated Hitler from the Chancellorship. They were filled with complex personal and party intrigues, and efforts by the people round Hindenburg either to neutralise or utilise the rapidly expanding Nazi Party.

Hugenberg, the chief German newspaper and film magnate, who was Chairman of the National Party ; Seldte, a soda-water manufacturer who led an organisation called the 'Steel Helmets,' later merged into the Nazi Party; and the Junkers of the *Landbund* joined Hitler in forming an anti-Brüning coalition which took the name of 'National Opposition.'

Brüning, pressed by the Social Democrats, who were only supporting him because of their alarm about Hitler, asked Hindenburg to dissolve the Nazi Storm Troops, which had played a big part in the Presidential election. The old Marshal readily agreed, being full of resentment that Hitler had taken him to a second ballot. Brown Shirts accordingly disappeared from the streets. The Munich Brown House was occupied by police. The use of uniforms, banners, and marches was prohibited.

If Hindenburg and Brüning had held together, the Nazis would have taken longer to reach power, for Hitler still held to absolute legality in his campaign. But Brüning brought about his own downfall by quarrelling with the President.

The Chancellor had a scheme for the splitting up of large and neglected estates, and the settlement of unemployed upon the land. Such a policy aroused the indignation of the East Prussian Junkers, the class to which Hindenburg himself belonged. With the co-operation of rich industrialists, these landowners had recently presented him with his family's old property in East Prussia, Schloss Neudeck.

Spoilt by lavish grants from earlier administrations out of agricultural relief-funds known as 'Help for the East,' the Junkers furiously resented the Chancellor's proposals to expropriate neglected lands. They denounced Brüning to Hindenburg as an 'agrarian Bolshevik.'

Hindenburg gave way to their pressure and demanded his resignation. Brüning was unable to resist. He could count on a safe majority in the Reichstag, but his position was a purely Parliamentary one, with no organised support in the country. Accordingly, on May 30, 1932, he resigned, and so vanished from the German political scene, leaving Hitler a long stride nearer to his goal as ruler of Germany.

After Brüning's fall, Hitler's ultimate succession to the Chancellorship appeared a certainty to every German except one. But that one was the eighty-three-year-old President Hindenburg, from whom, under the constitution, the call to office would need to come.

In Marshal Hindenburg's massive grey head lingered the class-prejudices of a Germany that had gone. He could not bring himself to regard this humble ex-corporal of Austrian origin, who had so surprisingly become a great national leader, as suitable for the dignity next below his own.

In the midst of the flood of fierce political passions whose currents and counter-currents surged to and fro, the old Marshal stood like a rugged rock, apparently unconscious of the forces seething around him.

His only close associates were his son, Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg, and his secretary, Herr Otto von Meissner. These served as channels of communication between the outside world and the aged President, and party-leaders could never be sure how much of what they heard from them represented the Marshal's own mind.

On his rare appearances in public, with wrinkled hands folded on his crutch-stick, the large square head looking as though carved in granite, and the stern, heavily hooded eyes showing no perception of his surroundings, he gave the impression of a national monument rather than a human being.

Hitler had met Hindenburg for the first time early in 1932. The interview originated with General von Schleicher, a senior official of the Reichswehr Ministry who had a strong taste for political intrigue, and held the post of Defence Minister.

During the last days of Brüning's Government, General Schleicher, who enjoyed the Marshal's confidence, had taken up the *rôle* of Cabinet-maker. Knowing that Hindenburg would not consider Hitler for the Chancellorship, he recommended for that office Colonel Franz von Papen, a politically unknown but rich ex-soldier and diplomat, whose 'light-cavalry manners' - as an elegant military bearing is termed in Germany - were likely to be congenial to the President's prejudices for gentlemen in high office.

Schleicher's next step was to persuade Hitler to give the support of the Nazi Party to this proposed new Government. The inducement he offered was that von Papen would cancel the suppression of the public activities of the Brown Shirts which Hindenburg, at Brüning's request, had imposed.

In the interest of these plans, Schleicher arranged for Hitler to be received privately by the President at his Palace in Berlin.

Hitler who was accompanied by his lieutenants, Röhm and Goering, promised his support to Papen, but made it clear that he expected before long to be called to the Chancellorship himself. He addressed the old Marshal in a long harangue on existing political conditions, to which the President listened with obvious impatience.

“ A curious fellow, that Bohemian corporal you sent me!” grumbled Hindenburg to Schleicher afterwards. “ He apparently thinks he should be Chancellor of Germany! Humph! Minister of Posts and Telegraphs is about his level ! “

To this stiff and dignified old veteran the tense, high-strung temperament of Adolf Hitler was bound to be antipathetic and incomprehensible. Such a type of personality lay outside the limited range of his experience. Towards von Papen the President could adopt the easy manners of an elderly colonel with a favourite young subaltern. Von Schleicher, too, was typical of the more politically minded General Staff officer. Even Dr Brüning, with his precise, professional manner, was a character familiar to any German of the older generation.

But this prophet of the German masses; this demagogue who could rouse vast audiences of phlegmatic Germans to frantic enthusiasm; this corporal who had been floundering in the Flanders mud when the old Marshal was Commander-in-Chief appeared to President Hindenburg a strange phenomenon, to be regarded with the suspicion that he felt towards so many features of the new Germany into which his length of years had carried him.

Von Papen thus succeeded Brüning as Chancellor. General von Schleicher remained Minister of Defence.

The other members of the Cabinet were noblemen or big landowners. The Herrenklub, to which they all belonged, became for the moment the Carlton Club of Germany. To an onlooker it might have seemed that the clever Junkers had used the Nazi movement for their own purposes and that the 'Third Reich,' of which Hitler at his trial in 1923 had called himself 'the drummer,' would take the form of a restoration of the old governing class in Germany.

But Hitler knew that the tide was rising beneath him. He was content to allow the aristocrats to enjoy their brief Indian summer of authority provided he could get his Brown Shirts onto the streets again. He needed them for the general election which was close ahead, since the Chancellor von Papen, unable to count on a majority in the Reichstag, had persuaded Hindenburg to dissolve it.

And meanwhile von Papen proceeded to set a precedent, just as Brüning had done, which was to smooth the path for a future Nazi *régime*. The Provincial Government of Prussia was Socialist. Papen determined to turn it out and to transfer its authority to the Central Government. This was a big step towards that unification of the Reich which was one of Hitler's aims, for Prussia contained two-thirds of the population of Germany.

It might have been a risky enterprise, for the Socialists were still the largest party in the country. Like the Nazis, they had their own uniformed organization, the *Reichsbanner*. The Socialist Ministers of Prussia, further-more, controlled its highly disciplined police force, 60,000 strong. Had they mobilised these in their defence, and called out the trade unions, the Communists, and the gangsters of the 'Red Front,' in the way that, twelve years before, the German Social-Democrat Government had resisted the Kapp Putsch by proclaiming a General Strike, they might have put up a formidable resistance to von Papen's plan of suppression. It would then have rested with the Reichswehr to settle whether Right or Left should prevail in Germany - and the Reichswehr had always been a 'lone wolf,' owning no more than professional allegiance to any politician.

The Prussian Socialist Cabinet had not the courage to put their fate to the test. They went quietly, and with their going the last Socialist flag in Germany was hauled down.

Throughout the country the Nazis were now carrying everything before them. Provincial Governments saw their local legislatures invaded by a steadily increasing number of successful Brown Shirt candidates.

The new Reichstag elections of July 31, 1932, raised the Party to uncontested primacy. Two hundred and thirty seats fell to the Nazis, representing nearly 14,000,000 votes. The Brown Shirts became stronger than their old enemies, the Social Democrats and Communists, together.

Hitler's policy of winning power by legal means had been fully justified by its results. His conquest of a national majority now entitled him to expect the offer of the Chancellorship.

Papen and Schleicher were not so disposed to make way for Hitler as they had been to avail themselves of his support. Schleicher tried to compromise by suggesting the Vice-Chancellorship. The men round the President were getting scared of this new political force. Hitler was no ordinary Party-leader. He had at his command hundreds of thousands of young Storm Troopers, the tramp of whose heavy boots shook the streets of every German town, and whose mass-meetings with their banners, bands, and discipline were the most impressive spectacles that Berlin had seen since the days of 'Kaiser-parades.'

Once in the Chancellorship, it would be hard to get him out. The best plan seemed to be to try to lure him into the second place in a Coalition Government where he would be under authority and have colleagues to put a brake on his activities.

A second interview with Marshal Hindenburg was accordingly arranged, at which the President offered Hitler the Vice-Chancellorship in a new van Papen Cabinet. The Nazi leader replied that he was entitled to the Chancellorship on the same basis as that on which Mussolini had formed his original Government, by including representatives of other Parties.

Hindenburg refused to consider this suggestion. He was not prepared he said, to hand over Germany to the Brown Shirts. In bitter resentment Hitler retired to his villa at Berchtesgaden.

It was a critical moment for his cause. "Nothing is more difficult," Goebbels wrote in his diary on that day," than to tell an army which believes itself victorious that success has been snatched away from it."

Then began the most trying six months that the Nazi movement had known since its refounding seven years earlier after the failure of the Munich Putsch.

It had grown into a huge organisation, and, like all such, had to keep up its development or else decline. Every city in Germany now had its 'Brown House,' which was the local centre of a complex network of Nazi activities. Aeroplanes, motor-cars, newspapers, propaganda-bureaux, and paid staffs of speakers needed a constant flow of funds to maintain their activities. For the Nazi Party had, in fact, become a state within the State-without as yet possessing Governmental revenue resources.

To have won a sweeping electoral victory and yet be left outside the Government was a situation which might well look like failure to the rank and file who had no acquaintance with the vagaries of high politics.

Of mass-movements it is especially true that nothing succeeds like success. Directly the sequence of successes stopped, subscriptions to the Party funds began to slump.

The autumn and early winter of 1932 were a period of increasing depression. The Party revenged itself upon the von Papen Government by carrying a huge vote of no confidence against it in the Reichstag, but this only reacted on itself, for the Reichstag was once more dissolved, and in the next election, on November 6, 1932, Hitler's Parliamentary representation fell by 34 seats, with a loss of two million votes in the country. In disconcerting contrast, the Communist deputies increased from 89 to 100.

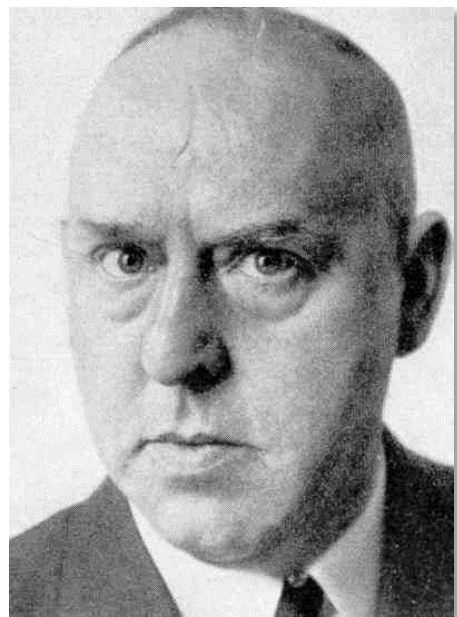
To many even inside the Party it seemed that this reverse was the beginning or the end of the Nazi movement. "The originally strong confidence of the Party has given way to a grey depression," records Dr Goebbels four days after the election. "Everywhere trouble, conflicts, dissensions. The financial situation of the Berlin organisation hopeless. Nothing but falling off of subscriptions – debts -obligations-and not the slightest possibility of raising any substantial sum of money after such a reverse."

In the midst of this unhealthy situation, discord began to develop within the movement.

As far back as 1926 Hitler and Gregor Strasser had had an open difference of opinion as to what attitude should be adopted towards the Government's proposal to restore to the dethroned German princes their nationalised property.

To settle the quarrel, Hitler called a meeting of the Party. Strasser was defeated and sank to minor importance in its councils, though his eloquence and personality still gave him influence over those of its rank and file who shared his Socialist leanings.

Amid the gloom which descended upon the movement after its set-back at the elections of



Gregor Strasser

November, 1932, Strasser began to grow prominent again.

He had never ceased to resent his eclipse of six years before and may have seen in this decline of the Party fortunes a chance to reassert himself. A Bavarian, born in 1892, Gregor Strasser during the war had been commissioned from the ranks and decorated for valour. By trade he was a druggist. He had tried to help in the Munich Putsch, though the Storm Troopers with whom he hurried in from Landshut did not arrive until after the *coup d'etat* was over.

In this man General Schleicher began to see a possible substitute for Hitler.

Papen, unable to obtain Reichstag support, resigned on November 17. Hindenburg reluctantly agreed that if Hitler could form an alliance with the Nationalist and Centre Parties, so as to get a majority, he would accept him as Chancellor. The old President, or his advisers, knew that this would be impossible, as proved to be the case. Hitler then made a counter-proposal. He would take the Chancellorship without Parliamentary support, if Hindenburg would allow him to govern by decree. But that would have meant handing over Germany to unrestricted Nazi control, and Hindenburg opposed to such a course.

The old President had still another card to play. On November 26 he asked Schleicher to form a Government. It was for this contingency that this crafty general had been preparing, and he had a new scheme ready to obtain the Nazi support which Hitler's refusal to serve except as Chancellor had hitherto withheld. Schleicher's plan was to play off Strasser against Hitler. He offered Strasser the Vice-Chancellorship under himself, and took him to see Hindenburg.

In a subsequent account of their conversation, Strasser alleged that the old President assured him he would never "make the Bohemian corporal Chancellor of Germany." Schleicher had no doubt represented to Strasser that Hitler was wrecking the prospects of the Nazi Party by his refusal to take office except on his own terms and suggested that Strasser might check discouragement and decline in the movement by substituting himself for his leader.

'When this scheme became known, Hitler was furious. He denounced Strasser as a traitor, expelled him from the Party, and required all Nazi members in the Reichstag to take a new oath of allegiance to himself.

Protesting that he had never intended disloyalty either to leader or movement, Gregor Strasser resigned. Schleicher formed a precarious Cabinet without him.

But the peril of disruption was only increased by Strasser's going. How many adherents of the Party, especially in Berlin, would stand by the banished apostle? Those who did, and are now in exile, still form a group in Czechoslovakia known as the 'Black Nazis.'

The risk of a secession of Strasser's supporters in the Party completed the gloom of this darkest hour before the dawn of its triumph, which was so close at hand. Goebbels describes how Hitler paced up and down his room in the Kaiserhof, exclaiming at one moment: "If the Party splits, I will end it all inside three minutes with a pistol!" A few weeks afterwards he said, "There have been two miracles in my life. Twice have I been face to face with disaster—after the Munich Putsch when I was in gaol isolated, defeated, and made to look ridiculous; and on the very eve of becoming Chancellor, when I seemed about to founder in sight of port, swamped by intrigues, financial difficulties, and the dead-weight of twelve million people who swung first one way and then another. Both times God saved me."

But the dreaded split in the Party did not occur. Hitler's prestige and eloquence prevailed over the disaffected, and convinced them that Strasser had tried to betray their cause. Eighteen months later he was to pay the death-penalty for his political ambitions in the Nazi 'purge' of June 30, 1934.

To provide a diversion from these internal quarrels and relieve his overstrained nerves, Hitler flung himself into a local election campaign in the tiny province of Lippe, where the Nazi candidates gained a success which was some set-off to the disasters of the preceding weeks.

At this difficult moment von Papen returned to the picture. He was convinced that his fall from the Chancellorship was due to Schleicher's scheming, and wanted revenge. This was becoming easier of attainment since Schleicher had quarrelled with Hindenburg's Junker friends by refusing their demands for new protective duties on food-stuffs.

Papen was still high in Hindenburg's favour, and to undo Schleicher he proposed to the President a new Cabinet combination. It would not be so dangerous after all, he argued, to let Hitler become Chancellor if he, von Papen, acted as Vice-Chancellor. Hindenburg could rely on him to see that such a Government was held back from extreme courses.

Junker denunciations of Schleicher inclined the President to listen. He had certainly said in the past that he would never have Hitler as German Chancellor, but this would be no more than a nominal Chancellorship. The Nazi leader could do no harm surrounded by Ministers whom Hindenburg could trust. It was accordingly agreed that Hitler should become Chancellor, with only two Nazi colleagues - Goering at the Air Ministry, which, since Germany then possessed no Air Force, was a civilian department, and Frick, the former police official who had helped in the Munich Putsch, as Minister of the Interior, another minor post, since German internal affairs were still under twenty-eight provincial Governments.

But it was no good von Papen backing up the Nazis if they could not keep their organisation going. Money must be obtained at all costs. Papen used his high social connections in the Rhineland to get it. On January 4, 1933, he brought Hitler to see the great German banker, Baron van Schröder, in Cologne. From this meeting resulted a huge subscription to the Nazi funds from the industrial magnates of the Rhineland. At one stroke the financial gloom that had paralysed the Party's activities was lifted.

Schleicher's agents reported this bargain to him. They even produced a photograph of Hitler and Papen leaving von Schröder's house. Schleicher abused von Papen violently by telephone. He began to realise the dangerous combination forming against him. His days indeed were numbered. He tried to persuade the President to dissolve the Reichstag. But against both Junkers and Nazis, supported by the President himself, the Chancellor could not hope to prevail. Hindenburg's attitude became steadily more hostile. At length, on January 28, the President demanded that Schleicher should drop his anti-Junker legislation. Schleicher was forced to offer his resignation.

That was on a Saturday. For a few wild moments Schleicher contemplated resistance by force. He would call on the trade unions for a general strike. He would bring the Potsdam garrison to occupy Berlin in support of the Government. But at eleven o'clock on Monday morning, January 30, 1933, Hitler was offered the Chancellorship by President Hindenburg. The long campaign of the Nazi Party had triumphed.



**The new Reich chancellor with the ministers Frick and Göring
(Berlin, 30 January 1933)**

CHAPTER VI

THE 'RÉGIME' AND ITS RECORD

HITLER'S rule has surrounded Germany with a veil of mystery. Through this curtain the world-puzzled, impressed, and increasingly alarmed-has looked on at a series of strange events. Some of these have been administrative achievements of great benefit to the German people and high credit to Nazi efficiency; others have been rigorous acts of repression or party discipline.

All have been marked by the same secrecy of conception and swiftness of execution. Whereas in democratic countries changes in domestic or foreign policies are publicly defined and debated in advance, no one in Nazi Germany, with the exception of the small circle in the Chancellor's confidence, hears anything of any Governmental measure until it is an accomplished fact.

This was not the kind of Government that Hindenburg had contemplated when he agreed to Hitler becoming Chancellor with von Papen as mentor at his elbow.

Both the President and von Papen had underestimated the dynamic energy and determination of the Nazi Party. Like the cuckoo, it grew so fast and pushed so hard that the other occupiers of the Cabinet nest were soon ejected.

The two ministerial posts which Hindenburg had conceded to Goering and Frick proved, thanks to the energy of their occupants, to be the key-positions of the Government. Goering, who combined with his Air Ministry the post of Prussian Minister of the Interior, immediately set himself to 'Nazify' the Prussian police, and by a series of sharp orders he warned them to be ruthless in the suppression of any resistance to Government policy. Frick undertook what was euphemistically called the 'co-ordination' of the Civil Service, which meant that every State official of whose sympathies the Nazis were not certain lost his post.

An emergency decree gave the Government powers to suppress public meetings and newspapers. The Germans were made to feel the firm hand of their new master. Being Germans, they liked it, for, in Hitler's own words: "The people would rather be commanded than courted."

A new Reichstag election had been fixed for March 5. While it was still in preparation the world was startled by that mysterious event, the Reichstag fire. On the evening of February 27, 1933, passers-by saw flames through the windows of the domed Reichstag building which stands beside the Tiergarten. Called at once, the police found the main Parliament-chamber in flames at many points. The blaze spread so quickly that the Fire Brigade could do little but keep it to the centre of the building. Meanwhile, there had been arrested, lurking in a corridor, a young man, wearing only trousers and shoes, who had apparently torn his shirt to pieces to help in starting the conflagration. He proved to be a working-class Dutchman, carrying a passport in the name of Van der Lubbe, and confessed that he had set fire to the building.

On the following day a decree was issued "for the protection of the nation from the Communist peril." It practically imposed martial law on Germany. Civil liberties were suspended. The Storm Troopers were given authority as special constables to arrest people suspected of Communism, for the Government announced the discovery of plans for a Communist insurrection which was to have followed upon the Reichstag fire.

The trial followed, in the Supreme Court of Germany, of five men accused of complicity in the fire. They were Van der Lubbe, the young Dutchman, who, by the time he appeared in court, had apparently become a dribbling idiot, incapable of giving intelligible evidence; Ernst Torgler, leader of the Parliamentary Communist Party, who had been in the Reichstag an hour before the alarm was given; two obscure Bulgarian Communists; and another, Dimitroff, whose defiant bearing made him conspicuous at the trial.

After eight months of hearings and adjournments, only Van der Lubbe was convicted. He received the death-sentence and was beheaded. The other four, though acquitted, were detained in custody as Communists, until the private assurance conveyed to Hitler from England that Dimitroff's release would bring about an improvement in British feeling towards Germany led the Chancellor to announce his intention to release him in an interview with myself in February, 1934. With his two Bulgarian fellow prisoners, Dimitroff was accordingly deported by aeroplane to Russia, where, as Secretary of the Third International, he has since become the most powerful enemy of the Nazi Party in the world.

The General Election on March 5, if not the over-whelming Nazi success that subsequent plebiscites have been, nevertheless gave Hitler and his Nationalist allies a 52 per cent. majority in the Reichstag. With 288 seats, representing seventeen and a quarter million votes in the country, the Nazis themselves made up 44 per cent. of the new House. They had the

support of 52 Nationalist and Stahlhelm members, who still followed their respective leaders - Hugenberg and Seldte, both, for the present, colleagues of Hitler's in the new Ministry.

This Reichstag victory was the fulfilment of Hitler's old purpose of attaining power by legal means. To this he had pledged himself - but he had also pledged himself, when once invested with national authority, to abolish Parliamentary government and democratic methods altogether, and to replace them by that 'principle of leadership' which is the fundamental basis of the Nazi system.

This process of *Gleichschaltung*, or 'unification,' was taken in hand immediately.

The Nazi Government first proclaimed its goodwill towards the German workers by converting the First of May, hitherto a Red festival, into a National Labour Day. The Party's genius for stagecraft and 'atmosphere' transformed this annual demonstration, which had always been an occasion of class-riots, into a gigantic 'camp-meeting' of patriotic celebration. To a vast concourse on the Tempelhofer Feld Hitler proclaimed himself sole guardian of the interests of all classes of the nation, and made an impassioned appeal for German unity.



**The Führer speaks to the German workers
(1 May 1933)**

His voice rang out through the loud-speakers and over the wireless to the entire country:

“ Germans! You are not second-rate, though the world may declare it so a thousand times! You are not a second-class and inferior nation! Awake to the realisation of your own importance! Remember your glorious past and what your fathers, yes, and you yourselves have achieved! Forget the past fourteen years of decadence! Think only of the two thousand years of German history! You will again be a mighty nation if you only have the will to be so ! “

Effective as these stirring sentiments had been when Hitler was but the leader of one party among many, their potency was vastly increased when he uttered them as head of the German Government. Henceforth he not only had the will, but the power, to rehabilitate Germany.

Germans of every class suddenly realised that the consequences of defeat need not be eternal. The flame of rekindled patriotism resembled those religious revivals that sometimes sweep Great Britain and the United States, making converts of the most unpromising material.

To men in a state of ecstasy, whether religious or political, criticism of their prophet seems sacrilege, and they approve the utmost severity in the suppression of heresy.

Such feelings are often strongest among the most recent converts to the faith. There is no ground for surprise in the fact that the German nation readily accepted the rigorous discipline which the Nazi *régime* imposed. If personal restraint was the price of national recovery, they were prepared to pay it.

The world outside failed to realise that Left-Wing opposition was not only driven underground, but to a large extent converted.

Though few foreigners believed it at the time, the true answer to the question, "What has become of the 6,000,000 German Communists who voted at the General Election two months before Hitler came to power?" was that most of them had gone over to the Nazis.

This explains the ease with which the German Trade Unions and the Social Democratic Party were suppressed and their property confiscated. In July, 1933, the same fate befell the Catholic Centre Party, with the acquiescence of the Vatican, which had already signed a Concordat with the Nazi Government.

The Nationalist and Stahlhelm organizations were also eventually 'co-ordinated' with the Nazi Party, and Hugenberg, the leader of the former, resigned from the Cabinet. The Stahlhelm was found to have become a refuge for secretly hostile elements which sought safety in the ranks of this war-veterans' association. On its dissolution the suspects were weeded out and the reliable members enrolled in the Nazi Party.

Less than six months after Hitler had come to power with only two Nazi colleagues in the Government, he had filled eight of the fourteen ministerial posts with his own men. As for the remaining six - best known of whom were von Papen, Vice-Chancellor; Baron von Neurath, Foreign Minister; and General von Blomberg, Minister of Defence - these, although not members of his Party, were allies upon whom he could rely.

On July 14, 1933, the Nazi Cabinet proclaimed the suppression of all political parties except the National Socialists in the following terms :

" The National Socialist German Workers' Party is the only political party in Germany. Whoever undertakes to maintain the organisation of another political party or to form a new political party is to be punished with imprisonment. "

The only vestige of popular control left to the country was embodied in the phrase :

"The National Cabinet may question the people by means of a referendum as to whether or not it approves of a measure planned by the National Cabinet."

This completed the Nazi grip on Germany. Sixty-five million people, perhaps the best-disciplined and most industrious in the world, with great scientific genius, splendid industrial equipment, rich agricultural resources, and a central position in the heart of Europe, were henceforth under one dominant will. Hitler's Ministers were not colleagues sharing his responsibility, but a General Staff to execute his orders. He set himself, by national consent, to rule Germany with an authority that England has not known since the days of Elizabeth.

The Nazi Government was meanwhile building as fast as it threw down. The Provincial Governments which administered the former States of the German Empire whose Princes had been expelled in the revolution of November, 1918, were abolished. Germany was divided into eleven new provinces, each under a governor responsible to the Chancellor alone.

To replace the Trade Unions and Employers' Associations a 'German Labour Front' was created, uniting employers and workers, under the 'leader principle,' in the service of the State.

Grafted on to the Labour Front is a system for organising the leisure of the workers, adapted by the German Minister of Labour, Dr Ley, from Mussolini's invention of the *Dopolavoro*. It is called *Kraft durch Freude* ('Strength through Joy'), and has done much to make the *régime* popular with the younger German workers. They work harder and get less than corresponding grades in Britain, but as regards sport and sensible amusements much more is done for them. The German worker has no money to spend on such distractions as football-pools, cinemas, betting, or 'going to the dogs,' but in all the essentials of life he is as well off as his better-paid British colleague.

The 350,000 members of the *Kraft durch Freude* organisation travel each summer at nominal railway-fares to pleasure-resorts; 30,000 beds are provided for their lodgings and 20,000 more on the Baltic island of Rugen, where a mile of sea-front is covered by a continuous stretch of holiday-barracks, with sun-balconies and bathing-piers. Thousands chosen by the vote of their comrades are sent on summer-cruises to Lisbon and Madeira in a fleet of six ships kept for this purpose. In winter these ships are used to bring home for cheap holidays Germans living abroad.

At the winter-sport hostels of the *Kraft durch Freude* movement 25,000 young people are taught ski-running in the mountains. Any youth or girl who shows promise in any branch of athletics is given the equipment and opportunity to develop it.

The sporting-department of the movement has over 3,000,000 members. Young people who pass a rather stiff test in athletics get a bronze badge, which they wear with pride. There are gold and silver ones for older people who can reach the same standard. The Duchess of Brunswick, formerly Princess Victoria Luise, daughter of the ex-Kaiser, showed me with much satisfaction the women's golden emblem that she had won by passing the test after the age of forty.

State machinery like that for industrial workers was used to reorganise agriculture. Its name is the *Reichs- nährstand*, or 'National Food Estate.'

This fixes prices and settles the quantity and kind of crops that each farmer is to sow. To keep people on the land, the Government passed, on September 20, 1933, an 'Hereditary Farm Property Act.' It protects holdings up to 300 acres from encumbrance. Such farms cannot be sold, mortgaged, or seized for debt. On the death of a holder his property passes intact to his nearest male relative. The only person that can interfere with the owner is the State. If he farms badly, it hands his farm over to his next heir.

One million German yeomen are under this semi- feudal system, with the Government as their direct over- lord. Its effect has been to nationalise the country's food-supply.

The far-sighted national policy of the Nazi *régime* is making Germany steadily more independent of imported food. Whereas in Britain agriculture is allowed to remain depressed when other industries are thriving, the farmers of Germany are given that security of tenure and profit to which they are entitled by their services to the community.

The derelict, thistle-studded, water-logged fields of the British countryside have no counterpart in Germany, where the soil is regarded as a national treasure to be used to the utmost advantage.

If natural deficiencies make it impossible to cultivate certain areas profitably, the 300,000 young men in the German Labour Camps are available to remedy the defect. A farmer whose land requires special drainage or reclamation, a land-owner who wants a dam built to improve the productive capacity of his property, or a village needing a new cattle-pond can apply to the local authorities of the Ministry of Labour, and, if the request is approved, will be supplied with a party of sturdy young men who throw themselves into the required work with the enthusiasm of colonial pioneers.

The main cost of their services is a State charge, but the cultivator or community contributes a sum proportionate to the resulting benefits.

This wise agricultural policy has effects extending far beyond the farming-industry. It provides the whole nation with fresh, home-grown food, far greater in nourishment-value than the imported foodstuffs upon which the majority of the population of Great Britain depend.

In Germany, industries have ceased to be of the competitive, unorganised British type. Every German producer, from the largest employer to the humblest workman, is taught to feel that he is a unit in an enterprise of public utility, and that his personal interests are naturally sub-ordinate to those of the country as a whole.

Personal liberty of action generally means a lot of muddle, which under a system of authority is avoided. The difference between Germany and the democratic countries is like that between a professional and an amateur football side. The amateurs can please themselves, but the professionals have the satisfaction of playing better football.

'Team-work' in national affairs receives much lip-service Britain, yet the country remains highly individualist. The Nazis not only preach this ideal, but achieve it, in the spirit of their motto *Gemeinschaft und Dienst* ('Fellowship and Service').

Membership of their highly trained team means much hard work, but there is a great deal of pleasure in it as well. The boys and girls and young men and women of Germany have a better time than they would get in any other country unless they belonged to wealthy families. Under Nazi rule they live the same life and do the same things whether their parents are rich or poor.

The great 'Hitler Youth' camps held all over the country in the summer are unrivalled in the world as displays of sturdy, high-spirited, happy youth. Every sort of sport is provided for these fortunate youngsters, with instruction in the most varied accomplishments, from gliding and boat-sailing to riding and repairing a motor-car.

Hitler refuses to put arms in the hands of boys, as Mussolini does. Until a German youth joins the Army, his instructors concentrate on his physical development. The Labour Camps, in which every young German must spend six months, are a national university of comradeship, where all classes mingle and learn by experience that manual labour has a dignity of its own.

These institutions may not all be so completely efficient as they look on paper, but in every aspect of the German nation's life the constructive influence of the Nazi *régime* is seen, turning into reality ideals that elsewhere remain the dreams of social reformers. Typical of its activities is the campaign called *Schönheit der Arbeit*, a scheme for creating garden-cities and converting industrial plants from squalor to smartness. Even the sale of vulgarly comic picture-postcards and the use of ugly posters have been forbidden.

German workers are encouraged to put out all that is in them by the organisation of championships of skill, local and national. This *Reichsberufswettkampf* brings into friendly competition, each in his own craft, barbers and bootmakers, painters and plumbers, carpenters

and coal- miners - the members of every calling, in fact, where it is possible to measure individual skill.

Another undertaking of the Nazi administration is the provision of semi-agricultural settlements, called *Heimstädte*, for industrial workers. These are villages built on the outskirts of industrial towns where each artisan's house is surrounded by a large vegetable-garden so that he can supply his own family's needs. At its outset this scheme was intended to deal with the housing-needs of ten million people.

These are some of the constructive achievements by which the Nazi Government has consolidated its position in Germany. Though such wide-sweeping changes were imposed by authority, the German people were delighted with them, and felt that they were making a brave new Fatherland. The only thing like it in British experience is the 'doing-my-bit' spirit at the start of the Great War.

To law-abiding citizens the Nazi Government brought public order, political peace, more work, better living- conditions, and the promise, since fulfilled, to make Germany once more a great nation.

Upon the people who opposed, or looked like opposing, its plans, it laid a heavy hand.

Humanity is a characteristic that largely depends on circumstances. The jockey who pats his horse in the paddock may lash him in a hard finish. The rulers of Germany were stern because they believed the fate of their country was at stake.

If they failed, the gates would be open wide to Bolshevism - the same bloodthirsty Bolshevism which had ravaged and 'liquidated' in Russia, tortured and massacred in Hungary, and has added to its record of horror in Spain. Many parts of Germany knew by grim experience how savage the Reds can be.

Nazis believe that, but for Hitler, Communism would have swept over Germany, and Bolshevik rule would have reached from the Amur River to the Rhine.

“ It is we National Socialists,” say the Nazi leaders, “ who saved Britain from having the Soviets on her doorstep - if not across it - just as the Japanese are keeping the Bolsheviks from pressing down towards India.”

To Hitler Bolshevism is political leprosy. He believes that only constant vigilance will stop it from spreading over Europe.

His opinion on this point is based on the fact that he foresaw the outburst of Bolshevik fury in Spain which led to the wholesale murder of priests, nuns, and 'bourgeois' at the beginning of the Civil War. Hitler looks on the British Government and people as living in a fools' paradise.

“ The day may yet come,” he said once to me, “ when Britain will thank God that Germany has a strong army to defend Europe against Soviet Russia.”

When the Nazi leaders took up the task of setting Germany on her feet again, they determined to subdue the hostile elements in the country that might otherwise have been a menace in their rear. The methods by which they did so were vigorous because their adversaries were ruthless and treacherous.

Nor are the Germans the only nation to use strong measures. The American police handle strikers and prisoners pretty roughly. The Italian 'pacification' of Libya was marked by grim

severity. Even the pleasant-mannered Austrians put down a Communist rising in Vienna at a cost of 1500 killed and 4000 to 5000 wounded, after which the ringleader, seriously injured, was carried on a stretcher to the scaffold. As Hitler once pointed out to me, if casualties in the struggle between Nazis and Communists had been on the same scale of proportion to population, the total in Germany would have reached 18,000 dead and 50,000 wounded. As a matter of fact, there were more people killed during the revolution in Ireland than in Germany, which has twenty times as many inhabitants.

Yet had the struggle gone the other way and the Bolsheviks come out on top, German 'bourgeois,' clergy, and officers would have been slaughtered as freely as in Russia or Red Spain.

The Nazis won through to power at small cost in human life and suffering. Not more than five or six hundred men were killed in a dozen years, and for every prisoner sent to a concentration-camp, the Bolsheviks condemned, and are still condemning, a dozen to slow death in the Arctic swamps.

Great capital has been made by the enemies of Germany out of the concentration-camps, just as it was made by the enemies of Britain out of alleged abuses in the concentration-camps in South Africa during the Boer War. In both cases gross and reckless exaggerations were made. That there would have been far more cruelty in Germany if the Communists had been the guardians instead of the inmates of the concentration-camps is proved by the horrors that went on wherever Bolsheviks have gained the upper hand.

To blacken the whole Nazi *régime* because a few of its subordinates may have abused their powers is as unfair as it would be to condemn the Government of the United States for the brutalities of some warder in charge of a chain-gang in the mountains of West Virginia.

A quarrel with the Jews is so sure a way of making enemies throughout the world that the Nazis must have counted the cost of their anti-Semite policy before they put it into force.

Their attitude is based on the conception that the German nation is in a state of siege.

In setting out to smash the Peace Treaty, the Nazis, like men going into battle, declared that "he who is not with us is against us."

Only a racially pure German, they asserted, was worthy to share in the fight for national freedom.

Anti-Jewish prejudice was strengthened by the part played by that race in the Communist uprisings which did much to complete the disasters of the War.

In pre-War Germany Jewish blood was little disadvantage. Jews could not become officers, but all other professions were open to them, and rich Jews like Ballin, the Hamburg shipowner, were close friends even of the Kaiser.

But in the confusion after the War, a fresh Jewish invasion of Germany took place. It came from Poland and Galicia.

The cause of this migration was the collapse of German currency, which gave the Jews of neighbouring countries a chance after their own heart to make big profits.

Anyone coming to Germany at that time with foreign funds could buy up businesses, houses, and other properties at fantastically low cost. The Jew who left Lemberg or Cracow with the equivalent of a few hundred pounds found himself, on reaching Berlin, a capitalist with the financial resources required to give his business ability full scope.

Such incursions were made easier by the fact that the Yiddish tongue of Polish and Galician Jews is a German dialect. Moreover, under the Republic, passport regulations and police registration were mere formalities.

From the native German standpoint this immigration was a danger to national culture, for foreign Jews brought with them no standards but those of cosmopolitan materialism.

And while these meaner elements of the Jewish race were exploiting German depression, the intelligentsia of the same stock was getting a stranglehold on the learned professions.

Although the statistics of synagogue membership showed the Jews as forming only 1 per cent. of the total population of Germany, 45 per cent. of the professors of the Berlin Faculty of Medicine were Jews when Hitler came to power, and the Jewish practitioners in the three chief municipal hospitals of Moabit, Friedrichshain, and Neukölln are recorded to have formed 56, 63, and 67 per cent. respectively of the whole staff. Jewish doctors and surgeons were numerous even in Catholic hospitals. Under the Republic the public-relations officials in three of the principal German Ministries. were Jews.

The proportion of Jewish lawyers varied from 29 per cent. at Dortmund to 64 per cent. at Frankfurt, 66 per cent. in Berlin, and 67 per cent. at Breslau. Jews dominated the Berlin Stock Exchange. Of 234 theatrical managers in Germany, 50.4 per cent. were Jews, and in the capital Jewish predominance was four out of five. The ready-made clothing and multiple-store business of Germany was practically a Hebrew monopoly. Most intolerable of all from the Nazi point of view was the fact that the popular Press and publishing-business were largely staffed and controlled by Jews, with the two outstanding concerns of Ullstein and Rudolf Mosse at their heads.

Since, according to Hitler's public speeches, 98 per cent. of the posts of the Soviet Government are held by Jews, the Nazis see danger in allowing members of that race to exercise influential professions. They maintain that the Jewish character is fundamentally international and, as such, incapable of identifying-itself with national interests. They regard the Jews as drawn by both instinct and race towards co-operation with the Bolshevist rulers of Russia.

The basis for this suspicion was broadened by the share, out of all proportion to their numbers, taken by Jews as instigators, organisers, and leaders of the various Communist revolutions in Central Europe that followed the War. The most powerful figure in the organization calling itself the Madrid Government at the outset of the Spanish Civil War was the Jewish Soviet Ambassador, Rosenberg.

The tolerant attitude of the average Briton, therefore, towards Jews, Communists, and those deluded intellectuals indulgently termed 'parlour-Bolshevists' appears to Nazi eyes as stupid apathy in the presence of real danger. It is looked on as an indication that the British race has lost that alert common sense in matters affecting its national interests by which it used to be distinguished. Hitler is convinced that highly placed Jews, often successfully disguised as of true British or French stock, are subtly and systematically vitiating the vigour and virtue of Britain, and, to a still greater extent, those of France. That a Jewish author like M. Leon Blum, whose work on *Marriage* advocates 'immorality,' should have become Prime Minister of France seems to most Germans a confirmation of this view.

In subordinating matters of race and religion to their national aims, the Nazi leaders have not hesitated to interfere with the ecclesiastical organizations of their own people also. They justify their repression of the Catholic and Evangelical Churches in Germany by declaring that it is directed against the political activities rather than the faith of these denominations.

Hitler's principle is that in all but purely spiritual matters the lives of the German people should be subject to no other influence than National Socialism. His campaign against the churches in Germany is based on the belief that they do not concern themselves only with the religious beliefs of their members, but aim at controlling their activities as citizens.

The Chancellor especially contests the claim of the Roman Catholic Church to educate the children of its members. Like the Tudor Sovereigns of England, he distrusts its second allegiance to a foreign authority in Rome. Twenty per cent. of the total area of Germany is said to be owned by the Catholic Church and its various Orders.

No event in the record of Hitler's rule has startled foreign countries more than the violent 'purge' of the Nazi Party carried out on June 30, 1934. The full list of the persons shot in the summary executions which took place all over Germany during that weekend has never been produced. It certainly amounts to several hundred, and included, besides such prominent figures as General von Schleicher, the ex-Chancellor, whose wife died with him, and Captain Röhm, head of the S.A., or Storm Troopers, many others of high position in the Nazi movement and the Government service.

It would be absurd to suppose that some savage impulse led Hitler to order and assume full responsibility for the suppression of his own followers.

The explanation for his action lies in the fact that the Nazi movement was at that time threatened by an internal split which, if it had developed, might have brought about a civil war in Germany. Ruthless as Hitler's action was, he defends it by contending that, if he had failed to stamp out the disaffection among his followers, the ultimate cost in human life to the country would have been much greater. He regards himself as having been in the position of the captain of a ship in which mutiny has broken out on the high seas, and considers the severity of his methods to have been essential to the safety of the passengers—who in this case were the German nation as a whole.

No detailed official account has ever been published of the exact character of the conspiracy which was on foot, but it is known that Röhm and a clique of his supporters resented the fact that the Nazification of Germany, according to their ideas, was not yet complete.

Röhm wanted his two million Storm Troopers to be not only the Prætorian Guard of the Party, but also the embodiment of the national strength of the State.

This latter function Hitler had been content to leave in the hands of the Reichswehr, at that time nominally limited to a force of 1000,000 highly trained, long-service soldiers.

The Reichswehr generals stubbornly resisted Röhm's desire for the amalgamation of his two million Brown Shirts with the national army and the elevation of Storm Troop commanders to military rank.

Under both the Republican and the Nazi Governments, the Reichswehr generals had remained outside politics, occupied solely with their professional task of making the German army the most efficient military force in the world. They were not prepared to see this achievement endangered by the submersion of these superb soldiers under a mass-influx of Storm Troopers. Hitler, by accepting the views of the generals, had aroused the resentment of Röhm and his associates, who accordingly prepared to use their Brown Shirt legions for a *coup d'etat*.

If this rising of the Party militia had been successful, it would have been followed by the execution of those whom the leaders of the Storm Troops regarded as their adversaries. A list of people to be thus suppressed is said to have been found after the 'purge.' Hitler's friends

allege that his name appeared upon it, and Hitler himself, in his Reichstag speech after the executions, declared that one of the condemned men, named Uhl, had confessed that he had been allotted the mission of assassinating him after the S.A. revolution had been carried into effect.

But the Reichswehr possessed an efficient secret service of its own, which closely followed the plans of Röhm and his group. It would appear to be the Reichswehr generals who urged Hitler to crush the conspirators before these plans were complete.

As a further complication, Röhm was in touch with other disaffected public men in Germany. Among them was the ambitious, intriguing, and embittered General von Schleicher, who had originally put Hitler in touch with Hindenburg, and was furious that the man he had tried to use as an instrument should have taken his place as Chancellor.

Since Schleicher's death he has been officially rehabilitated, but at the time it was believed by Hitler and his advisers that he and Röhm had agreed that Schleicher was to become head of the Government. Schleicher was suspected of being in touch, not with the French Government, but with elements in France which might have got him official backing from that country if, with Röhm's help, he recovered the Chancellorship.

These schemes were to come into operation after the Storm Troopers' annual July 'leave,' during which parades and the wearing of uniforms were suspended. In an order to his followers, Röhm went so far as to threaten the 'enemies of the S.A.' that they would "receive their answer at such time and in such form as appears necessary. The S.A.," he concluded, "is, and remains, the destiny of Germany."

It is Hitler's usual practice not to interfere in differences of opinion about policy among his subordinates. He remains as a supreme authority above the turmoil, ready to intervene only if such divergences of view threaten the efficiency of the *régime*.

By the closing days of June, 1934, Röhm's conspiracy could no longer be neglected.

The Chancellor decided to act at once. Röhm and his principal associates were known to be staying at a villa called the Pension Hanselbauer, on the shores of the Wiessee, a lake about thirty miles from Munich. They had called a conference of S.A. leaders at that place. At this conference the final decision for revolt might be taken. Hitler's purpose was to anticipate it.

He flew to Munich, arriving there at dawn. With him, besides Goebbels, were Otto Dietrich, the Nazi Press chief, his adjutants, Bruckner and Schaub, and his personal guards.

In two cars, accompanied by his staff, and a few men of the S.S., or Black Guards, as escort, he set out on the three-quarter-hour drive to Röhm's headquarters.

The sentries mounted before the door withdrew on his orders, and Hitler made his way at once to Röhm's bedroom. The burly figure of the doomed man, plunged in a drunken sleep, lay stretched on the bed, fully dressed in the uniform he had worn at a wild supper-party which had lasted long into the night. He was shaken into a muddled consciousness to find Hitler standing over him, his face white with fury.

"*Schuft, du bist verhaftet!*" ("You scoundrel, you are under arrest!") were the only words the Chancellor spoke, and the statement was enforced by the automatic pistols in the hands of the black-uniformed men behind him.

Röhm was too besotted to do more than mumble incoherent protests.

Heines, his principal colleague, discovered under morally compromising circumstances in another room was shot at once. All the other Storm Troop leaders in the villa were arrested.

They were brought to the Stadelheim Prison, in Munich. That red-brick gaol is a criminal prison, but was also used as a place of political detention for women Communists who were not sent to concentration-camps. A court-martial was set up there, and the accused men were rapidly condemned to death.

Röhm himself was not shot until Monday, July 2. Throughout the weekend he had been left with a revolver in his cell in the hope that he would take his own life. When he was led out to face the firing-squad, this corpulent, courageous, and able, but vicious adventurer who strangely enough, had given to his autobiography the title *History of a Traitor*, is said to have died with dignity and in silence.

Meanwhile General Goering was using the State Secret Police to carry out a widespread round-up of suspects in Berlin. Ernst, the commander of the Berlin Storm Troopers, was pursued to Bremen and arrested as he was about to embark with his wife on a cruise to the Mediterranean. The Berlin victims of the 'purge' were shot in the courtyard of what was formerly the Army Cadet School at Lichterfelde, and is now the barracks of the Hitler Life Guard Brigade of the S.S.

Those who may have believed that their high positions would protect them from drastic action lived scarcely long enough to realise the contrary. Schleicher and his wife were shot out of hand by officials of the secret police. Colonel von Bredow, one of Schleicher's closest collaborators, was killed in his office when he refused to hand over the keys of the safe.

Yet while these mass-executions were going on, and highly placed people were disappearing without trace, public order in Germany was entirely undisturbed. The confidence in which Hitler is held survived even this grim test. "It was terrible, but the Führer found it necessary, so it had to be," is the only comment I have ever heard about this modern Massacre of the Janissaries.

"For twenty-four hours I was the Supreme Court of the German people," he told the Reichstag a fortnight later. He showed no more remorse for his severity than does a judge who has sentenced a criminal to death on evidence. That interpretation of his action is the one that prevails in Germany.

The word 'crisis' has been hard-worked since Hitler came to power. There was a crisis when Germany left the League of Nations in 1933, and another in 1934 when the Nazi uprising broke out in Vienna. In 1935 Germany repudiated the military clauses of the Peace Treaty. The year 1936 saw the reoccupation of the Rhineland, while 1937 brought the bombardment of Almeria and the long-protracted 'crisis' which was the normal atmosphere of the Non-Intervention Committee.

Of all these strained situations the gravest developed from the reoccupation of the Rhineland.

It had been expected for several months before it happened, and the immediate pretext for it was the ratification of the military alliance which had been negotiated in the previous year between France and Russia. Hitler claimed that this pact was directed against Germany alone, and entitled him, in equity if not in law, to take new measures of national security by redistributing Germany's defensive forces within the limits of her own territory.

The actual time of the reoccupation is believed to have been fixed by the fact that the French Government had begun to ask Britain for specific pledges as to what action she would take if Germany reoccupied the Rhineland. The German Government argued that if Britain once gave those pledges she would respect them, but that if the Rhineland were reoccupied

before the British Government had committed itself, the risk of active resistance would be limited to possible action by the French Government.

That risk was great enough, however, for the German generals to hesitate about the wisdom of the undertaking. The German army was in process of being transformed from a long-term professional basis to a short-service national one. The most that the army could do was to send in isolated detachments, unlinked by the organisation of a higher command.

Hitler gave the order for the advance into the Rhineland on Friday, March 6, and next morning the British, French, and Belgian Ambassadors were suddenly summoned at noon to the *Reichskanzlei*, where the Chancellor read to them a memorandum, announcing that the Rhineland had already been occupied and outlining a new programme for assuring peace in Western Europe.

This consisted of :

1. Pacts of non-aggression for twenty-five years between Germany, France, and Belgium.
2. A guarantee of these pacts by Britain and Italy.
3. A similar pact with Holland if desired.
4. An air-pact between all the Western Powers.
5. Pacts of non-aggression between Germany and her eastern neighbours, including Lithuania.
6. The re-establishment of a demilitarized zone on Germany's western frontier, if France would do the same on her side.
7. Conditional return of Germany to the League of Nations.

The British Government's attitude towards these proposals was more favourable than that of the French, who denounced the reoccupation of the Rhineland as a breach of the Peace Treaty and the Locarno Pact.

The French Government was emboldened to take a strong line because :

1. Britain was pledged by Locarno to stand by France.
2. Britain had persuaded France to support her in imposing sanctions on Italy, so that the French had a moral claim for similar support against Germany.
3. France was relatively stronger with regard to Germany than she could hope to be again, as the German national-service army had been in existence only six months.

About 30,000 German troops marched into the Rhineland - nineteen battalions and thirteen batteries, with supply-services, engineers, and auxiliary detachments.

Forty-eight hours after the reoccupation had taken place I had a two-hour interview with the German Chancellor in Munich. He gave precision to his general offer of non-aggression pacts with States on his eastern frontiers by specifying that he was ready to include Czechoslovakia and Austria. He also said that if his overtures on this occasion were rejected or ignored, like others in the past, he would not renew them.

Conversations with other members of the German Government revealed a spirit of desperate determination which seemed typical of the German people generally.

“ If it comes to war,” I was told, “ Germany will resist to the last. Bolshevism may well be the only victor. It may be the fate of one German generation to die in order to secure the freedom of the next.

“ We should have some disagreeable surprises for the world in the event of war,” was another assurance which was given me.

A few days later in Berlin, I had an hour's talk alone at the Chancellery with Hitler and General Goering. The Chancellor stipulated that it should be confidential, except that I was authorized to pass on his views to official circles in England. It may be said, however, that he was of the opinion that the British Government ought to realise that the military reoccupation of the Rhineland was a matter of small importance by comparison with the peace-plan which he had offered to the world. He would do anything, he said, to bring about better relations with England and to secure peace in Western Europe, provided that he was not asked to consent to any restriction of German sovereignty.

He even discussed a practical scheme for reducing the tension then existing on the French frontier, but this was subsequently rejected by the French.

A general election was being held in Germany, and I accompanied Hitler by air or special train to several parts of the country for the purpose of seeing the popular reaction to the step he had taken. His speeches always contained a passionate appeal for peace, which aroused an equally fervent response from his vast audiences.

At Breslau the Chancellor invited me to drive with him through the streets. I sat at the back of his open car, the first of a long procession of black Mercedes-Benz. Hitler himself stood up beside the driver in the front seat. We drove thus for forty minutes at little more than walking pace through the streets of the city, lined with dense crowds from which went up an unceasing roar of “ *Heil! Heil! Heil!*” It beat upon our ears like a surge of the sea. Every window was hung with flags and crowded with onlookers. Hitler remained on his feet all the time, raising his arm in salute and smiling right and left.

I studied the serried ranks on either side. All ages and types of people wore the same expression of ecstatic delight. Very occasionally, in the vast crowds estimated at 400,000, one saw an isolated face that looked glum, and an arm that was not raised in salute. But 99 per cent. of the people showed every sign of fanatical and genuine enthusiasm.

Similar scenes were displayed to me in Frankfort and Cologne, cities in the area just reoccupied after being without troops for nearly eighteen years.

It was amid such proofs of Hitler's place in the hearts and minds of his people that the crisis caused by the Rhineland reoccupation petered out. Its epitaph was a *questionnaire* addressed by the British Foreign Office to Berlin, which began with the inquiry as to whether the German Government now felt it had reached the stage at which it would be prepared to keep its promises in the future. This gave such offence in Germany that no reply was ever made to it.

The result of the crisis was that the Germans recovered full military occupation of their territory. They were soon at work fortifying the Rhineland from the Dutch border to the Black Forest, while the French, behind their 'Maginot Line,' proceeded to work out the details of their new defensive alliance with Great Britain, based on Army and Air Force 'Staff-conversations.'

I know these dictators

This was the best issue that the wisdom of Western European statesmen could devise for a situation which, in its early stages, had at least held out the possibility of long-term peace-pacts between Germany and all her neighbours as a set-off to Hitler's action in resuming the freedom of military dispositions within the frontiers of his country.

CHAPTER VII

MEN AROUND THE CHANCELLOR

HITLER has often told his friends that he will retire from public life at sixty, an age that he will reach in 1949.

After that, he would like to play for another ten years the *rôle* of an Elder Statesman, helping his successor with advice, but taking no part in the administration. "I have seen too much of old men in high places," is a remark he sometimes makes, doubtless in allusion to the closing years of his predecessor, President Hindenburg.

In the archives of the Chancellery there lies a secret document in which Hitler has nominated his successor. It contains the names of three alternative 'Leaders of Germany' in the order of his choice. There can be little doubt that the first name on this list is that of General Goering.



Hermann Goering

After the Chancellor, Hermann Goering is the most powerful and popular man in Germany. He is Air Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, Prime Minister of Prussia, Commandant of the Prussian Police, Head of the State Secret Police, President of the Reichstag, and Chief Forester of the Reich - a post which gives him control over all the

German State domains. His temperament is almost the direct converse of Hitler's. Goering's capacity lies in action; Hitler's in vision. Hitler is introspective; Goering is objective.

The bond between these men of such contrasted temperament is fidelity. Autocratic towards others, Goering subordinates himself to his Leader with the loyalty of a soldier.

His father was the first Governor of German South-west Africa, and he himself had the regular military education of an army officer, obtaining at the age of nineteen his commission in a Prussian infantry régiment.

General Goering was twenty-one when the War started, and managed to get himself transferred to the German Air Force in defiance of the wishes of his military superiors. His skill as a pilot of fighting-machines eventually raised him to the command of the famous 'Richthofen Squadron,' after its founder had been killed, and enabled him to win that highest military distinction, the *Pour le Mérite* Cross, by shooting down thirty-six opposing aeroplanes.

After the War he became a civilian air-pilot in Sweden, and there married Baroness Karin von Fock, whom he met as a result of a forced landing. She died about ten years later, and General Goering has since been remarried, in almost royal state, to Frau Emmy Sonnemann, a beautiful and talented German actress.

Goering arrived in Munich in 1922 to study at the University. It was there that he came under Hitler's spell, and he was severely wounded in the shooting at the Feldherrnhalle during the November Putsch of 1923.

As one of the first Nazis to be elected to the Reichstag, he acted as Leader of the Parliamentary Party from 1928, and now that it is wholly Nazi, presides over the brief, formal, and infrequent sessions for which it assembles to hear pronouncements on Government policy.

After the arrival of the Party in power, Goering was successively and rapidly appointed to his present posts, being also promoted from captain's to general's rank. His position is virtually that of Vice-Chancellor.

General Goering is a typical Prussian - courageous, hard, challenging, and authoritative. 'Toughness' is his outstanding quality.

On my first visit to him, when he had been just twelve months in office, he said to me, "Nations differ. Your easy-going British ways would not suit Germany. Germans need, and like, a heavy hand. Before I became Prime Minister of Prussia there used to be four sex-murders a month in Berlin alone, because under the Republican *régime* death-sentences were nearly always commuted. Now that I am in charge, everybody knows that not only is the death-sentence certain for such murders, but that it will equally certainly be carried out. The result is that in the whole of Prussia there have been only four killings of that kind during the last twelve months."



Mussolini greets Frau Goering, September 1937

[Associated Press Photo.]

His character is as forceful as his physique, for his girth is not that of flabbiness but of strength. His pale-blue eyes have the steady, alert look of perfect health. His complexion is clear as a boy's. Shooting is his passion, and he is a first-rate performer with rifle and gun. The tone of his voice has a parade-ground incisiveness, but his sense of humour is strong and boisterous, breaking out in a loud and jovial chuckle.

Sixteenth-century England contained many men of his type-reckless, restless, and ruthless-with masterful habits and a taste for bold adventure.

Cardinal Wolsey, Henry the Eighth's great Minister, who built Hampton Court, had the same love of luxury and of spacious and beautiful environment. The tapestries, pictures, and furniture with which General Goering surrounds himself might have belonged to a prince of the Italian Renaissance.

This temperamental liking for splendour is reflected in his dress. The variety of his uniforms has become proverbial, and at home he wears costumes of his own design whose originality is often striking.

The first time he received me he was wearing a black silk double-breasted smoking-jacket with facings of pink silk and a bow tie of the same colour. Below were trousers of bright blue serge. On another occasion I found him wearing a white tunic of gaberdine cloth with gold facings, and dove-grey riding-breeches with boots of patent leather. Generally he is in the regulation blue coat of the German Air Force, turned back with white lapels. But on a recent visit he greeted me in a uniform which he had invented for his post as Chief Forester of

Germany. It is based upon the dress of medieval German hunters and consists of a jerkin of green frieze, collarless and without sleeves, held to the waist by a belt of the same material, from which hangs a hunting-knife in a green sheath.

Beneath this sleeveless coat General Goering wears a thick silk shirt, the soft collar of which is clasped by a heavy brooch bearing the emblem of St Hubert, the patron saint of hunters - a stag's antlers with an irradiated cross between them. The large links in his sleeves were embossed with the same design, which he has made the badge of the German Forestry Service. His powerful, well-shaped hands are adorned by several large signet-rings of antique design in lapis-lazuli and other coloured stones.

In his castle-turreted residence as Prime Minister of Prussia he sits in a high-backed, carved oaken chair at a long refectory table, which bears heavy silver candlesticks carrying tall altar candles of richly moulded form. Large photographs of his beautiful first wife who died, and of his father in his uniform as Governor of South-west Africa, face him on the table, which also has a silver cigar-box of old Italian pattern, set with semi-precious stones. The room itself contains magnificent pictures taken from German museums, and where its walls are not lined with leather-bound books they are hung with swords of all kinds, from gold-hilted, damascened Indian scimitars to a medieval two-handed broadsword. On carved oak chests stand huge gold and silver tankards which are splendid examples of German fifteenth-century craft.

The flat he has designed for himself in the new Air Ministry is a beautiful apartment, and on the Schorfheide, a lonely heath some twenty-five miles from Berlin, he has built a sumptuous shooting-box called Karinhall, after his first wife, whose mausoleum is in the grounds. Its large and richly furnished rooms are filled with his hunting-trophies and decorated with fine works of art from the Berlin museums. Lion-cubs play in the grounds, and hundreds of acres of the surrounding moor are shut off to the public, being constantly patrolled by the General's foresters.

The Air Minister is well guarded. On one occasion, as he sat at his desk expressing to me with vigorous gestures his impatience at the failure of the British Government to realise the justifiable character of German aims, the door of his large room was flung open without ceremony, and a liveried porter burst in with the words, "*Excellenz, die Wache ist da !*" ("The guard is here!")

I looked through the doorway, and there, pressing close behind the manservant, were the fixed bayonets and steel helmets of Goering's military escort, whose quarters are normally the guard-house outside the locked gates of the courtyard.

General Goering used a soldier's swear-word. "Tell them it was a test-alarm," he said, and then, seeing my surprise, added with a laugh, "I really must have that bell shifted. It has a way of going off when I move about too much in my chair. You see, there have been times when we knew that there were some desperate characters about, and there is a hidden bell-push here which I could ring if by any improbable chance a would-be assassin managed to get into my room."

Desperate and ruthless though some of the Red agents in Germany proved themselves to be in the pre-Hitler days, they would stand a poor chance of leaving General Goering's presence except with handcuffs on their wrists. He has embodied several ingenious ideas in the various residences that he has had built or adapted for his use. A demonstration of one of these resulted in a loud click of steel from different parts of the room.

"Now you can't get out," said the General, with a grim smile. "Every door is locked."

I was invited to the first dinner-party that General Goering gave in his capacity of Commander-in-Chief after the open reconstitution of the German Air Force. The other guests were all foreign air attaches and their wives, and with the exception of one German official I was the only man present in civilian clothes.

General Goering was wearing the full dress of the Air Force, with many decorations, and the broad green cordon of the highest class of the Italian Order of St Maurice and St Lazarus, a distinction bestowed on him by Mussolini, across his chest. As the guests, in their various national uniforms, were being presented to him, I saw his gaze fixed with especial interest upon the costume of the British Air Attaché, Colonel Don, who was wearing the mess-dress of the Royal Air Force. The General's eye took in the details of the short mess-jacket with close attention, and later in the evening I remarked to Colonel Don that he would be responsible for introducing yet another outfit to the German Air Minister's well-stocked wardrobe. This forecast was fulfilled, for the next time that I was honoured by a dinner-invitation from General Goering he had on a mess-jacket which, but for emblems and facings, was an exact replica of that used by the R.A.F. This has since been made the regulation evening attire of the German Air Force.

The dinner, prepared by Horcher, the well-known *restaurateur* of the Kürfürstendamm, was excellent, and everything in the house, which had been newly furnished under General Goering's directions, was of the highest possible standard of luxury. "That is a very fine copy of the famous Rubens, Excellency," I heard one of his foreign guests remark to the General.

"Copy? That *is* the famous Rubens !" was Goering's indignant rejoinder.

Since the sumptuous days of the *Roi Soleil* there can hardly have been so picturesque an entertainment in Europe as Goering's evening garden-party during the Olympic Games of 1936. It was held in the grounds at the back of the huge new Air Ministry, with the swimming-bath strewn with lilies floating in the glow of under-water lamps, while the broad expanse of turf was floodlit by anti-aircraft searchlights mounted on the roofs around.

After the *corps de ballet* of the Berlin Opera House had danced on the lawn before an audience sitting at supper under trees festooned with coloured electric lights, a screen some fifty or sixty yards long on the farther side of the garden was suddenly withdrawn, revealing a full-size Viennese fun-fair, with merry-go-rounds, shooting-galleries, switchbacks, and picturesque wine- and beer-booths where pretty young German actresses in Tyrolean costume were waiting to receive the General's guests.

"Only poverty-stricken countries can afford a show like this," was the remark I heard from a famous German financier amid the din of laughter, music, and gaiety.

The cost of the evening must, indeed, have been considerable, for there seemed to be as many entertainers as guests, but as an original and attractive spectacle it was marked by all that efficiency on which General Goering insists in every undertaking with which he is associated.

Though the Nazi spirit is too earnest for such social entertainments to be anything but an exception, a regular feature of the Berlin winter season is the great ball which General Goering gives at the State Opera House every February.

This is the nearest approach to a 'Court' function that present-day Germany knows, and it is the ambition of every young woman in Berlin society to get an invitation to it.

A dancing-floor is put in on the level of the stage, and the wings and back-stage space are opened up to provide more room for the hundreds of dancers. Footmen, wearing scarlet liveries with white breeches and stockings, and holding old-fashioned candles in glass shades mounted on long staves, line the grand staircase.

General Goering and his wife sit in the former Imperial box, which is big enough to form a spacious reception-room. At supper with them there during the last ball they gave, I met the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick, the son-in-law and daughter of the ex-Kaiser, who are often to be seen at important Nazi functions; Sir Henry Deterding, the oil-magnate, and his young German wife; at least a dozen officers of the Italian Air Force in uniform; and most of the members of the German Government, though the Chancellor himself does not appear on these festive social occasions.

It was one of those *gemütlich*, informal supper-parties that Germans like, with beer for the thirsty as well as champagne. Frau Goering, who is certainly the best-dressed woman in Germany, made a radiant hostess, with her natural golden hair, fair North German complexion, and musical, well-modulated voice an exclamation of “*Ach*, these Bolsheviks! They can't even send us good caviar nowadays!”

I have had many conversations with General Goering, lasting from one to two hours, in which he has expressed his views freely and emphatically on a variety of international questions. He generally ends these talks pacing up and down his long room, but he always begins by drawing towards him his rococo silver cigar-box, out of which he takes one of those dark, thin 'Virginia' cheroots with a straw mouthpiece that are seldom seen outside Italy. He deals with this in the Italian style, pulling out the thin pith. stalk which is threaded into the mouthpiece, igniting it with a match, and then using it to light the cigar.

On such occasions General Goering invariably comes back to one topic - the need for close co-operation between Britain and Germany. “We respect and like the British race,” he has said to me repeatedly. “You are akin to us by blood, and we wish to see you a strong and powerful nation. We do not mind how big an Air Force you build. Raise a National Service Army if you like. Germany is quite content that Britain should make herself as strong as she feels necessary.

“With our two countries in agreement, the peace of Europe would be on unshakable foundations. Who could stand against the British Fleet and the German Army?”

“There is nothing on earth about which Britain and Germany need quarrel. We should even be prepared to guarantee British interests in every part of the globe. But you must respond by conceding to us the position on the Continent to which we are entitled by our national qualities and situation, just as you are entitled to maintain British standards and influence throughout your great world-Empire.

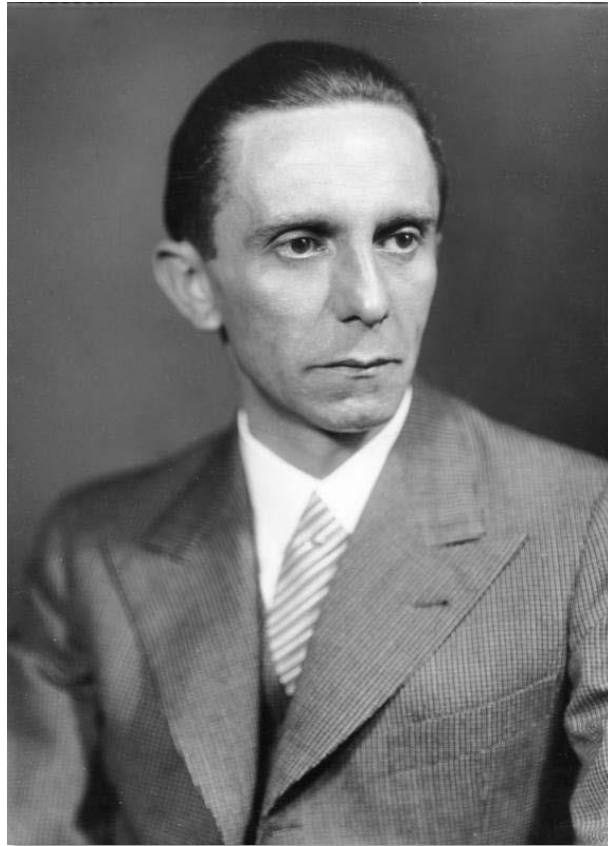
“What we should prefer is to see Britain concentrating on her own interests and not concerning herself with the vague and meddlesome policies of the League of Nations.”

General Goering's admiration for Britain began when he fought against our Air Force in the War. “Fine fellows!” he says, with the grim, reminiscent smile of a soldier.

Yet this favourable disposition towards Britain, and the personal friendship which General Goering maintains with several well-known members of the British aristocracy, are unlikely to modify his conception of the rightful aims of Germany. He resents all criticism of the interest which the Reich displays in the fate of that population of 3,500,000 Germans at present lying just outside its frontiers, along the borders of Czechoslovakia.

“ If they were people of British stock, would you not have the same feelings towards them yourselves? “ he asks.

Perhaps the closest of all Hitler's associates is Dr Paul Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, though his direct authority in the country has not the wide range of General Goering's. That this pale-faced little man with the haggard cheeks and clubfoot should have built up for himself so outstanding a position in the New Germany, which has been taught to make physical perfection its ideal, is a tribute to his genius and determination, while all who know him will bear testimony to the keenness of his mind.



Dr Joseph Goebbels

Dr Goebbels is one of the few leading personalities in Germany who is always smiling, though it would be wrong to conclude that his mood is invariably benign. The vitality that Nature denied to his physique by making him a cripple she put into his eyes. They are dark, lively, observant, and expressive. In private, his talk is a constant flow of witty, bantering comment on world affairs.

As an orator his hold over the German people is only surpassed by that of Herr Hitler himself, and his speeches, to foreign ears, seem more varied, sparkling, and reckless than the sterner harangues of his chief. Dr Goebbels is a Rhineland, born of Catholic parents in 1897, and educated at Catholic schools. He held scholarships at various universities, including Heidelberg, where he took his Doctorate of Philosophy in 1921.

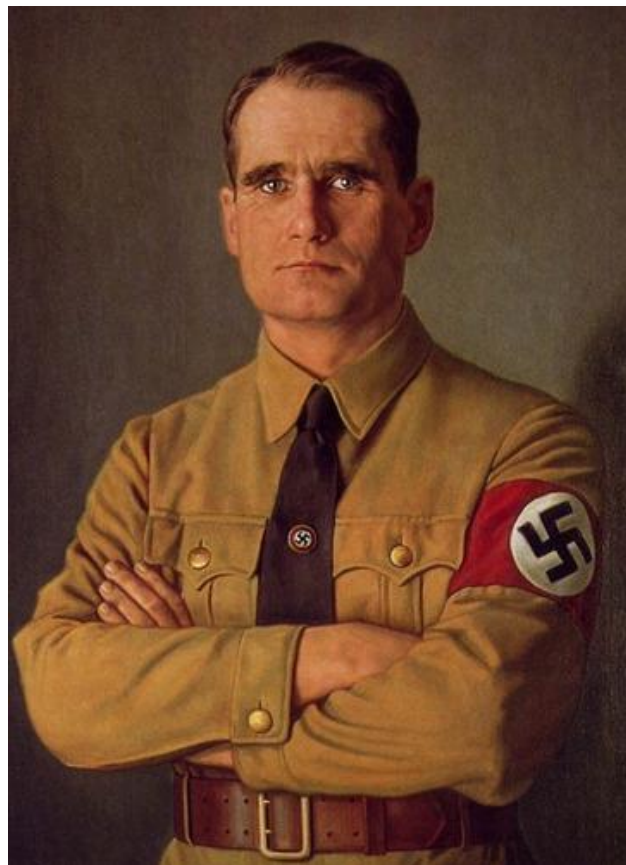
I know these dictators

His first political activity was to help in organising opposition to the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. In the following year he joined the Nazi Party and edited a local paper of the movement at Elberfeld.

Goebbels has always made North Germany, and the capital in particular, his special field. Though a Rhinelander, he can play on a great audience of sardonic Berlin working-men with the touch of a master.

His skill as an organiser of propaganda was invaluable in the Party's years of struggle. He is its showman-in-chief today, controlling the Press, cinema, theatre, and all institutions connected with publicity. His mind is alert, resourceful, and cynical, and his high position is based not only on his powers of ironic popular eloquence and infallible political flair, but also on close personal friendship with Hitler, at whose table he is a daily guest when the Chancellor is in Berlin.

Herr Rudolf Hess, whose office as personal deputy at the head of the Nazi organization keeps him in an especially close touch with the Führer, is a tall, dark, silent, athletic man at the outset of the forties. He joined up with Hitler in 1920, fascinated by a speech which he heard him deliver shortly after Hess had ceased to be a pilot in the German Air Force.



Rudolf Hess

Herr Hess was born and spent his boyhood in Alexandria, Egypt, where his father was a wealthy German import and export merchant. The family's property was confiscated on the outbreak of war, and when it was over, Hess went to the University of Munich to continue his studies. He worked as assistant to Professor Haushofer, a former general at the head of the

faculty of political geography, until he became private secretary to Hitler. He shared his leader's imprisonment at Landsberg, and to him a large part of *My Struggle* was there dictated.

With an ardent and daring disposition which won him distinction in the War, he combines a somewhat dreamy and artistic temperament. His confidential position with Hitler is assured by the sterling qualities of his character. Hess is entirely indifferent to financial considerations or personal advancement, and his fidelity is undoubted. His main function is the management of the Nazi Party. In this task he has full powers to decide according to his own judgment in the Chancellor's name, and his title of 'Representative of the Leader' is by no means an empty one.

Even in Germany Hess is rather a man of mystery, but none the less popular with the public. The tense expression of his close-joined, beetling black eyebrows and pale-blue eyes relaxes readily into a friendly smile. His grizzled hair is always uncovered, and he is the only prominent Nazi who prefers the simple brown shirt of the S.A. to the more elegant khaki tunic of the Party uniform.

Herr Hess, who is married but without children, has a keen taste for sport of the mechanical kind. In the year 1934 he won the annual air-race round the Zugspitze, the highest peak in Germany, and he drives his 90-h.p. super-charged Mercedes with the skill and dash of a track-motorist. A run for which he took me one wet winter day, to see a huge viaduct which was being built for the new motor-highway from Munich to the Austrian frontier, was an experience to remember. The Führer's deputy was frequently travelling over desperately greasy surfaces at ninety miles an hour. As he approached a bend in the road he would make a 'racing gear-change' without slackening speed and so silently that the only indication of it was the altered note of the engine.

Much better known to the British public than any of these collaborators of the German Chancellor is Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, now Minister for Foreign Affairs.



Joachim von Ribbentrop

His career has been more cosmopolitan in its surroundings and experiences than that of the other members of the Chancellor's group of intimate associates. Herr Ribbentrop was born in 1892 at Wesel, on the Rhine, and went to school at Metz. He comes of a military family. His father was a colonel, and one of his ancestors was Quartermaster-General to Marshal Blucher at the battle of Waterloo.

His youth was spent in several different countries, which accounts for his perfect knowledge of French and English. From the age of fifteen to seventeen he was in Switzerland; then for a year he lived with a professor's family in England, and in 1910, at eighteen, he went to Canada.

Von Ribbentrop was now dependent on his own exertions for his livelihood, and in true transatlantic style, began by getting a job on the great Quebec Bridge then being built across the River St Lawrence. He was in this employment for two years, working principally on the railway-track and on the caissons.

When war began in 1914 he came back to Germany in a Dutch ship. On the way it paid a call at a British port, and for two days von Ribbentrop and another German hid in the coal-bunkers to avoid arrest and internment by the British police.

Appointed to a hussar *régiment* on reaching Germany, Herr von Ribbentrop served on the Russian front and then at the War Ministry. At the end of the War he was in Constantinople, where he was attached to the German Embassy.

His activities were next directed to the wine business, which renewed his acquaintance with France, and eventually led to his marriage with *Fräulein* Henkell, the daughter of the proprietor of the best-known brand of German champagne.

When von Ribbentrop's close association with the Nazi hierarchy began, he was able to render valuable service to Hitler as intermediary between him and the Rhineland magnates, whose financial support was a vital necessity in the culminating days of the Party's struggle. For some years before his appointment to London, in 1936, he was Germany's Ambassador-at-large, and had a considerable diplomatic staff under his own orders in Berlin. It was he who concluded the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which is the most successful negotiation that has taken place between the two countries under the Nazi *régime*, and he acted as Hitler's envoy to Britain during the crisis of the Rhineland reoccupation.

When time permits, von Ribbentrop and his wife entertain a great deal at their pleasant house in the villa-suburb of Dahlem. Both have unusual social charm. His Excellency is furthermore a good violinist, owns race-horses, goes shooting chamois in Austria, and is fond of golf.

He came to London as Ambassador with the earnest hope of bringing about an Anglo-German *rapprochement*. It was a bitter disappointment to him that his efforts did not meet with more success.

CHAPTER VIII

HITLER'S AIMS

Is Hitler sincere?

After my first contact with him in 1933, when his experience of power was still counted in months, I wrote that I believed in his professions with regard to peace for two reasons :

1. Because he was obsessed with his immense task of internal reorganisation, and
2. Because he had a former combatant's aversion from the chances and calamities of war.

Four years have gone by since then. They have been devoted by Hitler entirely to internal reconstruction. However potentially aggressive some developments of this process, like the reoccupation of the Rhineland, may appear, not a solitary shot has been fired and not a single incident has occurred on any frontier of Germany.

To judge of any statesman's sincerity is a difficult task but Hitler has one quality to which I can bear personal witness, and which creates at least a certain presumption of sincerity. That quality is consistency.

He never misses an opportunity of declaring his desire for peace, with which he couples the hope that Anglo- German relations will become closer and more cordial.

Most of my talks with Hitler have taken place at times of public excitement, when even a responsible statesman might overstress his aims. They have left me with an impression of continuity in his plans, which, even if they go farther than some countries may like, are limited by common sense. Like Gladstone, the German Chancellor is a fiery speaker but a cool thinker. Since coming into office, he has not made a statement on foreign policy which he has had reason to regret.

The difference between Hitler's standpoint and that of the Western Powers in international affairs lies in the fact that he had never regarded the European situation as static, while we have tried to keep it so. The British and French Governments looked on the Treaty of Versailles as establishing a permanent order of affairs in Europe. For them this was a final and considered settlement, to be maintained. For Hitler it was a transient and unnatural situation, to be altered.

From the moment he obtained control of the Government, his aim has been to secure equality for Germany with the other Great Powers. For that purpose he reconstructed the German Army, Navy, and Air Force, and resumed complete sovereignty over the national territory.

It may prove that this levelling-up process is not yet over. Danzig and Memel are two German cities still outside the Reich, from which they were taken by the Peace Treaty. Germany will not rest until she has recovered them. This will not necessarily mean war. Strong Powers are in a favourable position to achieve their set purposes by negotiation.

But even if Memel and Danzig were given back tomorrow, there would still be German ambitions remaining unfulfilled. Nazi political philosophy is dominated by a conception

called *Germanentum*. It claims to establish a special relation to all Germans in Europe with whom the people of the Reich have historical and cultural connection. The present rulers of Germany have fulfilled their aim of union with Austria, and will not rest until the 3½ millions of Czechoslovakia are a self-governing community free to form closer associations with their kinsmen across the border.

That ambition may not go the length of annexation. The German Government expresses readiness to respect the independence of the Czechs, provided that they abandon their alliances with France and Russia, which in Nazi eyes make their country a potential enemy salient into the heart of Germany, containing many aerodromes already equipped for the use of Czechoslovakia's Bolshevik allies.

After the Rhineland reoccupation of March, 1936, Hitler declared himself willing to sign a Non-Aggression Pact with Czechoslovakia. Since then the Czech Government's National Defence Bill has weighed so heavily on its subject German population, by rendering its members liable to deportation from their homes on the frontier, that such a pact would not now be made unless the claims of the German minority were first satisfied.

No one who has visited the German borderland of Czechoslovakia will deny the completely German character of that country and its inhabitants. The seventeenth-century towns of the Egerland and the villages of the Erzgebirge are as purely Teuton as if they were in the heart of Silesia or Franconia.

The only Czechs to be seen there are members of the Government services who live under social conditions as isolated as if they were officials of another nationality administering a conquered land. In cases where they are too few in number to support tradesmen of their own race they even import their supplies from sources outside the Sudeten area.

Though the minorities of Czechoslovakia pay the same taxation as the Czechs, they do not receive a fair apportionment of national expenditure. The roads perceptibly deteriorate as one enters the German frontier-zone.

In these German townships there is often to be seen a fine modern school which has been built for a handful of children belonging to the Czech Government employees stationed there, while the very much larger number of German children of school age are crowded into out-of-date buildings. It is characteristic of the unreliability of statistics that the large sum allotted in the Czech national Budget to 'minority schools' covers also the schools which have been built for the Czech 'minority' in the predominantly German districts.

The highly nationalist policy of the Czechs has sown the wind in their composite country: it is now reaping the whirlwind.

The Nazis aim at more than the extension of their national influence over the Sudeten Germans. They want also what they call a *Ventil*, or outlet.

In Hitler's autobiography he condemns the pre-war German Government's ambition for colonies. He used to criticize the policy of overseas expansion backed up by a big navy, which brought Germany into conflict with Great Britain. He preferred the principle of Bismarck, according to which Germany's vital interests lie in Europe.

As far back as October, 1933, however, Herr Hitler said to me: "It is to the interest of the world that a great nation, containing too many people for its area, shall not be deprived of the requisite conditions of existence. We shall never go to war to get colonies. But we are

convinced that we are as capable as any other nation of administering and developing colonial territory. We regard this as a matter for negotiation.”

Since Dr Schacht, the Minister of Economics, has convinced the Chancellor that Germany could get from her former African colonies 25 per cent. of the raw materials, including 75 per cent. of the fats, that she requires, the demand for colonial territory has taken a more prominent place among his national aims. He reconciles this with his former censure of the same policy by the argument that colonies would not now involve Germany in naval competition with Britain, since the proportions of the fleets of the two countries have been fixed by the Anglo-German Agreement. Nazi spokesmen even point out that German colonies under such conditions would be hostages in the hands of Britain, for Germany would rely upon her good relations with the British Government for their protection.

Officially, the aim of Germany is stated to be the recovery of all her former colonies. But there is reason to suppose that German statesmen might be satisfied with 'a rounded-out Cameroons.' By this is meant a West African colony based upon the original German territory there, which is now divided between the adjoining British Nigeria and French Equatorial Africa. The annual deficit on the budget of the British section of the Cameroons is £30,000 to £50,000 a year.

Such colonial aspirations are in addition to, and not in substitution for, German ambitions in Eastern Europe. The limits to which these extend beyond the virtual incorporation of the German populations of Austria and Czechoslovakia are not precisely defined. To a large extent they are conditioned by Germany's obsession with the Bolshevist danger.

“ If Mr Baldwin says the British frontier is on the Rhine,” it is argued, “ we are entitled to claim that our eastern frontier lies a good deal farther east than the map shows.” That Germany hopes one day to recover the Polish Corridor, and join up East Prussia with the rest of the Reich, is certain. It surprised not only the other nations of Europe but his own followers in Germany when Hitler, within a year of coming to power, negotiated a ten-year peace-pact with Poland.

Some people believed that behind this reconciliation with a country whose outlet to the sea had been provided by cutting Germany in two lay the ultimate aim of conquering enough of the Ukraine from Russia to enable Poland to be compensated for the return of the Corridor to Germany by an extension of her frontiers to the east, with Odessa as a substitute port for Danzig. German statesmen declare their western frontier fixed for ever, but regard their eastern frontier as requiring readjustment.

By Hitler I was told, in February, 1934, that the idea of Germany taking territory from Russia was 'ridiculous,' and by one of his principal advisers on foreign affairs that Germany would never attack Russia, because that country “ is like a feather-bed, easy to get into and hard to get out of.” There is no doubt, however, that Germany is obsessed by the possibility of having to meet the attack, on the one side of Russian forces, using Czechoslovak territory as a taking-off point, and on the other of the French Army and Air Force, under the orders of a ' Popular Front Government' dominated by Russia. It was for this reason that the Nazi Government determined to prevent the victory of the Reds in Spain. A Soviet-controlled *régime* in Madrid would be an effective agent for the Bolshevising of France.

Without violating the neutral territories of countries to which she has offered pacts of non-aggression, Germany could attack Russia only by way of a naval or aerial expedition along the Baltic. But in the minds of the Nazi leaders war with Russia does not seem to be regarded as the only possible prelude to a readjustment of their eastern frontier.

They look forward to the overthrow of Soviet rule not so much by foreign attack as by the development of a strong regional movement within Russia.

Only half the inhabitants of that country are Russians, they say, and the Bolshevik Revolution succeeded largely because it encouraged at first the principle of local nationalism. Some of the former territories of the Czars - like Finland, Russian Poland, and the Baltic States- won their independence in this revolution, and have kept it. Others - like Georgia and the Ukraine - won it and lost it again. Others - like Turkestan - never got it at all.

There are signs, the Germans believe, that the spirit of regional nationalism is stirring again in Russia. If it should someday disrupt the Union of Soviet Republics, they hope that the Western European Powers would support Germany in utilising that situation to rearrange the map of Eastern Europe to her satisfaction.

A possible development in Russo-German relations even more dangerous to Western Europe than their present enmity would be a reconciliation between these two countries and the pooling of their vast resources.

There was considerable alarm at the Genoa Conference in 1920 when the Russian and German delegations suddenly announced that they had made the Treaty of Rapallo, never yet repealed, though at that time neither country had developed more than a fraction of the formidable resources that both possess to-day.

Between the generals of the Reichswehr and the Red army there has always been a mutual professional sympathy.

“ The Red generals often ask us,” I have been told in Berlin, “ why Germany and Russia cannot bury their ideological quarrel. 'Let us agree,' they say, ' that each country shall retain its present political system without interference from the other, and let us join our military resources. Then no combination in Europe could stand against us.' ”

“ “ We have good reason to know,” went on my informant, “ how powerful the Russian war-industries are, for we foolishly helped to create them, but so long as Adolf Hitler is here he will never come to a working agreement with Bolshevism, for he hates it with his whole soul.” ”

M. Pierre Laval, the former French Right-Wing Premier, who signed the military alliance between France and Russia, told me that one of his reasons for the step was the fear that if France did not make such a pact, Germany might.

It is fortunate for Britain that the two powerful, land- hungry nations of Germany and Japan should have a common potential antagonist in Russia. That gigantic country has enough flesh to satisfy their appetites and perhaps enough bone to blunt their teeth.

The propaganda which the Bolshevik Government carries on among the native populations of our own Empire has done more harm to British interests than any activities of Germany or Japan. If those two Powers did not hold Russia's attention at either end of her vast dominions, the Indian Government might have to fight on the North-west Frontier, not against Waziri tribesmen, but against the Red army.

We have a choice of evils. There is little human probability of war being permanently avoided. Such vast preparations can hardly fail to have their natural sequel.

The last time the Teuto-Slav conflict broke out, Britain was dragged into it. On that occasion Russia was backing Serbia against Austria. She is now backing Czechoslovakia against Germany.

If this ancient feud flames up again, it would be well to deflect it into those regions where it can do least harm. Humanity and common sense alike suggest that the broad steppes of Little Russia are a more suitable locality than the densely populated centres of civilization in Western Europe.

The recent trend of British policy has been to attract the oncoming disaster in our own direction by a military alliance with France, which in turn is the military ally of Russia - a State that under its present rulers has never ceased to plot our downfall.

To justify this course two ideals and two pretexts are invoked. The first of these is 'collective security.' That argument is a contradiction in terms, for the policy pursued in its name would generalize and extend to Western Europe a war which might otherwise be localised and kept remote.

The second motive put forward for our association with the Russo-French military alliance is the defence of democratic institutions. This argument, too, is bad. Russia is not the friend but the enemy of democracy, and if Germany finds an outlet for her energies in the East, she is less likely to cause trouble in the West.

There remain the pleas that if Russia found herself isolated, she would join up with Germany; and also that Britain and France need Russia as a set-off to possible Japanese aggression in Asia. But these are remote speculations, while the association of the Western Powers with the Soviets entails the much closer risk of embroilment with the National Socialist Government.

German ambitions in the immediate future seem to be limited to the establishment of a hegemony over the small states of Central and Eastern Europe. For many years after the War this hegemony was in the hands of France, as the founder and patron of the Little Entente- a defensive alliance which still exists between Czechoslovakia, Roumania, and Jugoslavia.

To some extent French influence is being replaced by German in Central Europe through Dr Schacht's economic deals with Governments in that part of the Continent.

The Nazis declare this to be a natural development, based on exchange of goods, whereas the French preponderance was an artificial one founded on loans for armament purposes.

Germany is the largest buyer of the agricultural products of Eastern European states. The trading-language of that region has been German for many generations. The town- civilization is largely Teutonic, for in the Middle Ages the princes of Eastern Europe did their best to attract German merchants to their territories. They also made grants of land to German peasant-settlers, who were renowned for skill as cultivators of the soil.

In that region Germany has an equitable interest, and so long as she preserved the integrity of the small States in her orbit, the 'Western Powers would have no grounds to resent the expansion of her influence there. It is natural for a large planet to possess satellites.

But can we believe that Germany will be content with anything less than the complete dominance of Europe, Western as well as Eastern ?

The works of some German writers seem to justify misgiving on this point, but in Germany there is only one man whose opinion counts, and that is Adolf Hitler. In considering the wisdom of concessions to Germany, one comes back to the original question: *Can we trust Hitler?*

His past record is the only reliable foundation for an opinion. Herr Hitler has done more than most statesmen towards lowering those piles of war-material whose shadow darkens our path.

When all European Governments are building up greater forces of destruction than ever before, it may be recalled that in 1934 the German Chancellor proposed the all-round limitation of armaments. If this had been done, it would have saved colossal expenditure and much anxiety.

Herr Hitler's plan was for the limitation of both the French and German armies to 500,000 men. He was willing to wait five years for France to come down to this level.

Tanks and guns were to be kept small, and bombing- aircraft given up by all Powers. Germany offered to content herself, for five years at least, with half the air- strength of France, or 30 per cent. of that of all her neighbours together, whichever was the lower.

Finally, Herr Hitler agreed to admit an international commission to ensure that these restrictions were respected.

On the French Government lies the responsibility of rejecting this chance for all of us to escape the armaments race, and on the British Government for failing to persuade them to the other course. The consequence of refusing Herr Hitler's proposal has been that, instead of saving great sums by admitting Germany to equality on a small scale, we are all obliged to spend still greater sums in trying to be equal with her on the largest scale of which she is capable.

It was similar French obstruction that prevented a Western Air Pact in 1935.

This proposal arose at a Franco-British conference in London, and was laid before the Nazi Government with a request for urgent consideration.

Directly Germany showed signs of falling in with the idea, the French Government complicated the whole question by insisting that the proposed 'Locarno of the air' should be linked with an Eastern European Pact of Non-Aggression. This raised a shoal of supplementary issues on which the Western Air Pact was wrecked.

It is wrong to suppose that Herr Hitler's administration has been one solely of challenge, menace, and repudiation. There have been times when the German Government was willing to co-operate rather than compete. Had these opportunities been taken, Europe might now be on a safer path than the precipitous slope of rearmament which may ultimately lead to the abyss of war.

As further evidence that it was not diplomatic bluff which inspired Herr Hitler's proposals of disarmament and twenty-five years' peace with every nation 'whose frontiers marched with those of Germany, I may quote parts of a letter which he addressed to Viscount Rothermere on May 3, 1935, expressing his views on war as an instrument of national policy. They are as follows:

“ Nine-tenths of the blood poured out on battlefields during the last three hundred years in Europe has been wasted. In those three hundred years Germany has lost from twenty to twenty-five million lives in wars which were intrinsically without benefit to the nation, if benefit is estimated in terms of practical advantage rather than dubious prestige.

“ All hope for the future is dead, so far as the human eye can see, unless it comes from England and Germany.

“ I am no new advocate of an Anglo-German understanding. In Germany I have made between four and five thousand speeches to small, large, and mammoth audiences, yet there is no single speech of mine, nor any line that I have written, in which I have expressed anything contrary to this conception, or against an Anglo-German understanding.

“ So far as I am concerned, the world may reproach me with what it will; one reproach, however, it can never make—that I have vacillated in my views or been unfaithful in my work. Had an unknown man with such defects set himself to win a nation in fifteen years, he could never have succeeded. This perhaps is the basis of what may, to many, seem the exaggerated faith inspired by my personality. I believe that my consistent mental attitude, my invariable principles, and my unshakable resolution will in the end succeed in enabling me to play a great and historical part towards the re-establishment of sound and permanent relations between the two great Germanic nations.

“ Such an agreement between England and Germany would represent the weighty influence for peace and common sense of 120,000,000 of the most valuable people in the world. The historically unique colonial aptitude and the naval power of Britain would be combined with that of one of the first military nations of the world. If this understanding could be still further enlarged by the adhesion of the American nation, it would be absolutely impossible to see who in the world could disturb a combination for peace which would never, of set purpose or intent, neglect the interests of the white peoples.

“ We have in German a fine proverb: 'The gods love and bless those who seem to strive for the impossible. That is a divinity in which I believe.'”

It might be argued that the armed intervention of Germany in the Spanish Civil War did not accord with these declarations about the futility of war. Yet the Germans believed themselves to be defending vital European interests by helping General Franco.

“ If Spain went Red, so would France,” they say. “ Britain could then shut herself up inside the limits of her Empire; but Germany would have Bolshevism on two sides. The victory of the Spanish Nationalists is indispensable to the security of Germany. You British invaded Russia after the Great War, in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Bolshevik *régime*. Why should you resent the fact that we provided Franco with a set-off to the aid which the Soviet Government gave so openly to his Red opponents?

“ Germany does not want to control Spain, or obtain territorial concessions in that country or its colonies. Her only interest in Spain is as a source of raw materials, like oil, fruit, and iron ore. Germany has no colonies from which to draw such supplies. If the Reds won in Spain, that source would disappear.”

German rearmament, far advanced as it is, has still some way to go. That is a factor making for peace, since it gives more time to make the world safe, as Lord Hardinge has said, “ for the co-existence of democracies and dictatorships.”

The first year's contingent of recruits for the German national service army were called up in June and November, 1936. The estimate of five years has been given as the time required from that date to provide all the junior officers, non-commissioned officers, and trained reserves necessary for an army of forty-two, or even more, divisions. Pre-military training may have made this possible within a shorter period. The German Army is already a most formidable force.

The shortage of officers was at first so great that most of those of military age left over from the Great War were recalled to serve as majors and colonels.

Subalterns were turned out at high pressure by twelve Military Academies. In pre-War times the German army had only four such establishments.

The 1000,000 long-service men of the Reichswehr provided all the non-commissioned officers needed, but others require to be trained to make good the casualties that would occur in war, and as military education grows more technical and mechanical, this process takes longer.

Another matter that had to be taken in hand was the modification of equipment, especially in the Tank Corps revealed as necessary by experience in Spain. It was a German Staff officer who described the Spanish Civil War as “ a war between Europe and Asia, in which the Powers are trying out their military material.”

There may still be time for Britain and Germany to reach a working agreement in Europe before some unexpected incident starts the great war which every nation dreads, and in which, as Hitler himself says, the only victor will be Bolshevism.

He blames the German Government of forty years ago for rejecting Joseph Chamberlain's offer of an Anglo- German understanding. He himself would not be likely to repeat that blunder.

Dictatorships are a phenomenon of our times which must be faced. They have sprung up in many different parts of Europe, from Russia and Turkey in the East to Portugal in the West. They have achieved great success, while democracy, especially in France, has manifested grave defects. As Mr Lloyd George, who has himself been both dictator and democratic Premier, bluntly put it: “ The Dictators act, while the democratic leaders fumble.”

If the German nation as a whole were hostile to France and Britain, war would be inevitable. Everyone with personal experience of Germany knows that this is not the case. If war comes, the blame will rest on the Governments, not the nations, concerned.

Evidence of the wish for closer relations between the peoples of Britain and Germany may be found in the progress made by the Anglo-German Fellowship in England, and the *Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft* in Berlin. The aim of both is to encourage contact and co-operation. The British unit of these twin Associations was founded on October 2, 1935. It was brought into being by Mr E. W. D. Tennant and a small group of Englishmen with intimate knowledge of German affairs. In 1937 its 700 subscribers included 60 members of both Houses of Parliament, three directors of the Bank of England, and a large number of important industrial leaders, bankers, and professional men. Its secretary is Mr T. P. Conwell-Evans, while the headquarters are at 223 Cranmer Court, Sloane Avenue, London, S.W.3.

Such organisations play a valuable part in breeding closer sympathy between the British and German peoples, whose Governments are still talking across a barricade.

Sir John Simon and Mr Eden once paid a visit to Herr Hitler, but its good effects were undone by the fact that Mr Eden went on to Moscow, to greet with equal cordiality that Bolshevik administration which Germans regard as their established foe.

So long as the British Government allows its freedom of action towards Germany to be limited by relations with France, and, through France, with Russia, it will be impossible to come to an understanding with that country. We have given ample proofs of our good faith to France. It would be well if we could reduce the risks against which we both want to guard by entering into direct negotiation with the Power which France has so far persisted in treating as an irreconcilable enemy.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRESS AND THE DICTATORS

HITLER'S emergence as a power-factor in Europe began with the Reichstag elections of September 14, 1930.

On the day the result of those elections was declared I was in Venice with Lord Rothermere.

The golden sunshine of early autumn was turning the surface of the Grand Canal beneath the windows of his sitting-room into a dancing arabesque of green and silver, and its reflected light sparkled in the faded eighteenth-century mirrors that hung on silk-brocaded walls which had seen much history made.

The peacefulness of that afternoon in the Silent City of the Sea had its counterpart in the calm prevailing on the political horizon. Economic depression lay heavy on the world in the autumn of 1930, but international relations had none of their present intensity of strain.

The post-War situation seemed to have settled down into permanent stability. France, with her great army, was mistress of the Continent. Her allies of the Little Entente, equipped and largely trained by the French War Ministry, stood as formidable outposts along the Danube valley from the German frontier to the Black Sea.

The surprising rebirth of Italy under Mussolini was certainly a new development, but to the outside world the Duce's achievements still seemed to be solely of sociological importance.

As for the international position of Great Britain, the people of that country in 1930 regarded it as one of natural and unshakable security, perpetuated by the terms imposed in the Treaty of Versailles upon the last of a long series of unsuccessful challengers.

With France, the only first-class military Power in Europe, the British Government was in close co-operation. Germany's Navy lay at the bottom of Scapa Flow. She was debarred from building an air fleet or raising a great army. The German nation contained, moreover, a multitude of mutually hostile political parties; Nazis and Communists were carrying on a covert civil war of murder and reprisal.

Most conclusive and reassuring argument of all - no European country except Britain and France had any money, so that, in view of the costliness of armaments, it was clearly impossible for the peace prevailing on the Continent to be put in peril.

That peace was furthermore guaranteed by the League of Nations. At the first sign of trouble a meeting of the Council would be called at Geneva. It was believed that a warning from this body would suffice to curb the head-strong and subdue the proud.

Such was the European political background on the day that a telegram reached Lord Rothermere in Venice, reading: "*Result of Reichstag Elections-Social Democrats 143, National Socialists 107.*"

Just over two years before, the Nazi representatives in the German Parliament had numbered 12, and represented 810,000 votes. At one bound they had become its second strongest party, with an electoral backing of 6,400,000 voters.

Lord Rothermere read the telegram aloud. Then he said: “ Remember this day. *Hitler is going to rule Germany*. As sure as we sit here, this is the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Europe.”

Yet that first electoral success of the Nazi Party aroused only a passing interest in Europe. Even two years later Hitler seemed for a moment to be losing his grip on Germany. Eight weeks before he became Chancellor on January 30, 1933, the Nazi representation in the Reichstag, which had been 230 seats after the election of July 3 I, 1932, sank to 196, and the strength of the Party in the country fell by two million votes.

I motored with Lord Rothermere from Venice to Munich, and it was from there, a little over a week later that he sent to the *Daily Mail* an article which raised a flood of commentary, criticism, and incredulity.

“ A new Germany is rising before our eyes,” he said. “ She is strong to-day; she will be much stronger a few years hence. She is determined now; she may before long be defiant.”

The situation which Lord Rothermere, amid general scepticism, foresaw, is to-day in full existence. The Peace Treaty has been repudiated by deliberate instalments, until only its territorial clauses remain. The nation whose independence was then under mortgage to reparation liabilities, armament limitations, demilitarization of territory, internationalisation of waterways, and other servitudes has become the most challenging force in the affairs of Europe.

A huge air force, a mighty and magnificently equipped conscript army, and a completely modern navy are the powerful instruments of which Germany now disposes to support her still unsatisfied ambitions.

Seldom in history have seven years seen so complete a change in international relations as the one brought about by Adolf Hitler.

There is a disturbing likeness between the critical times in which we live and the years of tension that led up to the Great War. As then, there are two camps in Europe. They used to be Triple Entente and Triple Alliance. Now they are 'democratic states 'and 'authoritarian governments,' , Rome-Berlin axis' and 'Paris-Moscow axis.'

The only difference is that the armaments on either side are costlier, far more deadly, and more extensive than before 1914.

Again, as a quarter of a century ago, the comforting statement is often heard that 'nobody really wants to fight,' supported by the reassuring reflection that 'everyone knows war doesn't pay.'

This opinion, however, is more common in those countries which were victorious in the last conflict. To Germany it has always seemed that war paid her conquerors very well, while to Italian eyes its potential prizes still gleam brightly because, although on the winning side, they were baulked of a fair share of the spoils.

But the general run of mankind has grown used to living dangerously. Events that in the early years of the century would have put the whole world into a panic are now dismissed with the confident assumption that in some way a peaceful solution for them will be found. There is a curious contrast between Governmental anxiety and popular calm.

The general indifference to the rumblings of the European volcano may be partly due to the fact that never have personal contacts between the citizens of Western European States

been so frequent and so friendly. The number of people in Britain with pleasant individual memories of Germany constantly increases, and though currency regulations restrict the visits of Germans to this country, there is much eagerness on their part to come. A traveller on the Continent who formed his opinion only from social intercourse might conclude that this was a period of perfect international goodwill.

That this friendliness is not at present reflected in official relations is the misfortune, and may become the tragedy, of our times.

These relations will tend to become more strained as the burden of war-preparations in each country makes itself increasingly felt. It does not help to ease this discomfort that a carping and critical attitude should be adopted alike by the German and Italian and by the British Press.

Neither of the Dictators has any personal knowledge of Britain to moderate the unfriendly impression made by many of the extracts from English newspapers laid before them.

It is clear, therefore, that however pleasant the individual receptions which Germany and Italy extend to British travellers, this amiable treatment has little bearing upon the possibilities of a clash with them. In those authoritarian countries the people have no voice in the decisions that might lead to war. They have been taught to trust and obey, whereas the citizens of democratic states are accustomed to criticize and even to obstruct.

Under the dictatorships, the control of the Press has been entirely taken over by the State. The purpose of German and Italian journalism is no longer to gain readers or develop a large advertising-revenue, to inform or even to entertain its public. Its functions are those of a department of public policy, and the selection of newspaper contents is governed solely by their value, as State propaganda, either within the national frontiers or beyond them.

In the democratic countries a large part of the Press has moved in the opposite direction. Instead of putting national interests first, its outlook on public affairs is dominated by a set of vague and visionary principles.¹

Because Germany and Italy have evolved a new national system which rejects many of the theories and practices traditional in Britain, Left-Wing British newspapers assume that these *régimes* are tyrannies imposed by force.

No account is taken of the fact that according to every test which can possibly be applied, the overwhelming majority of both nations enthusiastically admires and supports the methods and policies of their leaders. The evidence of this is simply denied. When Hitler holds a plebiscite, the sweeping majority in his favour is said to be faked. When Mussolini is acclaimed by vast crowds of his fellow-countrymen, the explanation put forward is that they are acting under compulsion of the police.

Passing from the origins of the Dictatorships to their actual record, condemnation becomes still more severe. The great and incontestable benefits conferred by these hard-working authoritarian Governments are dismissed with the contemptuous comment that they are “worthless if bought at the price of freedom.” Every effort is made to concentrate public attention on those features of Fascist or Nazi administration which are uncongenial to modern ideas, although parallels to them can generally be found in our own not-far-distant past.

These fastidious opinions would carry more weight if they were not so obviously biased. Every act of violence or oppression that can be charged to Germany or Italy has been

¹ Notable exceptions to this aberration are the *Daily Mail*, with its associated newspapers, and the *Observer*

anticipated on a far bigger scale by the Soviet Government, without any similar disapproval from the same source. The critics of authoritarian rule strain at the Fascist gnat but swallow the Communist camel.

Censure in the British Press of German and Italian Government procedure is intensified in its effect by the great increase in the exchange of national opinion that has taken place in recent years. Air-transport now carries British newspapers on the day of publication to almost every capital in Europe, where Government-controlled wireless services give wide and immediate publicity to any hostile expression of opinion they contain. Thus a phrase hastily or maliciously forged in Fleet Street may within a few hours be doing damage to British relations with the country to which it refers.

The result has been to produce in the European atmosphere that tense strain which has been compared by the Prime Minister, Mr Neville Chamberlain, to those conditions in the High Alps where “ an incautious move or even a sudden loud exclamation may start an avalanche.”

Whereas in the past the common reproach against most British newspapers was their insularity of outlook, to-day some of them have become dangerously cosmopolitan. Their comments on the activities of foreign Governments are no longer confined to matters in which Great Britain has a direct interest. They extend to any aspect of their national life that seems to infringe the standards that this country has set up for itself.

But this activity is by no means limited to newspapers. To meddle in the internal affairs of neighbouring nations has become a hobby in other departments of public life. The ears of many people are kept pressed to the party-wall, eager for sounds of grievance or discontent in the adjoining establishment, and unflattering comments are loudly expressed upon the way in which it is conducted.

‘Investigating committees’ are even formed to travel abroad and draw up reports on aspects of the life of Continental countries which are no concern of ours.

Undeterred by imperfect knowledge of the facts, societies of British busybodies have acquired the habit of passing votes of censure on foreign Governments whose views are not in harmony with their own.

Bishops have added to their religious duties the function of making scathing pronouncements on the affairs of other nations with which they are acquainted only by hearsay, or through brief visits organised by propaganda departments of the particular political factions to which these indiscreet clergymen have promised their support. The Governments of those countries are led to overestimate the importance of such statements by the fact that they come from the dignitaries of a State Church who have a place in Parliament.

It is fortunately the case that no one can challenge the right of British newspapers to print, or British speakers to express, whatever Comments they choose on any topic, provided they avoid the law of libel, contempt of court, and the Official Secrets Act. Yet things which are lawful are sometimes inexpedient.

“ You should never forget that the Germans have had to rid themselves of a strong inferiority-complex caused by defeat,” a man whose name is well known in diplomacy once said to me. “ By talking down to them from the top of the cliffs of Dover you will never convince them, but only infuriate them.”

This is not the time to indulge the Englishman's traditional taste for teaching other countries to run their own affairs. The sole concern of anyone with influence on international

relations today should be to avert war. Tolerance and restraint may do this, whereas criticism is more likely to provoke than convert its objects.

The German and Italian peoples are better judges than ourselves of the benefits that the Dictatorships have brought. Minorities among them have suffered, but to nothing like the same extent as under Bolshevist rule in Russia, Bela Kun's tyranny in Hungary, or the present Red Government in Spain.

Strict as the authoritarian Governments are, they look after their people well. Their powers are so great that any measure of public welfare is put in force directly the need for it appears.

The children provide the best testimony to the advantages of these *régimes*. In physique and general appearance the boys and girls of Germany and Italy are now the finest in Europe. They surpass those of other nations as much as British boys used to in the days when they were the only ones who played games, and German children were pale, spectacled little students, while Italian boys took their only exercise walking in processions wearing a semi-naval uniform and shepherded by a black-cassocked priest.

German and Italian schools devote a part of every afternoon to physical training. Their exercises are a parade of bronzed, muscular young bodies like Greek statues come to life. The *Hitler-Jugend* and *Avanguardisti* not only give their youthful members a grounding as athletes but as citizens with a sense of duty to the State. At their summer camps they practise sports all day, and at night they listen to ardent speeches on patriotic principles. "Our duty is to die for Germany" was the motto in giant letters dominating one camp of 6,000 boys that I visited.

There is a danger that while the people of Britain are invoking the name of freedom they may fall behind. In some vital aspects of national strength and welfare we are already surpassed by the Germans and Italians. Personal liberty in Britain too often means liberty to slack. The democratic countries must ask themselves whether, with their easy-going ways, they can hope to compete, even in the pursuits of peace, with these highly disciplined nations whose spirit has been steeled in the fire of adversity.

Though some of the British Press looks no deeper than the cross-currents on the surface, a great tide of national progress is running in Germany and Italy. Long after the mud that it stirs up has settled, the good that it brings with it will remain.

I know these dictators



The Dictators visit the tombs of the Munich Putsch victims

[Photo: International Graphic Press Ltd.]

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE DUCE AS A MAN

STEP into the dynamo-room of a power-station, and your scalp starts to tingle with the electricity in the air. To enter the presence of Mussolini produces a similar effect upon the mind. He radiates will-power as a stove throws out heat. One feels his strength of character before he begins to speak.

When strangers are shown into his great room at the Palazzo Venezia, large as a riding-school and lofty as a church, he sometimes keeps his head bent over his work table in the far corner till they have reached him. This is not a display of indifference to their arrival, but is due to the fact that some people are too nervous to face the long approach across an empty floor under his gaze. His force of personality, in fact, surrounds him with an atmosphere that is almost physical.

Mussolini incarnates the new Italy even more than Hitler embodies the new Germany. The Führer gave new form to a national substance that was already there. He restored the confidence of the German people in its own great qualities, and created a system of State-service in which they have found more effective scope. The Duce's first task was to mould the human material with which he had to deal. No other nation bears the imprint of one man's mind and will so strongly as Italy does today.

Thanks to a kindly climate, Italians have been accustomed, ever since Roman days, to discuss public business in the open air. Mass-meetings play an important part in their national life. They are the medium by which the Duce expounds his policy. Whereas British Prime Ministers make such statements in the House of Commons, Mussolini stands on a balcony and harangues the crowd.

Latin peoples like vivid language, and Mussolini accordingly adopts a forcible style. Speeches that have to be shouted to excited multitudes in the open air would lose their effect if they were phrased in moderate and guarded terms.

The same conditions explain the somewhat histrionic manner which the Duce displays in public. To make a gesture effective to the eyes of a vast audience it has to be exaggerated.

Though Mussolini may pose before the crowd, there is nothing affected or artificial about him in private. His manner is downright and generally cordial. He cannot conceal his strength of character, for it is as much a part of him as his flashing eyes, strong hands, or Roman-Emperor-like head. But the emphasis of his tone is not meant to dominate his listener. The Duce's positive style of talking is a reflection of the workings of his mind. Categorical cogency of thought gives precision and assurance to his words.

He has all the qualities of a first-class newspaper-man. That is a comparison which Mussolini himself would appreciate. At the last Italian census he filled up his own form, and on the line marked 'occupation' he wrote- not in humility, but pride-*Giornalista*.

He has a keen sense of the value of words, and abhors verbiage. His style, both in talking and writing, is concise and definite. His mind seizes instantly on a new idea, or on the

essential fact among a mass of detail. Italian diplomats who bring him long verbal reports on complicated international questions often find their own minds clarified by reading in the newspapers next morning a succinct summary of all the important points in the situation, dictated by the Duce himself directly they left him.

His power of concentration is great, and he enjoys using it. Mussolini has the gift of throwing himself into the occupation of the moment with as much vigour as if it were the only duty of the day. Each of the long succession of people that he receives gets the impression that the Duce's entire attention is concentrated upon him and his business. His mind never wanders, and he can cut out cares and anxieties by a simple effort of will. Going to bed between ten and eleven o'clock, he sleeps seven or eight hours each night, however complicated or critical may be the problems of the moment. "I Just close the sluice-gate," was the picturesque expression he once used to me.

A similar business-like regularity marks his awakening. He follows Napoleon's precept: "When it is time to turn over in bed, it is time to turn out." He gets up directly he wakes, takes a few deep breaths at the open window, and goes at once to a tepid bath.

Mussolini attaches the same importance to massage as did the ancient Romans, but he rubs himself down instead of having it done for him. He also shaves himself, though most Italians prefer to have this done by a barber. Then he dresses in riding-clothes, running his eye meanwhile over two or three morning papers propped up on a stand before him.

Breakfast consists of a glass of milk, sipped in small gulps, which is the only food that Mussolini takes before his lunch at two o'clock in the afternoon.

At about 7.30 A.M. he sets out for an hour on horseback.

This is the recreation that gives him most pleasure of any. He has studied horsemanship under the well-known Roman instructor d' Angelis, and by characteristic determination, has become a good rider. "I jumped a fence of 1 metre 20 (about 4 feet) to-day," he remarked with satisfaction when receiving me once at his office in riding-breeches and boots.

Taking an early morning walk in the Villa Borghese Gardens, I have seen the Duce on a big chestnut horse going over the jumps with which the park is provided. On one occasion I followed him to the gate, where his car was waiting. Mussolini dismounted, and got into the car, whereupon the horse, which had been left free, came up and put his head through the window to take a piece of sugar from his rider. "*Cam'è carino!*" murmured the little group of spectators sympathetically.

By 8.30 A.M. Mussolini is back at the Villa Torlonia, and a few minutes before nine he sets out by motor-car for his office at the Palazzo Venezia, where he stays till two in the afternoon. At that time he goes home for lunch, and afterwards returns to work till about eight o'clock at night.

The Duce eats little meat, and often does without it for days together. His midday meal is the chief one of the day. The Italian national dishes of *risotto* and *pasta* are his favourites. He eats a lot of vegetables-mainly spinach, peas, beans, or celery, served without sauce or butter-and fruit. He especially likes grape-fruit. Once, when he was in a place that had none, an aeroplane was sent to Genoa to get some from the stores of an Italian liner. He drinks no spirits or liqueurs and very little wine. He has told me, in fact, that his wine-drinking is practically confined to public dinners that prove unusually tedious. He never takes coffee or tea, but every afternoon - like the mildest of old gentlemen, to use his own phrase - he has an infusion of camomile brought to him at his desk. He resembles Hitler in his abstemious tastes.

Neither of them smokes, though Mussolini used to as a soldier at the front. Both avoid rich foods entirely.

If possible, Mussolini prefers to eat alone, and on two or three days a month he dispenses with food altogether, only drinking an occasional glass of sugared water.

This simplicity and regularity of life have brought their reward. Few men who work so hard at a desk as Mussolini are his equals in physical fitness. In his fifty- fifth year of life and fifteenth of rulership he is more robust than when he came to power. His frame is heavy, but solid and strong, and the liveliness of his eye reflects his vitality.

He has the habit of suddenly breaking away from his work for half an hour's hard exercise. He often fences, generally in the afternoon at home, with Commendatore Rodolfi, one of the Italian masters of the sabre. These are hard bouts, and though Mussolini wears a padded jacket he will not put on a fencing-mask, as he likes to breathe freely, risky though it is to leave the face unprotected. When he was editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, he fought two duels, one with a member of Parliament and the other with a general. He was slightly wounded in the first and wounded his adversary in the second.

The Duce also has a boxing-instructor. In summer he swims every day at Ostia, the Roman seaside resort, or drives a fast motor-boat which is kept at the mouth of the Tiber. In winter he sometimes goes skiing in the Apennines.

All this exercise and careful living keep him in such hard condition that he seems proof against fatigue, whether physical or mental. He never rests or relaxes during the day. His only repose is change of activity. Some idea of his tireless energy may be gained from the following account of his activities on a blazing hot Sunday - his day of leisure - in July, 1937:

Piloting his own aeroplane, he inspected five air-ports;

Visited the new Air Academy being built at Florence;

Called at the sun-cure colony near that city, where 800 children were undergoing treatment;

Saw the trial trip of a new aeroplane at Pisa;

Stopped to watch some peasants threshing wheat at San Piero-a-Grado, near Pisa;

Motored to Viareggio, and bathed in the sea;

Visited the Rosa Maltoni-Mussolini Institute, named after his mother;

Flew back to Rome; and finally

Attended an open-air concert at the Basilica of Maxentino, sitting among the crowd.

I have never seen Mussolini's desk with more than one or two documents lying upon it. He carries the greater part of the business of State in his head. For five hours daily, from 9 A.M. till 2 P.M., he receives a constant succession of reports from Ministers and departmental chiefs. He insists that they make them as brief as possible. Very seldom does he allow a subordinate to sit down in his presence. These consultations consist generally of a sharp interrogatory by the Duce and equally laconic replies. " Don't waste time telling me about things that are going well," he says. " 'What I want to hear about is anything that is going wrong.'"

It had always puzzled me how a man whose experience of administration had been limited to an editor's desk could handle complicated official business so successfully as Mussolini.

“ Many of the experts whom you receive must know more about their own subjects than you can possibly do,” I once said to him. “ How do you prevent them from running policies of their own in their departments? “

“ I have a fantastically strong memory,” was the Duce's reply. “ Whenever I have discussed a subject or studied a dossier, its details remain in my mind for years. In the case of subordinates whom I have not seen for a long time, I always begin by recalling to them what I said on the last occasion and referring to some technical detail of the matter they then submitted to me. As they know that all the documents on that affair have been in their possession without my having had access to them, this impresses them with my familiarity with their work, and they do not venture to conceal any matter connected with their department.”

At four or five o'clock in the afternoon Mussolini begins another series of receptions of visitors and deputations. These are of all possible varieties, and he has an extraordinary talent for adapting his manner to the various topics which they bring before him. Typical of his presence of mind was his rejoinder to an English literary man who obtained an audience with him during the Abyssinian campaign. This particular writer had strongly pro- Ethiopian sympathies, and he determined to make his entry into Mussolini's presence so striking that it would shake the Duce's confidence in his military enterprise.

Accordingly as the visitor, escorted by an Italian official, crossed the threshold, he stopped, stretched out his arm, and pointing dramatically towards Mussolini at the far end of the room, exclaimed in a loud voice, “ You- will-never-conquer-Abyssinia ! “

Mussolini, standing behind his desk twenty yards away, maintained his self- possession.

“ Thank you. Good afternoon! “ was his only reply, and his discomfited caller, who had prepared a long argument to deliver to the Duce, found himself outside the room again in well under ten seconds.

With all these calls upon his time, Mussolini goes into quite minor matters of Government business. I have heard from one of his staff that he even deals personally with applications for exemption from military service. His directions to Government Departments and to the Press consist of short sentences written in large handwriting on the margins of the documents laid before him.

Only once has Mussolini been ill, and that was when he developed a duodenal ulcer at the end of 1924, a year which was the most critical and difficult that he has experienced. Medical opinion in Rome favoured an operation, though this would have kept him away from Government work for two or three months. Sir Aldo Castellani, the well-known Italian doctor who practises in London, was sent for, and advised against it, recommending instead a diet consisting solely of milk.

For six weeks Mussolini took no other food, but though he could not leave his room, Italian Ministers used to make their daily reports to him at home. At the beginning of March, 1925, still very weak, he began his public appearances again, and since then his good health has been uninterrupted.

When Mussolini first became Prime Minister he lived at the Savoy Hotel. This is not one of the big luxury- hotels of Rome, but it displays with pride in its entrance- hall a marble

tablet commemorating his stay. From there he removed to a small flat in a side-street off the Via di Quattro Fontane. Like all Italians, the Duce has a liking for spacious surroundings, and found life in a small apartment irksome. He accordingly accepted the offer of Prince Giovanni Torlonia to put at his disposition a wing of the Villa Torlonia, just outside the Porta Pia.

The Torlonia family was originally the great Roman banking-house, and are mentioned as such by Charles Dickens. Prince Giovanni's principal residence in Rome is a palace close to St Peter's, in the dining-room of which Cesare Borgia is supposed to have been poisoned. He seldom uses the villa outside the Porta Pia, of which Mussolini occupies two floors in one wing.

These apartments are furnished in modern style, and the Duce lives there with his wife, Donna Rachele, and his three younger children.

The household is quite a modest one, without a single manservant, for Mussolini never entertains at home, excepting for a rare garden-party in the grounds.

Besides this town-house he has an austere feudal castle on a hilltop in the province where he was born. It was made habitable and presented to him by the people of Ravenna and Forli. From its thousand-year-old walls Mussolini looks out over the wild confusion of the Apennines, the plain of the Romagna, and the coast of the Adriatic. These heights are the ramparts of Italy, and have served repeatedly as her defence against invaders from the North. Mussolini likes to go there to reflect on difficult problems and take important decisions.

He is the owner of two other little villas, one at Carpena, and the other on the shore of the Adriatic at Riccione, near Rimini, where Donna Rachele and her children spend the summer holidays.

The Duce's favourite indoor distraction is music. He generally plays the violin after luncheon at the Villa Torlonia. Eighteenth-century Italian composers are his favourites, and he takes an interest in liturgical music, especially that of Palestrina. Among foreign composers he prefers Beethoven, Brahms, and Bach. He often goes to the opera on Sunday, generally sitting alone in the Royal Box. He is fond of the cinema, though it is seldom that he has time to see a film.

Mussolini's taste in literature is wide, for it extends to German, French, and English authors in the original, as well as Italian. He likes modern novels, but history is what he mainly reads. For cats and dogs he has a special fondness, which extends to lions. Like General Goering, he kept a lion-cub once, which used to roam about the house and curl up on his lap like a giant kitten. When it grew too big, it was sent to the Roman Zoo, where Mussolini sometimes pays it a visit.

It is characteristic of the Duce's restless vitality that he takes an almost boyish delight in speed. He is a first-class motor-driver, and though in the streets of Rome he sets an example by observing the traffic-rules, he travels fast in the open country. On the closing day of the Stresa Conference, he received me at 9 P.M. and was then just about to start to drive himself in an open car to Rocca delle Caminate, some 250 miles away, on a dark night and in pouring rain.

At the Italian manoeuvres of 1935, in the mountainous country south of the Brenner Pass, I followed him in his Alfa-Romeo up and down the steep and sharply twisting Alpine roads, over surfaces made greasy by continual rain.

The Duce kept up a pace which soon strung out the staff-cars behind him, and as the gendarmes posted on the corners presented arms, he would take one hand off the wheel to

give the Roman salute in reply. Never have I seen a more anxious-looking passenger than the Italian general who sat next to him.

A few years ago he took up motor-cycling with equal zest. He would flash like a comet along the straight Ostia road, and once he had a collision there with a private car. Before the actual crash occurred, the Duce was able to slow up enough to prevent more than material damage resulting. But the other people had had a nasty fright, and their abuse of the motor-cyclist contained almost every term known to the rich Roman vocabulary.

Mussolini's leather cycling-helmet and black goggles disguised him completely. After being reviled for a minute or two, he raised his goggles, and at the same time his escort of motor-cyclist police, who had been left behind, came thudding along after him, to stop suddenly with a screech of brakes and a scrape of outstretched heavy boots.

The fury of the car-passengers gave place to dismay when they recognised the object of their vituperation. This was increased when the Duce ordered one of his police-guard to take the name and address of the owner, but it proved to be only for the purpose of sending him, a few days later, a brand-new car of the same make.

Mussolini had his first lessons in flying when he was still editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*. He passed his tests as a pilot of big three-engined bombing-machines in 1936, on both sea and land. His journeys in Italy are generally made by air, and he flies the machine himself, making light of fears that members of the Italian Government express.

I had long had a promise from him that he would take me up one day, and in Libya, during his tour of that North African colony in March, 1937, Mussolini fulfilled it.

He was to travel about 500 miles by air from an encampment in the desert to Misurata, where Count Volpi, a former Governor of the Province, was awaiting him for lunch.

A stop had to be made on the way, so we started soon after dawn from a rough aerodrome that had been specially cleared on the open plain.

The three engines of the Savoia-Marchetti bomber were turning over as we drove up. Two other machines of the same type flew with us, one of them piloted by Marshal Balbo, the Governor of the colony.

“There's not much comfort in these military types,” said Mussolini, “but you can stand just behind my seat and see how I handle the machine.”

The aeroplane was as full of fittings as a factory, with bomb-racks on both sides, a machine-gun turret rising above the body amidships, and another gun in a compartment below the pilot's feet.

There were twin-controls, and in the other pilot's seat was a general of the Italian Air force. A mechanic and a wireless operator formed the rest of the crew.

The straps of a parachute were slipped over Mussolini's head as he stepped into the aeroplane. This was only a formal precaution, for it would have been almost impossible to get out of the closed machine if anything had gone wrong.

He took off normally, and for an hour we flew at about 1500 feet above the utterly barren desert, close to the coast, where the twin desolations of sea and Sahara meet.

As I looked over the Duce's shoulder, the touch of his black-gloved hand upon the wheel seemed light and sure, and he kept the machine as steady as an air-liner, despite the bumpy atmosphere above an African desert.

Half an hour had to be spent at the tiny white coastal town of Sirte, so Mussolini made a big circle out to sea to give the two aeroplanes following us time to come down first.

There was only a small emergency aerodrome on the edge of the desert, and when he shut his engine off it seemed to me that he was gliding down too steeply. For a moment I expected a big bump, followed by a bounce into the air, and other disagreeable consequences. But just as my uneasiness became acute, Mussolini flattened out and grounded as gently as a leaf.

“ Did you think I was going to make a bad landing? “ he said. “ Ah, I know these machines. Like women, they sometimes need handling gently - and sometimes not so gently.”

After an inspection of the little town, where a thousand people live, though all their fresh water has to be brought from wells twenty miles away, we got into the plane again.

There was no wind. Mussolini taxied the machine to the far edge of the clear ground so as to get the maximum run. As he started his take-off, the throttle-levers of the three engines were not quite fully open, and with a quick movement the Air Force general sitting beside him switched them to the 'full-gas' position. The Duce stretched out his hand to do this one half-second later. When he found that they had already been moved he shot a stern glance at his watchful fellow-pilot. There was only just enough space for a heavy machine to get off in, but Mussolini cleared the first boulders of the surrounding desert by a safe margin and landed at Misurata an hour later as smoothly as the most experienced pilot could have done.

CHAPTER II

MUSSOLINI' S FAMILY

THE Duce has five children, of whom the elder daughter, Edda, and the first son, Vittorio, are married. His family is divided by age into two sections, as a result of the fact that during his early years as Prime Minister, when he was devoting all his energies to reorganizing the administration, his wife did not come to join him in Rome, but continued to live in Milan.



Donna Rachele, as Signora Mussolini has been called since her husband received the Collar of the Annunziata, which gives him the rank of 'cousin' to the King of Italy, is a fair-haired, comely woman, born in 1890, inclined to plumpness, of gentle and retiring character, and devoted to her children. The whole of her time is taken up with looking after them. She has never employed a nurse or governess, and leads a quiet, domesticated life at the Villa Torlonia, with no social interests.

The eldest of the family is Edda, now the Countess Ciano, married in 1931 to the young diplomat who has since become Italian Foreign Minister. She was born in 1910.

The two elder sons, Vittorio and Bruno, served as airmen in the Abyssinian campaign. They were born in 1917 and 1919. Vittorio, early in 1937, married Signorina Buvoli, a pretty girl from Milan.

The junior section of the family consists of a boy, Giulio Romano, born in 1930, and a little daughter named Anna Maria, a year younger, who, in 1936, had to undergo an operation for infantile paralysis, which has now been cured.

Of these children, Edda is the closest to her father. His devotion to her is intense. When she was staying at the Italian Embassy in London in 1935, he would telephone daily for news of her.

Like her father, Countess Edda Ciano has a strongly independent personality, with the same vivacious temperament and keen intelligence. She proved her physical courage at the age of fifteen by rescuing a child from drowning in the sea.

She has a slim, elegant figure, with excellent taste in dress. Her zest for social life is untiring, and her vitality often keeps her dancing until dawn. In a softer, feminine, but very striking way, Countess Edda's features reproduce those of her father, especially the strong chin and those magnetic eyes whose gaze is sometimes so searching, while at others it takes on a fixed, introspective expression of deep thought.

Between Mussolini and his elder daughter there is the additional tie that, unlike his other children, she can just remember those hard days when, as editor of a little weekly paper called *The Class Struggle*, he lived on a salary from the Socialist Party of thirty lire-then equivalent to twenty-four shillings-a week. "As a small child, I often did not have enough to eat," the young Countess tells her friends.

Before she was three, when Mussolini was in prison, accused of organizing Socialist riots at Forli, Edda used to be taken by Signora Mussolini to visit her father in his cell. He always received them in high spirits, assuring his wife that he was having a fine rest-cure and doing a lot of reading.

A warder used to be present at these interviews, and Edda was generally coached beforehand to do something to distract this guardian's attention, so that Signora Mussolini might slip into her husband's hand the messages which she had brought for him from leading members of the Socialist Party.

Edda Ciano is probably the only person who ever talks to Mussolini with unrestricted frankness, and her opinions carry much weight with him. About the year 1932 I had indirect evidence of this.

The Duce had been expressing his regret that British newspapers seldom quoted any but the most bellicose parts of his speeches. "In order to justify the sacrifices I ask from the Italian people," he said, "I am obliged to urge them to prepare for the possibility of a future struggle.

But can anyone believe that, after serving as a soldier in the ranks and seeing men blown to pieces before my eyes, I would ever plunge Italy, if I could help it, into another European War?"

Happening to be on the board of British Movietone News, I said to the Duce, "I hear that your Excellency has been learning English. Would it not be possible for you to express those sentiments in the form of a news-reel interview?"

"I am not sure whether my pronunciation is good enough," was the reply, "but I will draft something in Italian. You shall turn it into English, and we will see what can be done."

The statement which Mussolini prepared was only two short typewritten sheets in length, but when the recording-apparatus arrived from Paris he rehearsed it with me for over an hour to improve his accent for its delivery.

Two or three weeks later, when the film had been developed, and invitations sent to the members of the Diplomatic Corps in London to attend the opening view, I got a message through the Italian *Charge d'Affaires* that the Duce wanted the film withdrawn. The British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Ronald Graham, had told him that his English accent was not sufficiently clear.

It was unfortunately too late to stop production, and the news-reel was soon on its journey round the world. It eventually reached Shanghai, where the Duce's daughter was then living. She went to see it, and sent congratulations by cable to her father. This delighted him so much that, as I afterwards heard, he was thoroughly pleased that his request for the suppression of the film had come too late.

Mussolini has great fondness for children, and especially for his little boy and girl, Romanino (as he is called in the family) and Maria. The boy is of frailer appearance than his elder brothers, who were always sturdy, while the little girl was for a long time an invalid.

Now that these children are growing stronger, their father often joins in their games. A well-known Italian who was one day summoned to the Villa Torlonia told me that he heard squeals of laughter coming from the next room. Thinking that the children were playing there alone, he opened the door and saw, to his astonishment, their father stretched flat on his back along the floor, with little Romanino and Maria pummelling and kicking him.

Mussolini has begun to take Romanino about with him on his official journeys, even when they are made by aeroplane. There was a sympathetic little scene at the opening of a picture-gallery in Venice to which they went together. It contained a portrait of Mussolini's younger brother, Arnaldo, who died in 1931. He began life as a teacher of agriculture, shared part of Mussolini's self-imposed exile as a young man in Switzerland, and later joined him in journalism. There was a strong likeness between them, though Arnaldo's face was softer and rounder, and his character less forceful than his brother's. When Benito became Prime Minister, Arnaldo took over the *Popolo d'Italia* and edited it until his death.

Little Romano had then been a baby of twelve months old, so that Mussolini had to point out the picture to him. "*Ecco tuo zio!*" he said. "*Saluti!*" -and the grave-faced little boy raised his arm in the Fascist salute to the uncle he could not remember.

The Duce has a widowed sister, named Edvige, who lives in Rome, not far from the Villa Torlonia. She is in very modest financial circumstances, and Mussolini makes her a small monthly allowance out of his private income. She is a great friend of Donna Rachele.

When Mussolini's youngest child, Anna Maria, was recovering from spinal meningitis, he involuntarily showed on a public occasion how deep his feeling for his little daughter is. It was at the opening of a new building for the use of the Press. After a speech of welcome, the President of the Foreign Correspondents' Association unexpectedly produced a life-size baby doll.

"We are all so glad to hear of the progress your little girl is making," he said, "and we should like to ask your Excellency to take this doll home to her, in the hope that it may help to pass the time until she is quite well"

At these words Mussolini almost broke down. The tears rushed to his eyes. He took the doll and stood for a moment, clearing his throat as if about to speak. Then in a strained

whisper he said to Signor Alfieri, the Press Minister, " I can't reply to this speech. You must say something."

The Duce walked away and stood with his back turned, looking out of a window, holding the doll clasped as tightly to his breast as if it had been the child herself. It was only after several minutes that he mastered his feelings, and was able to resume his part in the proceedings.

The tenderness of heart behind the Duce's stern exterior extends to all children. Arrangements were once being made for a great gathering of Italian boys and girls to celebrate some Fascist festival. The special telephone-bell which distinguishes the direct lines connecting Mussolini with all Government departments began to ring on the desk of the Minister in charge of this function.

" Has the food for the children's meal been ordered? " inquired the Duce.

" Everything has been prepared. The best caterers in Rome have it all in hand," was the reply.

" Is the bread of the very best quality? Have you tasted it yourself? " came the unexpected question.

" Well, I haven't tasted it, but I have no doubt it's quite good," said the Minister.

" Please have some sent to me so that I can try it for myself," requested Mussolini, revealing thereby not only his care for the child-guests of the Government, but the importance which hungry days in boyhood had taught him to attach to the flavour of a piece of bread.

His peasant upbringing accounts for much in Mussolini's character. He has all the toughness, scepticism, and pertinacity of the *sangue romagnolo* that runs in his veins. His heart is filled with a peasant's passion for the soil-that soil which in Italy is so often ungenerous in response to the labour lavished on it.

Harvest is a spectacle in which he takes a countryman's delight. When it is on, he will leave his work and motor down to some farm near Rome where, stripped to his singlet, he helps to stack the sheaves, binding a hand-kerchief round his brow to stop the sweat from pouring down his massive face.

I remember the expert attention with which he looked on when an ox, harnessed to a village-cart, suddenly went wild during a parade of colonists before him in Libya, and began to plunge dangerously among the crowd. Eager to distinguish themselves before the Duce, gallant Fascists seized the animal's wide-spreading horns, only to be flung right and left by its tossing head.

" You don't know how to handle oxen," roared Mussolini delightedly. " Never take them by the horns. Catch hold of a foreleg. That's the way to master them! "

Mussolini has few intimate friends, but the closest of them are Admiral Ciano and his wife, members of old and distinguished Leghorn families. This elder Contessa Ciano - for, since he became head of the Government, Mussolini has procured for his old friend the hereditary title of Conte Ciano di Cortellazzo - is a strong-minded and intelligent woman of commanding appearance and dominating personality. Admiral Ciano, now President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, led during the War a daring motor-boat raid on the Austrian fleet as it lay in the Gulf of Pola - an exploit known in Italy as the " Beffa di Zuccari." He was an early member of the Fascist Party, and, when Mussolini reached the Premiership, the Admiral was put in

charge of the Ministry of Communications, where he reorganised the Italian railways with a strong hand.

The Cianos have an only son, Galeazzo, who, after studying law at the University of Rome, became a journalist, acting as dramatic critic for the Fascist newspaper *Nuovo Paese*, and as Rome correspondent of Mussolini's *Popolo d'Italia*. During that time he also wrote two plays.

After Mussolini had been in power about three years, the idea of a marriage between his daughter Edda and young Galeazzo began to form, not only in the minds of the young people concerned, but in those of their parents. Edda, then fifteen years old, was at a convent-school at Poggio Reale, near Florence, where the daughters of many leading Italian families are educated. Since the marriage could not take place for several years, Galeazzo Ciano had time to pass the examinations for the Diplomatic Service, and to be attached for a short period to the Italian Embassies in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro.

From South America he was appointed First Secretary to the Italian Embassy in Peking. The Ambassador at that time, Signor Daniele Vare, speaks English and writes books in that language with a perfection only equalled among foreigners by Joseph Conrad. He encouraged his First Secretary to acquire the excellent knowledge of English which Count Ciano now possesses.

There can be no doubt that Galeazzo Ciano would have distinguished himself in the Diplomatic Service even without his family connections. In fact, his chief anxiety as a younger man was that he might always be overshadowed by his father's national reputation. In 1930, being then twenty-seven years old, he was called back from Peking to become First Secretary of the new Italian Embassy to the Holy See, which had been created as a result of Mussolini's Concordat with the Pope.

This brought him together with Edda Mussolini again. The last time he had seen her she had been a schoolgirl. Now she was a grown woman of twenty, and within a few weeks the marriage that had long been contemplated was realised.

Its celebration took place with full ceremony on April 25, 1930, at the church of the parish in which the Villa Torlonia stands. Mussolini gave his daughter away; a family wedding-breakfast was held at the Villa, and young Count and Countess Ciano left to spend their honeymoon at Capri.

Two months later, they sailed for the Far East, where Ciano had been appointed Consul-General in Shanghai.

They were there all through the fighting between Chinese and Japanese which laid waste the Shanghai suburb of Chapei in 1932, and the first of Countess Ciano's two little boys was born to the sound of artillery and machine-gun fire.

Despite this unpleasant experience, she found life in China so agreeable that at one time she wanted her husband to give up his diplomatic career and take a permanent post in Shanghai as Director of an Italian bank. It was there, too, that the Countess perfected her knowledge of English, which, as I have noticed on several occasions, extends to an acquaintance with American slang.

In 1933 Ciano was brought back to Rome to begin a career of rapid promotion which leads many people to believe that the Duce intends to designate him as his successor.

He was first sent as Italian delegate to the London Economic Conference, and then promoted to be Minister of Press and Propaganda.

While he was holding this post, the Abyssinian war began, and the newly appointed Minister went at once to the front, as commander of a bombing-squadron which bore the name *La Disperata*. On his return he became Foreign Minister, and his room at the Palazzo Chigi contains a model of his aeroplane marked with the scars of 42 bullets that struck it during a single month of his war-service.

In build Count Ciano is very like his father-in-law- of medium height and powerful frame. His hair is black, and his square-jawed, clean-shaven face full of expression. When he smiles he shows strong white teeth.

Count Ciano has great intelligence and much charm. Close association with Mussolini, to whom he stands nearer than any other Minister, has led him to acquire something of his manner and bearing. He has a broad outlook on international affairs, which he discusses with knowledge and assurance. Like the Duce, he is a keen fencer. One can step straight from his tapestry-hung office into a bare room which is reserved for daily bouts with his *maitre d'armes*.

CHAPTER III

YOUTH AND EARLY MANHOOD

CHARACTER is largely the result of early environment, and the people of the Romagna, where Benito Mussolini was born and brought up, are notorious for the dourness of their temperament.

That district forms part of the province of Emilia, on the Eastern side of the Apennines. It is an infertile land, whose streams are swift currents of little use for purposes of cultivation. Vineyards laboriously built on the sides of stony hills produce a poor wine for local consumption. Through the meagre soil in the valleys outcrops of rock push up to hinder the plough.

Trees are rare, and since wood is the only fuel the poverty-stricken peasants can afford, their hearths are often cold in the bleak winter weather. The stern temper of this ungenerous region is expressed in its proverb: '*Chi ha freddo salti*' ("If you want to get warm, skip").

Amid these harsh surroundings, at the foot of a hill called Rocca delle Caminate, is a small village of grey stone houses belonging to the commune of Predappio. Its name is Dovia, and in a peasant cottage on its upper outskirts Mussolini was born at two o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday, July 29, 1883.

His father was the village blacksmith. In chilly weather the forge, with its glowing fire, served the local peasants as a sort of club, and Alessandro Mussolini, a big, fleshy man of strong-willed character, was their recognized authority on political questions. He was an ardent International Socialist, and, even in that remote, insignificant village, was under the constant supervision of the police. There were times when he could not go as far as the nearby market-town of Forli without special permission.

Mussolini claims to trace his ancestry to a knightly family which ruled in Bologna in the thirteenth century. His father and mother, however, had both been brought up as peasants. The mother, Rosa Maltoni, had taken a diploma at the Normal School at Forli, and was employed as teacher of the village school at Dovia. In contrast to her husband, she was a religious woman with a strong sense of duty to her family.

Mussolini, like his younger brother, Arnaldo, and his sister, Edvige, was devoted to her. It was she who taught them to read. She insisted, too, that in the home they should speak pure Italian, and not the Romagna dialect. To the other village boys this seemed a pose of superiority which involved young Benito in many fights and bouts of stone-throwing. When Mussolini grew too big for the elementary school at Dovia where his mother taught, he was sent to the communal boys' school at Predappio, two miles away.

By his own account he was a rough, sturdy, quarrelsome urchin, fond of reading, yet equally ready to rob orchards, snare wild birds, or pull the bellows in his father's forge. It was there that his education in politics began, for Alessandro Mussolini and his friends were constantly denouncing the Government and the capitalists. They went so far as to set up a local branch of the Socialist International. For taking a leading part in this, Mussolini's father was sentenced to several months in the old prison at Forli. After his release he was elected as a Socialist member of the village council of Predappio, and he founded a co-operative association there.

Benito's mother wanted him to become a teacher like herself, and to prepare him for that calling he was sent to a boarding-school at Faenza, kept by the Salesian Friars. This was his farthest journey from home so far, and his father drove him to the nearest station in a borrowed donkey-cart. The donkey fell down on the way, and this bad omen was later fulfilled, for Mussolini, though intelligent as a pupil, was so undisciplined that the priests sent him home as incorrigible after he had stuck his penknife into an older boy with whom he had a quarrel.

His education was continued at the Normal School of Forlimpopoli, where he remained till the age of eighteen and took his diploma as a primary-school teacher.

His first post was in an elementary school at Gualtieri.

For twelve months he taught village boys the elements of grammar and arithmetic, but when he was nineteen the prospect of spending his whole life in such cramped surroundings began to appal him.

Mussolini first thought of emigrating to America but neither he nor his family could raise the money for his passage. He accordingly decided to try his luck nearer at hand, and his mother provided him with his fare as far as the Swiss frontier.

Family troubles accompanied this new start in life.

Before Mussolini had actually entered Switzerland he read in the paper that an election-riot had taken place in Predappio. The voting-urns had been overturned and the police had arrested on suspicion all the 'chief Socialists in the district. Among them was his father, who, although he had not taken part in the attack upon the urns, remained six months in prison before being acquitted at the Forli Assizes.

Mussolini telegraphed to ask if he should come home but his mother encouraged him to go on. He accordingly crossed the frontier into Switzerland on foot with exactly *1s. 9d.* in his pocket. Sleeping under bridges and almost literally starving, he tramped his way to Lausanne, where there was a colony of Italians, many of whom had left their country to escape military service or because of political trouble with the police.

Of the two years he spent in Switzerland Mussolini himself has revealed but little. "I worked usually as a mason," he says in his autobiography, but before he had been long in Lausanne he discovered that for a small fee he could attend lectures at the university.

The taste for study, which had led Mussolini as a boy to spend his time out of school reading in the public library at Forli, made him eager to take this opportunity. He was then employed as a hod-carrier on a new building, where his work lasted until six in the evening. He accordingly looked round for a new job which would leave him free to go to the university in the afternoon.

He found it as a delivery-man to an Italian wine-merchant named Tedeschi in the Rue du Pre. Each morning he would set out on his round, pushing a hand-cart or carrying a basket full of bottles over his arm. Many a time he must have passed up and down the long, steep, winding hill that leads from Lausanne to its suburb of Ouchy, on the shore of Lake Geneva, never dreaming that twenty years later his first appearance on the international stage as a statesman would be made at the Hotel Beaurivage, standing at its foot.

Signor Tedeschi, his employer, is dead, but the business is carried on by a son and daughter who were small children when Mussolini was working for their father. All that they can recall of him was that he was a very 'bustling young man,' anxious to get through his delivery-round so as to be in time for the lectures at the university. When Mussolini came

back to Lausanne as Prime Minister of Italy in 1922, he sent one of his secretaries to photograph the Tedeschis' shop.

After some months in this wine-business, he found similar employment in a grocery establishment known as 'La Mercerie' in the Avenue d'Echallens, where the hours were more convenient for his studies.

The course that he took at Lausanne was in social and political science, and lasted for six months. The lectures were given first by Professor Vilfredo Pareto, who is now dead, and later by Professor Pascal Boninsegni.

Between Signor Boninsegni and himself, Mussolini discovered a personal bond in the fact that the Professor had been born at Forli, the nearest town to Mussolini's home. They used to talk together in the Romagna dialect.

Professor Boninsegni is still on the staff of the university. "I well remember being impressed at that time," he says, "with the straightforwardness and determination of Mussolini's character."

In April, 1937, the Duce's former lecturer was sent by the Faculty of Lausanne to present him with the diploma of an honorary degree as Doctor of Social and Political Science. This is the only degree that Mussolini has accepted from any university. In receiving it, he said to Professor Boninsegni, "I shall always be greatly attached to Lausanne University, because it was there that I learnt to distinguish between things as they are and things as one would wish them to be. This was largely due to your teaching."

On the Professor's writing-table stands a signed photograph of Mussolini, dated thirty years after that six months' lecture-course, with the inscription "In souvenir of my stay at Lausanne, with friendship and admiration." Mussolini keeps in touch with his old tutor by letter, and the Professor has once or twice invoked this friendship on behalf of former teachers at Italian universities whose political views have got them into trouble.

He exerted a decisive influence upon Mussolini at one critical moment of his early career. Mussolini's Italian friends in Switzerland were rabidly anti-militarist, and were doing their best to persuade him not to go back to Italy to report for the army. Mussolini himself was so active a Socialist agitator that he had already been expelled from the Canton of Geneva and was shortly afterwards to have the same experience in Lausanne. He nevertheless felt a keen desire to go home and do his military service. The only question in his mind was whether this would be a betrayal of his Socialist principles. He took this problem to Signor Boninsegni, who urged him to follow his instinct and to return to his duty ..

Mussolini was twenty-one when he got back to Italy. He was enrolled in one of those rifle-régiments known as *Bersaglieri*, which are famous for marching long distances at a jog-trot, and are distinguished by the plumes of green cock's feathers that droop down onto the shoulder from a round tilted hat.

Despite his former pacifist prejudices, Mussolini enjoyed his army service. It was interrupted by the sudden death of his mother at the early age of forty-seven. This loss affected him deeply. She had been nearer to his heart than any other human being, and had always encouraged his intuitions of future greatness.

Excused from the rest of his year of military service after this bereavement, Mussolini again took up a roaming life. His stay at Lausanne had taught him French, and with this accomplishment and his teacher's diploma he was able to find a post as French master in a Middle School at Oneglia. Here his Socialist principles got him into trouble with the local

council, and he left Italy once more, crossing the frontier into the Trentino, which was then an Italian-speaking province on the southern frontier of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

At Trento, Mussolini met another man whose name was to become famous in Italy. This was Cesare Battisti, then the editor of the Italian newspaper of the Trentino province called the *Popolo*. Though an Austrian subject, Battisti, when Italy entered the Great War, followed the instincts of his Italian race, and crossed the frontier to join the Italian army. He was taken prisoner, and publicly garrotted by the Austrian authorities for high treason, thereby becoming a hero of Italian Nationalism whose name has been given to streets and squares all over Italy.

Mussolini soon attracted the attention of the police by signing an article in the *Popolo* which supported Italian claims to the Trentino. For this he was expelled from Austrian territory and returned to his home in Forlì.

By this time his father had given up work as a blacksmith and opened an *osteria*, or wineshop, just outside the town of Forlì, to which he gave the name of *L'Agnello*. To cook the macaroni, which was the only dish the wineshop supplied, he took on as partner in this enterprise the widow of a farmhand. Her name was Anna Agostini, and she had a nineteen-year-old daughter called Rachele, a simple but lively and attractive peasant-girl.

When Mussolini came home as a man of twenty-six he was soon an outstanding figure in the neighbourhood. He had travelled, learnt languages, seen the world, and paid for his political activities by going to prison and being expelled from two foreign countries. His manner, alternately reserved and fiery, inspired the yokels of the Romagna with awe. They did not like to meet the gaze of the fierce, glaring eyes in that pale face, surrounded by a thick fringe of black beard.

It was natural that the record and reputation of this man, locally known as "Professor" Mussolini, should stir the imagination of the young girl who helped her mother in the kitchen of the *osteria*.

The fact that Mussolini was once more living under his father's roof brought them together. Ultimately Rachele Agostini became his wife, little suspecting that one day she would have the first place in Italy after the Queen herself.

The months that Mussolini spent at Forlì in 1909 and 1910 were a time of poverty and discouragement. He earned a little money by using the knowledge of German he had gained in Austria to translate Heine's *Reisebilder*.

Slightly better times came when he was appointed secretary of the Forlì Socialist Association, and founded a weekly paper to which he gave the name of *The Class Struggle*.

Its opening number contained the first public definition of Mussolini's political opinions:

"We assure our opponents that our polemics and criticisms will be inspired by sincerity and respect for all ideas that are honestly professed. We shall try to avoid that sectarian, fanatic, Jacobin spirit which seems to account for present-day intolerance of the Reds.

"But we shall not spare the charlatans of any party who seek to win applause, subsidies, and financial benefits.

"Socialism is not a graft, nor a political game, nor a romantic dream. Least of all is it a sport. It is an effort for moral and material elevation, individual and collective."

Mussolini's political agitation as a Socialist was marked by all the furious energy which distinguishes him today. The writings of the French syndicalist, Georges Sorel, urging direct action, filled him with revolutionary violence. He led a riot at Forlì to bring down the price of

milk, in the course of which he threatened to throw the mayor through the window of the Town Hall. He was constantly before the courts for breaking the peace.

Already the principles which he later used in founding the Fascist Party began to show themselves in his Socialist ideas.

“ We prefer quality to quantity,” he wrote. “ We prefer the small, resolute, bold nucleus, which knows what it wants and goes for it, to the obedient and docile flock that follows the shepherd and scatters at the first growl of the wolves.”

He denounced Parliamentary institutions as ineffective and corrupt. “ Of all the paralytics that litter up the corridors of Parliament,” he wrote, “ the Socialist deputies are the most paralysed.” He was tireless in attacking the “ well-off Socialist” class. When the Forli Socialist Association offered to raise his salary from five pounds a month to six, he refused to accept the increase.

In September, 1911, Italy declared war on Turkey and invaded Libya. Mussolini organised a protest-strike at Forli. Cavalry had to be called out to repress it, and for two days and two nights disturbances were almost continuous.

He was warned by his friends that he would be arrested, but refused to go into hiding, and when the police surrounded him as he sat at a table on the terrace of a cafe in Forli, he said, “ I am writing a book about John Huss, and you are going to give me the chance to finish it in gaol. You have no idea how pleased that prospect makes me.” Then, holding out his wrists for the handcuffs, he walked quietly off to prison. .

At his trial which took place two months later, Mussolini addressed the court as follows: “ Between us Socialists and the Nationalists there is this difference - they want to extend the territory of Italy; I want to make Italy prosperous, rich, and free.

“ I would rather be a citizen of Denmark than a subject of the Chinese Empire.”

Mussolini denied that he had stirred up the riots at Forli, and told his judges that if they condemned him they would be condemning freedom of thought. He was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, but was released at the end of five.

When Mussolini came out of prison in 1912, he had become a national figure in the eyes of the Socialist Party, and it was not long before he was offered the editorship of the Party's newspaper, the *Avanti*, which was published in Milan.

This city, the industrial capital of Italy, was to be the principal scene of Mussolini's political action until he reached power ten years later.

His father lived only just long enough to see his eldest son appointed to the editorship of the *Avanti*. With his death the Mussolini family broke up, his brother, Arnaldo, and his sister, Edvige, both leaving home to get married about this time.

As editor of the *Avanti* Mussolini found his financial position much improved, and life in a cosmopolitan modern city like Milan provided him with greater scope than the parochial conditions of Forli. He threw himself into his new task with characteristic energy, and soon raised the circulation of his newspaper from a low figure to 90,000 daily.

Meanwhile his political outlook was undergoing rapid evolution. The Socialist and revolutionary sentiments that had animated his youth were giving place to a clearer perception of the direction in which the interests of the Italian people lay. And when, in June, 1914, there broke out in Italy a widespread popular insurrection known as the 'Red Week,' he learnt from

its collapse that the capitalist and militarist system, of which as editor of the *Avanti* he was the avowed antagonist, could not be over- thrown by methods of violence.

At the beginning of the Great War, Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance, which had been formed in 1882, and included, besides herself, Germany and Austria- Hungary. It was Italian jealousy of the seizure of Tunisia by France that enabled Bismarck to overcome the ancient hostility of Italy for Austria, and bring her into this combination.

As early as 1896, however, Italy had notified her allies that she could not, by reason of her geographical situation, support them in war should their adversaries include both France and Britain.

In August, 1914, therefore, the hands of the Italian Government with regard to intervention were free, and Italian policy could be based upon considerations of national interest alone.

The official policy of the Italian Socialist Party was one of absolute neutrality, and in the first weeks of the war the *Avanti* preached total abstention.

Gradually Mussolini began to perceive that a nation which remained neutral in the great struggle could hope for little consideration from the ultimate victors. Italy had definite nationalist aims, such as the recovery of the province of Trentino from Austria, and the extension of her frontiers all the east to include the city of Trieste. It was only at the expense of the Central Powers that these ambitions could be satisfied, and men like Mussolini's former associate, Cesare Battisti, began to raise in Italy the cry of "Now or never!"

In October, 1914, Mussolini made one of the major decisions of his life. He suddenly and emphatically repudiated the non-interventionist policy of the Italian Socialist Party and resigned the editorship of the *Avanti*. It was a courageous step to take, for it involved the loss of his livelihood and complete rupture with almost all his political friends.

Early in October he wrote: "I am not ashamed to confess that in the course of these two tragic months my mind has suffered oscillations, uncertainty, trepidation; and who, let me ask, among men of intelligence in Italy and abroad has not suffered, more or less profoundly, the hard travail of this inward crisis?"

His abandonment of the cause of neutrality led to Mussolini being summoned to appear before a meeting of the Socialist Party in Milan. He was regarded as a traitor to the movement of which he had hitherto been one of the leaders, and he was to be formally deprived of his membership of the Party. Amid a fierce outburst of indignant reproaches the expulsion took place, and on November 15, 1914, Mussolini founded his own independent newspaper, the *Popolo d'Italia*. ..

The accusation was freely made at the time that this new Socialist but interventionist daily was subsidized by the French Foreign Office, nor would there have been anything disgraceful in the acceptance of Allied aid in the work of rousing Italy to take up the Allied cause. In well-informed quarters I have been told that a loan was made which was paid back before the War was over. It is certain that Mussolini did not benefit from it personally, for in the early days of the *Popolo d'Italia* it was all he could do to pay the staff and meet the printing-charges of the paper.

The movement for Italian intervention was henceforth led by four men - Mussolini, d'Annunzio, Battisti, and Corridoni. Of these the two last met their death in the War which they had urged upon their fellow-countrymen, while the two survivors were wounded in it.

"Neutrals can never hope to dominate events," wrote Mussolini. "They will always be dominated by them. The creaking wheels of history have to be oiled with blood." His

I know these dictators

agitation undoubtedly helped to sway the hesitating Italian Government towards intervention. Both sides were offering Italy territorial inducements to be conceded at the end of the War, and on May 24, 1915, the demand, led by Mussolini and his friends, that Italy should march against her traditional enemy, Austria, was fulfilled, and the Italian Government declared war.

CHAPTER IV

FROM CORPORAL TO CHIEF OF STATE

THREE months later, Mussolini, now thirty-two, was called up by his old régiment, the 11th Bersaglieri. The first winter of the War he spent in the trenches on the Upper Isonzo, a bleak and bitterly cold mountain-sector. From there he was moved to the Carnia, and at the end of 1916, was on the stony plateau of the Carso, one of the most active parts of the Italian front, where every shell-burst was made more deadly by flying fragments of rock.

Like Hitler, Mussolini was promoted to corporal in the field. His company-officer referred to him in orders at the time as, "Ever the first in operations of courage and audacity." With the exception of a time in hospital with typhoid fever, Mussolini remained at the front for fifteen months. That he received no further promotion he attributes to the suspicion attaching to his political past.

On the afternoon of February 23, 1917, he was engaged with about twenty men of his battalion in carrying out ranging-fire with a trench-mortar. A dozen rounds had been expended when a bomb burst prematurely inside the gun. Four of the twenty men were killed, and Mussolini himself received about forty wounds from steel splinters. He was hit in the right shoulder, right ribs, waist, and left leg.

Taken back to hospital at Ronchi, he lay there for a month in great suffering. He himself has recorded that it required twenty-seven operations to extract the pieces of shell, and that he refused to allow the surgeons to use an anaesthetic while they probed his wounds. Towards the end of his time in hospital, the building came under the fire of the Austrian guns. It was hit so often that all the wounded who were fit to be moved were hurriedly placed in ambulances and transported to the rear. Mussolini himself was still in too high a fever to stand the journey.

The news that the editor of the much-discussed *Popolo d'Italia* had become a casualty spread through the country. King Victor Emmanuel himself called at the Ronchi hospital to see him.

Eventually he was moved to a base-hospital at Milan, and in August, 1917, was discharged from further military service and went back to the *Popolo d'Italia*.

The outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia had produced by this time a strong spirit of defeatism in the ranks of the Italian army. Socialist deputies throughout the country were openly demanding a separate peace before another winter in the trenches, and in November, 1917, came the dramatic retreat of the Italian army, which began at Caporetto, on the Isonzo, and ended only when the troops had fallen back behind the line of the River Piave, fifty miles to the rear.

On the mountain sectors of the front the Italian troops stood firm, and Mussolini's newspaper did much to maintain the national spirit of resistance despite the crushing reverse which had brought the enemy to within sight of the Campanile of Venice.

In October, 1918, Italy's part in the War ended with the victorious battle of Vittorio Veneto. Trieste and the Trentino were occupied, but after the first few months of peace, disillusionment and serious political unrest set in. Socialist and Communist agitators throughout the country jeered at the returning soldiers as having been the dupes of

warmongers. The cost of living was high; taxation was heavy; industry had been disorganised. And a climax of the national discouragement was reached when, at the Peace Conference in Paris, President Wilson firmly opposed the Italian claim to annex the former Hungarian port of Fiume at the head of the Adriatic.

Mussolini and Gabriele d' Annunzio, the poet who had added to his fame during the War by leading the *Serenissima* air-squadron, set themselves to secure Fiume for Italy. In March, 1919, they formed the first *Fascio di Combattimento*, or 'fighting squad,' which was the nucleus round which the Fascist Party ultimately developed.

This meeting of some forty or fifty war-veterans adopted as their costume the black shirt which had been the uniform of the Italian *Arditi*, or shock troops.

Mussolini at this time still called himself a Socialist, but he was above all an Imperialist, fiercely declaring Italy's right to the full satisfaction of her war aims, and was consequently in bitter opposition to the official Socialist Party, which still maintained the expulsion pronounced against him on the eve of the war.

Mussolini and d' Annunzio together organised the sudden *coup* by which d' Annunzio, at the head of a force of Fascists, suddenly occupied Fiume, and maintained himself there for sixteen months in defiance of the Italian Government and of the Peace Conference in Paris. It was Mussolini who raised a public subscription through his newspaper to finance this expedition, and he even threatened to lead a national rising if the Italian Government attempted to turn out d' Annunzio by force.

Yet at this time the Fascist movement was no more than an insignificant sect of Nationalists submerged in a sea of Socialism and Communism. When Mussolini stood as an independent candidate for Parliament at Milan in the General Election of November 16, 1919, he polled only 5000 votes, and not a single Fascist candidate was elected to the Chamber.

The following year saw a turn of the tide in his favour.

Bolshevist principles were spreading so fast that Italian patriots felt the need of a determined leader. Officers who showed themselves in uniform were attacked by Communist roughs and had their medals and badges of rank torn from them. A postal strike and railway strike disorganised the country. Peasants and ex-servicemen settled themselves on the large estates. Police-barracks were besieged and sometimes burnt.

The climax came in September, 1920, when all over Northern Italy the workers seized the factories, in defiance of their own trade-union leaders, and declared their intention to run them for their own benefit. I was in Turin at the time and saw many indications that Italy was heading for Bolshevism. As one walked about the darkened city at night - the town-lighting having been cut off by a municipal strike - revolver shots would often ring out down some side-street, followed by the Fascist rallying cry, " *A noi !*" and by a scamper of running feet - for clashes between Blackshirts and Reds were of constant occurrence.

With the aid of Mussolini's successor as editor of the *Avanti*, I got admission to the main Fiat motor-car works while the 13,000 employees were still in occupation. The gates were barricaded and surmounted by a sandbag parapet. Some 2000 men, I was told, were being kept constantly under arms in the factory.

Inside, the walls were covered with such inscriptions as " *Viva Lenin!*" and work was being carried on under elected Communist leaders, who boasted-perhaps falsely - that two unpopular foremen had been tied to shovels and flung into the blazing furnaces when the factory had been seized.

Nothing has ever brought home more vividly to me the achievements of the Fascist *régime* than a second visit which I paid to those works three years later, which was twelve months after Mussolini came to power. As the manager was showing me round I told him in what circumstances I had previously seen the place, and asked what had become of the truculent Reds who had then been in occupation of the factory.

“Most of them are still here,” was his answer. “They are all good Fascists now.”

The 'occupation of the factories' ended in a compromise proposed by the seventy-seven-year-old Prime Minister, Giolitti, who promised the workmen immunity for their action and a share in the control of the concerns employing them.

This was a conclusion typical of the timidity and impotence that aroused the wrath of Mussolini against all Parliamentary Governments, of whatever party. In an interview I had with Signor Giolitti while the workmen were still in possession, he blandly expressed the view that the time had come for new conditions to be introduced into industry, and remarked that the first French Ambassador to be appointed to the kingdom of Italy had defined it as “a country where more silly things were said and fewer done than any other.”

The inertness of the Italian Government was smoothing the way to revolution. The police shirked interfering with the Communists because they were likely to be punished for any action which aroused protest from the Reds in the Chamber of Deputies. During the occupation of the factories a gendarmerie officer, driving in a lorry with some of his men, was fired upon from the roof of one of the barricaded works. He rammed in the gate of the building by driving his lorry against it at full speed, and compelled some three hundred armed workmen inside to surrender. The consequence was his dismissal from the force.

Municipal administrations, especially in the North, where Communism was strongest, were squandering money on their Socialist employees, while efficiency collapsed. The Communist Party levied forced contributions on working-men. The peasants, who tilled the land on a system by which they handed over part of the crop in lieu of rent, refused to harvest the portion due to the proprietor, leaving it to rot in the fields.

These disorders brought more and more recruits to Mussolini's movement. Since the Government was unable to protect property and check Communist violence, Fascist squads of resolute young men were everywhere organised to take over the duties which the public authorities failed to fulfil. In May, 1920, there were only 30,000 Blackshirts in Italy. By February, 1921, they had increased to 100,000. At the time of the March on Rome in October, 1922, there were more than 300,000 Fascists under Mussolini's orders. The growth of the movement led to the election of 35 Fascist Deputies, with Mussolini at their head, to Parliament in 1921. He himself, after failing two years before to poll 5000 votes, was at the top of the list in Milan with 178,000.

The year 1921 and the first half of 1922 were a time of sporadic civil war between Blackshirts and Communists all over Italy. Communists murdered isolated Fascists. Fascists retaliated by attacks on the 'Labour Clubs' which were the Red centres in every town.

There is an exhibition in the Via Nazionale in Rome where relics, photographs, placards, and other records of this grim struggle are preserved. The streets of those old Italian cities which have seen so much violence and bloodshed in the past once more rang to the oaths of fighting men and the groans of the dying. In Florence a nineteen-year-old Fascist named Berta was thrown by a group of Communists over the parapet of one of the bridges that cross the Arno. He caught hold of the railings as he fell and hung there over the river, whereupon his Red attackers pounded his knuckles with their clubs until they forced him to let go. Communist bomb-outrages were frequent. In March, 1921, an explosion at the Diana Theatre

at Milan killed 20 and injured 50 people. In retaliation Fascist squads attacked and burnt the offices of the Socialist newspaper, *Avanti*.

Mussolini was in constant danger of assassination. Two oddly contrasting objects were never missing from his desk - a glass of milk and a big revolver. On the day of the Diana Theatre outrage a young man came to his office in Milan and confessed that he had been chosen by lot to murder him with a pistol, which he produced, but had been unable to bring himself to do it.

It was in these disturbed times that Mussolini began to take flying-lessons. A big aeroplane had crashed in the centre of Verona, killing sixteen people, including several Milanese journalists, and a Press campaign for restrictions on civilian flying had begun. To counter it, Mussolini determined to qualify for his pilot's certificate. On his second flight the engine cut out as he and his instructor were landing, and the machine crashed from a height of about one hundred feet, with no worse damage to Mussolini or his companion than some cuts about the head.

The Blackshirts began to get the upper hand in the political struggle. The beatings and doses of castor-oil administered by their Vigilance Committees became the terror of Red leaders.

The Fascist squads consisted mainly of young men in the later 'teens and early twenties, and there is no doubt that in many cases their violence was extreme.

Mussolini exerted himself to restrain these excesses, even putting his own leadership in peril to do so. In August, 1921, he signed a truce with the Socialists and the General Federation of Labour "for a return to normal conditions." This aroused violent opposition from a large section of the Fascist movement, and he offered his resignation, which was refused by the Central Committee.

Mussolini set himself to transform the Fascist squads into a political party. He declared this to be "an effort to fortify and enclose in a more iron discipline those who wish to be obedient soldiers under our standards of battle." The programme of the Party proclaimed that it would stand by the State so long as it defended national interests, that it would take the place of the State when it displayed weakness, and would march against the State if governmental power seemed likely to pass into unworthy hands.

Communism in Italy was slowly crushed by the relentless grip of the Fascists, now organised, like the armies of Imperial Rome, in squadrons, maniples, centuries, cohorts, and legions. The anti-toxin which Mussolini had generated in the life-blood of the nation proved too strong for the Red poison which had been injected into its veins.

In a last attempt to show their strength as wreckers, the Communists organised a general strike for July 31, 1922. They hoped that this would cause such riots that the Government would be compelled to suppress the Fascists by force. Every worker was to cease his labours simultaneously. No trains were to run; no food-supplies to be transported; the entire nation was to be paralysed.

To this threat Mussolini replied that the Fascists would give the Government forty-eight hours to break the general strike, after which they would deal with it themselves. Local Fascist organisations everywhere undertook to maintain public health services and the distribution of food.

The strike was a failure, and collapsed in less than a week. The confusion it caused was as harmful to the Socialists and Communists as to the Fascists and their supporters, and its only effect was to drive still more of the middle classes into the Blackshirt ranks.

The saner elements in the country saw clearly that Italy would never be safe until Mussolini came to power. Constant changes of Government had brought nothing but a succession of discredited and incompetent politicians.

The Prime Minister actually in office was Signor Facta, a colourless person promoted by party compromise. He tried to resign before the general strike, and King Victor Emmanuel consulted the leaders of all parties, Mussolini among them. But Mussolini intended to take over the Government of the country on his own terms and not after the usual negotiations with other sections of the Chamber to get a majority.

It was accordingly decided that Giolitti, who had persuaded the workmen to evacuate the factories, should be asked to form a Government. He was eighty years old and taking a cure at Vichy, so Facta agreed to carry on until the autumn.

The whole Parliamentary system was obviously breaking down. The Finance Minister announced that the deficit on the national budget for the year would be 6,500,000,000 *lire*.

Mussolini saw that the time for action had come. He formed a quadrumvirate, or council, of his most trusted followers - Italo Balbo, General de Bono, Bianchi, and de Vecchi.

Blackshirts all over Italy received the order to mobilize and march on Rome. Leading generals of the Italian army, even including the King's cousin, the Duke of Aosta, assured the Fascists of their support. Mussolini saw that the army, the only force capable of thwarting his plans, would be neutral if not friendly.

The Fascist plans were nevertheless kept secret. The Blackshirts gathered at two main centres. The chief was Naples, where 50,000 of them assembled under pretext of a Party Congress. The other centre was Perugia, in the central province of Umbria, upon which the Blackshirts of Northern Italy converged. If the Government had called out the army to oppose the march on Rome, Mussolini would have withdrawn his Blackshirts into the valley of the Po. Then a Fascist Government would have been set up in some town of Central Italy, and the campaign against the capital would have continued. Mussolini himself, after addressing the Fascists at Naples, returned to Milan, where he continued to edit the *Popolo d'Italia* so as to give the impression that no unusual step was being prepared.

On October 26 the Fascist Quadrumvirate sent an ultimatum to the Government demanding the premiership for their Party. The Prime Minister, Facta, who had hitherto affected to despise Fascist pretensions to power, asked the Sovereign to proclaim martial law throughout Italy. King Victor Emmanuel refused to take this step, which might have led to civil war.

Meanwhile the Blackshirts were converging upon Rome from the north and south. In every large town they had occupied the municipal buildings, the railway station, and the telegraph office.

The former complacency of the Government quickly gave way to panic. It ordered barbed-wire entanglements to be put on the roads leading into Rome.

At this crisis King Victor Emmanuel himself took action. Facta had already placed the resignation of the Government in his hands. On the afternoon of October 29, when the heads of the advancing Fascist columns were already near the gates of the capital, Mussolini, sitting in his office at the *Popolo d'Italia* in Milan, received a telephone call from General Cittadini, the King's adjutant, to the effect that the King wished him to come to Rome to take over the Government. He cautiously insisted that the invitation should be confirmed by telegram.

Surrounded by a crowd of cheering Fascists, who covered him with flowers, Mussolini entered, that same evening, a *wagon-lits* of the Milan-Rome express. The supreme moment of his career was at hand.

“What does your wife say?” a friend asked him as they stood in the corridor of the train.

“She said nothing. She only kissed me in silence, and at the last moment whispered, ‘Come back soon!’”

“And the children?”

“The two boys said nothing either, but I asked Edda (who was then twelve) if she would like to go to school in Rome. All she said was, ‘I am not so keen about it. I would much rather you came back here.’”

Next morning the train arrived at the station of Civitavecchia, twenty miles from Rome. The line between there and the capital had been torn up by the Reds, and two Royal motor-cars were waiting to take the Fascist leader to the King at the Palace of the Quirinal.

Mussolini had put on his black shirt, and first reviewed the thousands of Fascists who were gathered round the station, waiting to enter Rome. To them he said, “Friends, his Majesty the King has called me to Rome to form a Government. I shall do so. But I demand from you all calm, order, and discipline. Nothing must be allowed to spoil our victory.

“Italy is in our hands, and we swear to restore her to her former greatness.”

At 11.15 on that morning of October 30, 1922, Mussolini was received by the King.

“I ask your Majesty to excuse me,” he began, “for appearing before you in my black shirt, but I have just come from waging a battle which was fortunately bloodless.”

Mussolini at once agreed to take office as Prime Minister, and obtained the King's consent to hold a review of the Blackshirt legions surrounding the capital, after which they were to be sent home.

Now that the Fascist victory was complete, there was a popular rush to join the movement, and the 60,000 men who had marched on Rome found their numbers increased to 100,000 when Mussolini and the King watched them march past a couple of days later. The army authorities co-operated in arranging this parade, and also the rapid return of the Fascist legions to their native provinces by train.

Without bloodshed, almost without incident, Mussolini assumed the Government of Italy. An entirely new system of statecraft had been established in Europe.

CHAPTER V

DIFFICULTIES AND DEEDS

REVOLUTIONS are not made with kid-gloves. During the struggle that banished from Italy the Red flag of Bolshevism, some of the men who reached prominent positions in the Fascist movement were more conspicuous for reckless courage than political ability. Serviceable as followers of this type had been during the Party's militant phase, they were a hindrance rather than a help in the new task of remodelling the administration of the country to which Mussolini now set himself.

There were in the early days of the *régime* abuses of power by the 'Rases,' as the local Fascist chiefs were called, which damaged Mussolini's prestige but which, amid so many preoccupations, it was difficult for him to prevent.

It stands to his credit that he kept a firm hold upon the 60,000 armed Blackshirts concentrated round the capital for the 'March on Rome.' Mussolini's victory was followed by no Fascist 'Terror,' and his followers returned home without any disturbance of the peace.

Some of the men whom he appointed to high posts at the outset of his administration proved unworthy of them, and had to be replaced. Even in forming his personal staff Mussolini had difficulties. One of his first A.D.C.'s used his position to run up debts he could not meet, and had to be dismissed. Finding it necessary to engage a valet, Mussolini chose a waiter at the Savoy Hotel, where he was living. It was only later that the police discovered this man to be an active Communist, who made reports to his party upon everything that came within his knowledge.

There were disreputable elements within the Fascist movement which wrought evil before being eliminated. This reached a climax in the murder of the Socialist Deputy, Giacomo Matteotti, on June 11, 1924.

No event in the record of the Fascist *régime* did so much harm to Mussolini as this assassination, though the people who made capital out of it were content, twelve years later, to condone the murder of Calvo Sotelo by the Communists in Spain, and countless similar acts of violence in Russia.

The accusation was even brought that Mussolini himself ordered Matteotti's death, though, on grounds of expediency alone, he would hardly have added to the difficulties of the task of unifying Italy by causing the martyrdom of one of his most active Parliamentary opponents. This evil deed was mainly due to the criminal ruthlessness of Cesare Rossi, the head of Mussolini's Press Bureau, who, like the murderers of Thomas á Becket, thought to please his master by suppressing a troublesome antagonist.

Matteotti was seized outside his home by five men, led by an Italian named Dumini, who had been brought up in Chicago. He was dragged into a motor-car and driven off into the deserted region of the Roman Campagna. Some days after his disappearance his body was found buried in a ditch. His murderers received sentences of penal servitude, though they were given the benefit of a political amnesty in the following year.

I saw Mussolini in Rome three weeks after the Matteotti murder, while the facts connected with it were still obscure, and his own definition or his attitude towards it, though not published at the time, was as *follows*:

“ It is no use denying that this crime has profoundly stirred Italian public opinion. It has even deeply troubled opinion within the Fascist Party. It has made my task much more difficult.

“ Certain men who are close to me have been accused of complicity in it. I do not myself believe in their guilt, but, so as not to stand in the way of justice, I have got rid of them.

“ The Parliamentary Opposition, consisting of seventeen parties which are united only in their hostility to Fascism, have tried to hold the Fascist Party and myself responsible for Matteotti's murder, by arguing that if there had been no Fascism there would have been no crime. My answer is that if the criminals can be found, the courts are there to try them. A political *régime* cannot be tried by courts, but only by history.

“ My position is strong,” asserted Mussolini. “ The army, navy, air force, and Fascist militia are with me. So are the Senate and the majority of the Chamber.

“ I mean to use these resources to re-establish legality and order. This week Fascists who have been guilty of violence have received sentences totalling forty years of imprisonment. I intend to enforce strict discipline among the Blackshirts and to make the Fascist militia a properly organised body in the State.”

Il Capo del Governo

My dear Prince, *Mussolini*

I am very
glad that you have just
had the Duchon de ~~de~~ Mail et
I am sure that the first
population et the republican journal,
ambrose - être un ami sincère
de l'Italie fasciste.

I miss nothing anyone pleads

Rome 11 nov. 26 *Mussolini*

A Mussolini letter in three languages – English, French and Italian

[Personal

I know these dictators

Translation:

Head of the Government

My Dear Price,

I am very glad that you have become a Director of the Daily Mail, and I am sure that your very popular and widely circulated newspaper will continue to be a sincere friend of Fascist Italy.

With best wishes and greetings,

Rome 11 Nov., '26

(Signed) Mussolini

There are people who compare Mussolini to the sinister Italian tyrants of the Renaissance, who recoiled from no method of gaining their ends. If he were as ruthless as they affirm, it is unlikely that he would have allowed fierce opposition to his rule to continue in Parliament and Press for two whole years after he came to power. His acts of severity, such as the deportation of political adversaries to the Lipari Islands, were due to his resolve that the regeneration of Italy should not be obstructed. He preferred that the minority should suffer loss of liberty rather than that the benefits he was planning for the majority should be impaired. He himself had been frequently in prison for agitation against the Government, and he saw no reason for treating his political opponents differently now that it was his turn to exercise authority.

With the same motive, he suppressed Italian Freemasonry because, like the Grand Orient Lodges in France, it was a powerful and secret political organisation. To more obvious advantage he abolished that secret terrorist society known as the *Mafia*, which for generations had levied blackmail on the people of Sicily and the Southern Provinces, and was the prototype of the various 'rackets' introduced by Italian gangsters into the United States.

That Mussolini was tolerant of other influences in Italy which were beneficial to the nation is shown by the Concordat which he concluded with the Vatican on February 11, 1929. This was negotiated in a characteristically direct way by the Duce himself. He had given instructions to Count Grandi, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to get into touch with the Department of the Cardinal-Secretary of State for a settlement of the relations between the Italian Government and the Pope, who, like his predecessors, had withheld recognition of the incorporation of the Papal States with the kingdom of Italy in 1870, and in consequence never left the Vatican.

After these negotiations had been going on for months, Count Grandi learnt one day to his astonishment that Mussolini had during all that time been dealing confidentially with Father Tacchi-Venturi, one of the private secretaries of the Pope, and that the terms of an agreement between the Holy See and the Italian Government had already been arranged.

Moderation must have been displayed on both sides, for Pope Pius XI had shown himself to possess a character almost as authoritative as that of the Duce. The Vatican were no doubt pleased to discover the respect in which Mussolini held the Church, since some of his early speeches and writings had expressed atheistic views. The passage of the years had brought him into conformity with the Catholic religion, for which he feels an admiration like that pride in his country which is one of the keys to his character. It was manifest in a phrase he used at the time when the Concordat was signed: "Christianity might never have been more than an obscure Eastern sect if it had not been for Rome."

The Fascist State did not spring instantly into existence when Mussolini came to power. Its growth was gradual.

At the outset Mussolini's rule was not a Dictatorship. His first Ministry included three Liberals, six members of the Catholic Popular Party, and even three Social- Democrats in minor offices.

The achievements of his first year of power were well summed up in *The Times* of October 31, 1923, as follows:

“ It is incontestable that Italy has never been so united as she is today People have become impressed by the fact that Fascismo is not merely the usual successful political revolution, but also a spiritual revolution, and the South is no longer apprehensive of being sacrificed in the interests of the North, or *vice versa*.

“ Fascismo has abolished the game of Parliamentary chess; it has simplified the taxation system and reduced the deficit to measurable proportions; it has vastly improved the public services, particularly the railways; it has reduced a superfluously large bureaucracy without any very bad results in the way of hardships or unemployment; it has pursued a vigorous and fairly successful colonial policy. All this represents hard and useful work, but the chief boons it has conferred upon Italy are internal security and national self-respect.”

Until after the Matteotti murder in June, 1924, the Press and Parliamentary elections remained free. Following upon the boycott of Parliament by the whole of the Opposition, the Fascist Grand Council, in which the supreme power of the State now resides, set itself to reform the legislature, and since 1928 all candidates for Parliament must be selected by the Fascist Party. The functions of the Chamber of Deputies were restricted to passing bills of which the principle has been previously laid down by the Grand Council.

The authority of Parliament in economic affairs has to a large extent been taken over by the National Council of Corporations.

Twenty-two corporations, representing various categories of creative work, came into existence in November, 1934. Their purpose is to create harmony of interest in each occupational group, and to propose legislation affecting trade and industry. In each corporation, employers, employed, and consumers are alike represented.

These corporations, with their connecting body, the National Council, are not above Parliament, whose statutes can override their decisions, but they provide machinery for regulating the complicated economic system of a modern State. In Britain their functions are shared between Parliament, the Ministry of Labour, the Board of Trade, the Employers' Associations, the Trade Unions, and the Joint Industrial Councils.

In Mussolini's first fifteen years of office a magnificent record of constructive work was compiled. The life of the country received a new framework which greatly increased its efficiency, and helped to compensate for the poverty of the national resources.

The results achieved were the best possible proof that the Fascist administration had the willing co-operation of the mass of the people.

The transformation of the movement from a militant party into a creative national force was the foundation of all Mussolini's success.

“ One of the difficulties of making a revolution is that the revolutionaries remain,” he said to me in 1935. “ When only a few generals and politicians overthrow a *régime*, adjustment is easy, but a mass-revolution presents a difficult problem, especially when it has been organised on combative lines. I solved this problem by forming my followers into a Fascist militia, which constitutes a reserve for the army, but lives at home.”

Since Mussolini came to power there has been time for a new generation of young men and women to grow up which from childhood has lived in the atmosphere of Fascism. To some of them positions of authority are given at what in other countries would seem a very early age. When Mussolini is no longer there to provide his powerful personal impulse, he wants the country to be in the hands of people whose ideas have been entirely formed by the principles and practices of the Corporate State.

The benefits which that system has conferred upon the country are too well known to need enumeration. Some of them, like splendid new public buildings and motor roads, are conspicuous directly one enters Italy. The briefest visit is enough to show the great change in housing- conditions that has been brought about. Great areas of slums have vanished, and been replaced by attractive and inexpensive new residential quarters on the outskirts of large towns. Such schemes have taken the greatest care of the country's historic monuments.

Besides this improvement of urban conditions, enormous works of land-reclamation have been carried out. Typical of these was the drainage of the Pontine Marshes, until 1931 an uninhabitable malarial swamp twenty miles south of Rome. This area was converted into 200,000 acres of fertile farming-land, where 75,000 inhabitants drawn from the poorer parts of Italy were settled, with the two model towns of Littoria and Sabaudia as their local centres.

Even vaster schemes of land-improvement were undertaken in Puglia, Tuscany, Venetia, the Po Valley, and Sardinia. Agricultural production was increased throughout a country sterile and sunbaked in the south, stony and mountainous in the centre. The 'Battle of Grain,' as Mussolini called his scheme to make the nation self- supporting in wheat, met with a large success.

Development of water-power provided compensation for Italy's lack of coal. Trains now run by electricity as far south as Rome and Naples.

The system, which Mussolini invented, of providing all workers with recreation in their leisure, brought to the Italian peasant and artisan opportunities of which their fathers never dreamed. Instead of passing their whole lives in the village or city where they were born, such workers now travel anywhere in their own country, during the holidays secured for them by law, at one quarter the regular train-fare. Even the smallest places have their *Dopolavoro* centres to provide facilities for sport and recreation.

The system of physical training for the young which Mussolini introduced set a new standard to the world and has transformed the appearance and spirit of Italian youth. The various organisations of the *Balilla*, *Avanguardisti*, Young Fascists, and Fascist Militia together embody some 2,000,000 youths between the ages of six and twenty-one. About a million and a half girls are enrolled in parallel formations. Athletics, largely neglected in Italy before the Fascist era, have become a passion with the younger generation. Magnificent grounds for exercise and sport have been built in the large cities, of which the white marble *Foro Mussolini* in Rome is a stadium like those of ancient Greece.

While all this modernisation and improvement of the living-conditions of the Italian people was going on, the Duce vastly increased the efficiency and strength of army, navy, and air force. He developed the country's mercantile marine into a serious competitor to all other shipping on the trade- and passenger-routes of the world. He multiplied Italian fortified island bases in the Mediterranean, subdued the Arab tribes in the interior of Libya, and equipped that colony with delightful Riviera-like towns and splendid roads.

In addition to these material developments, Mussolini's dynamic energy engaged him in still greater tasks. Not only has he taken a full share in the international relations of the Great

I know these dictators

Powers, but he carried out the conquest of Abyssinia and actively supported the Nationalist cause in Spain.

The vision, courage, resourcefulness, and will-power required for such a series of vast enterprises are beyond computation. As a political executive Mussolini has no rival in the world to-day.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY DAYS IN POWER

THE first time I saw the Duce, he was a fellow newspaper- man and not yet a Dictator. It was in January, 1922, at Cannes, during one of the many inter-allied Conferences on German reparations. I was talking to some Italian journalists in the hall of the Carlton Hotel, when one of them exclaimed with that off-hand greeting used in Northern Italy, “*Ciao, Mussolini!*”

A dark man of middle height and square build was walking quickly past. “Is that the Leader of the Fascist Party?” I asked.

“Yes, he has come to interview Briand for his newspaper, the *Popolo d'Italia*,” I was told.

The impression left upon me by that brief glimpse of Mussolini was of a reserved, restless, and solitary personality. Those deep-set brown eyes, which I have since seen sweeping their confident and imperious gaze over vast multitudes, had a preoccupied, brooding look. The air of mastery now conspicuous about him was not so apparent then. Though the strength of his personality had been proved by his past record, it is the actual exercise of power that has revealed it in his bearing.

During the early years of Mussolini's administration his force of character was manifested almost aggressively, for at that time he was living under the nervous strain of one of the greatest tasks that any man has ever attempted.

Characteristic of this vehement early period was the dramatic first appearance he made in the field of international politics a month after he came to power. It occurred at the Lausanne Conference, called in November, 1922, to revise the Turkish Peace Treaty. As M. Poincaré, the French Prime Minister, and Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary, were to attend the opening proceedings, Mussolini decided to be present himself.

There was a certain piquancy about this journey to Switzerland, for Mussolini, as a young man, had lived in that country for two years, and been expelled from the cantons of Lausanne and Geneva for Socialist agitation. He had served several terms in gaol there, and the police record of his convictions was still in the files.

When the Swiss authorities heard that Mussolini was coming back as Italian Prime Minister, they suppressed these inconvenient documents, but their existence was well known, and might have put Mussolini at a disadvantage in making his first official contact with foreign Governments.

He anticipated this possibility by resolving that M. Poincaré and Lord Curzon should call upon him after his arrival rather than that he should wait on them. All three statesmen were due to reach Lausanne on the same day, and an official banquet had been prepared for that evening at the Hotel Beaurivage.

Lord Curzon and M. Poincaré, travelling together by special train, expected that Mussolini would be already at the hotel when they arrived. Instead, they found M. Massigli, of the French Foreign Office, waiting on the station-platform with disconcerting news. Mussolini, he said, had not turned up, and had let it be known that he would not do so until the French and British statesmen had been to call on him.

M. Poincaré, who, as an ex-President of the French Republic, had a due sense of his own dignity, was much exasperated by this news. He expressed his feelings strongly. “ *Mais où est-ce qu'il est, ce salaud?* ” (“ But where is the blighter? “) he exclaimed, in the hearing of everybody on the platform.

He was told that Mussolini had left his train at Territet, a town about ten miles short of Lausanne, where he was waiting at the Grand Hotel. He had refused all appeals by telephone to come and attend the official opening-dinner.

Curzon and Poincaré held a hasty consultation. Indignant as they were, they did not want to expose the coming Peace Conference to failure by disclosing to the Turks that the Allied statesmen were at loggerheads, so they suppressed their feelings and went on in their special train to Territet.

There, in the hall of the Grand Hotel, Mussolini awaited them. He held in his hand a thick black stick, which at that time never left him, and was surrounded by a phalanx of young Fascist secretaries of pugnacious appearance, dressed in black shirts and black fezes with long tassels.

It was a situation for which nothing in the past experience of the French and British statesmen had prepared them. An exchange of glacial salutations took place. Then followed a constrained silence. The Duce broke this by suggesting that his visitors might like to dine after their journey. It was too late to get back to Lausanne, where an excellent meal was awaiting them, so the hungry statesmen reluctantly fell in with the proposal.

A meal was hurriedly prepared in a private room. Lord Curzon, whose gouty leg had to be propped up on a special stool when he sat down, had this placed in such a way that his back was almost entirely turned on Mussolini, and directed his conversation exclusively to the French Prime Minister.

The Duce, having now gained his point, was ready to accompany the French and British delegates back to Lausanne. Their special train was standing in the station only a hundred yards away. Immediately after dinner the three statesmen and their respective staffs set out to walk across to it. But to the consternation of Lord Curzon and M. Poincaré, at the foot of the hotel steps was waiting a scratch band of about twenty Italian men and boys living in Territet. Directly Mussolini appeared, this orchestra struck up the Fascist tune, *Giovinetta*, and led the way to the station with the ex-President of the French Republic and the British Foreign Secretary acting as secondary figures in the triumphant progress prepared by local Italian patriotism.

In December of the same year, 1922, Mussolini paid a visit to London to see Mr Bonar Law, then Prime Minister. On this occasion, too, he took with him his big black stick which, like Hitler's riding-whip, had been both a defence and a mascot during the struggle against Communism.

His staff held a consultation about this item of his equipment. They feared that it would make a bad impression in London if the Leader of the Fascists arrived armed with a club. But how could Mussolini be persuaded to give up this habitual companion? His Chief of Staff, Barone- Russo, found an ingenious solution to the difficulty. As the train drew into the station at Victoria, Mussolini asked for his *manganello*.

“ Duce this is your first visit to a foreign capital,” said Barone-Russo. “ I am going to ask you a great favour. Will you, as a souvenir of this historic occasion, allow me to keep this stick? “

It was nine months later, in September, 1923, that I saw Mussolini for the first time since he had taken over the Government of Italy. A band of Greeks in Albania had just assassinated General Tellini, the President of the International Frontier Commission, together with three other Italian Staff Officers.

Mussolini dispatched to the Greek Government a demand for reparation, and backed it up by sending the Italian fleet to occupy Corfu. As the Greek military governor of that island refused to surrender, the Italian ships shelled the citadel. The Greek Government appealed to the League of Nations.

I arrived in Rome to follow the development of this situation and, on the next day, was received by Mussolini, whose office at that time was a small room in the Palazzo Chigi. He had been severely criticised in the British Press, and there was a formidable look in his eye when I came in.

“ If I had not heard that you are well disposed towards Italy, I would not have received you,” he exclaimed, pointing straight at me with outstretched arm.

He then entered upon an explanation of his energetic policy towards Greece which, in view of the course that Anglo-Italian relations have since taken, it is interesting to recall.

“ Had a British statesman been sitting in my place,” began Mussolini, “ he would have acted as I did. When Lord Palmerston, seventy years ago, threatened similar measures against the Greeks in the case of a British subject who was actually a Portuguese Jew, his political adversaries in Parliament congratulated him on his decision.”

A curious sidelight was thrown on one aspect of his public life at that time by Barone-Russo, who received me in the ante-room. The table there was covered with gifts presented to Mussolini in commemoration of the 'March on Rome' nearly twelve months previously. There was a reproduction of the Greek statue called the 'Victory of Samothraki,' and a number of inscribed silver caskets and bronze laurel-wreaths. It puzzled me to see among these objects a pair of fencing-masks and an open case of duelling-pistols. These long-barrelled weapons lay in their velvet grooves, muzzle to butt, and alongside them was a compartment filled with gleaming, round, half-inch-thick leaden bullets.

Duelling-pistols seemed an odd ornament for a Prime Minister's office, and I asked why this grim exhibit was on view.

“ The reason is,” said Barone-Russo, “ that Mussolini still has enemies in Italy. One of them might come here to start a row which could only be settled by a duel. We keep those weapons in a prominent place so that anyone with such intentions may see that the Duce is as ready to meet him with sabre or pistol as with political arguments.”

Mussolini was very particular about the exact rendering of his ideas on Anglo-Italian relations. “ Draft something for me to see,” he said, after a conversation I had had with him late one night during a visit paid to Milan. I sat up till four in the morning writing in English an account of the views he had expressed, and at nine o'clock, took it to his room at the Hotel de la Ville. The Duce settled at his desk and began to translate it aloud into French. I had expected him to hand my text to a secretary to be turned into Italian. It was characteristic of his capacity for taking pains that he should himself render it from one foreign language into another.

“ *Quel est le sens exact de ce mot-là ?* “ he would ask at intervals, raising his bent head from this work.

I watched him closely as he translated. Mussolini had then just turned forty. He was less robust of figure and full of face than he is now, and his head was covered with an already thinning growth of fine black hair. It is iron-grey to-day, and in summer he has his skull shaved smooth, which makes him look more than ever like the polished marble bust of a Roman consul.

He was wearing a morning coat, with the Fascist badge of the lictor's rods and axe in its buttonhole, and I noticed that his cuff-links bore the device of the ace of clubs, which had certainly been trumps in the Fascist campaign against the Italian Reds.

Though fourteen years have passed, I still retain the same impression that Mussolini then made on me.

He is an Elizabethan [I wrote in the *Daily Mail*]. Allowing for altered conditions, he stands to modern Italy as Raleigh and Drake did to England in Queen Elizabeth's day. He incarnates the new spirit which has possessed his nation, and between the Italy of the early twentieth century and the England of the early seventeenth there is much spiritual resemblance—the same intense national pride, the same unbounded optimism, the same fierce sense of opening opportunity, the same quick, sensitive temper, the same tendency to recklessness, the same full-blooded heart of a nation that feels its youth and strength.

Of one thing I am sure: he is not the kind of man to be dismissed by calling him from the depths of an easy-chair in Downing Street, 'a pinchbeck Napoleon.' He is a big factor in present-day Europe, and as such, deserves to be thought about seriously, not smiled at in a politely superior way.

It is easy to 'guy' a great man's mannerisms, as English caricatures of the Napoleonic period show. And no one could do what Mussolini has already done without being great in some respects at least—great in strength of will, in courage, in the vision that sets before a man a lofty goal.

This summary of Mussolini's character met with scant approval from British circles in Rome, both official and private. Mussolini could not last, I was told. He was trying to build a solid structure with defective materials. The Italian character was not 'adapted to all this organisation and discipline. The Fascist *régime* was tyrannical and corrupt. The whole show would break down.

To these criticisms I used to reply in a way which still seems sound to me today. "Italy's internal administration concerns the Italian people alone. Criticizing or quarrelling with Italy can do no good to Britain. The best thing for us to do is to get on good terms with this new Government."

CHAPTER VII

PEOPLE AND PERILS ABOUT THE DUCE

MUSSOLINI'S system is more highly centralised than Hitler's. He holds seven ministerial posts himself—those of Premier, and Minister of War, Air, Marine, Foreign Affairs, Corporations, and the Interior. The heads of other Government Departments stand to him virtually in the relationship of Under-Secretaries, for all major matters of Government policy are kept under his personal control.

The men who are now close to Mussolini were already his helpers before he came to power. But there are others, once prominent, who have disappeared from public life. Farinacci, a former Secretary-General of the Party, owed his eclipse to an over-aggressive personality. As 'Ras' of Cremona, he was the tyrant of his province, popularly called *l'uomo dei schiaffi*, or 'the slap-giver,' from his habit of boxing the ears of those who differed from him. He has recently regained some prominence as the leader of anti-British sentiment in the Italian Press and as an Italian envoy to Spain.

Aldo Finzi, another well-known early Fascist, became Minister of Air but was soon dropped from the Government. Turati, also Secretary-General of the Party, got into disgrace with the Duce and was turned out.

Even Mussolini's ablest and most loyal colleagues recognise that length of service creates no title to continuance in office. "We all go when our time comes," as one of them who had himself gone said to me. Members of the Party in high positions accept their displacement without complaint. The reason for it is Mussolini's determination that the new system which he has invented and established shall keep the impress of his own personality and not be modified, even involuntarily, by the intervention of other minds. The Duce delegates none of his 'authority for long.

Conspicuous among the men who rose with him to power is Dino Grandi, now Ambassador in London, and from 1929 to 1932 Minister of Foreign Affairs. There can be no surer tribute to the tact and charm of Count Grandi - a title bestowed on him in 1937 - than the personal popularity which he retained in London even at the most critical periods of the conquest of Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War. He has done more than anyone to make Fascism attractive to foreign nations. His tall, slender figure, lively eyes, and short, pointed, dark-red beard give him a distinguished presence. He speaks English excellently, though he began to learn it only after he became Foreign Minister. His sense of humour makes him vivacious and amusing company.

Grandi's career is characteristic of the great opportunities which the Fascist system offers to young men. Born near Bologna on June 4, 1895, the son of a small landowner, he served in the War as an officer of the *Alpini*, or Mountain Rifles, winning four decorations for valour, and by the time he was twenty-six he had been elected a Fascist member of the Chamber of Deputies.

In the March on Rome in 1922 he acted as Mussolini's Chief of Staff, and when the Fascist Government was formed, became its first diplomat. Count Grandi has a wider experience of foreign missions and responsibilities than most statesmen of his age. He conducted the Italian war-debt negotiations with America, was present at the Locarno Conference, served as Italian

delegate at the London Naval Conference in 1930, and has been sent on special embassies to Turkey and Poland.

Though his health at first suffered from the damp winter climate of London, he adapted himself to English life and institutions, spending his week-ends at a house he rented near Virginia Water, and his summer holidays with his two small children at the seaside.

He has a charming and beautiful wife, under whose supervision the Italian Embassy has become the most beautifully furnished in London, for she and her husband toured the whole of Italy collecting masterpieces from picture-galleries and museums for its embellishment.

Marshal Italo Balbo is, after Mussolini, the most picturesque figure in Italy. He was born in 1897, and no man has had a more adventurous career in the air. As Air Minister he led two squadrons of Savoia-Marchetti bombers—twenty-four machines—on a flight across the Atlantic in 1933, from Rome to Chicago *via* Ireland, and back by way of Portugal.

As Mussolini says of him, “Balbo is bound to be immortal, for nothing can kill him.” In 1931 his seaplane hit some underwater wreckage as it was taking off at Capri and immediately sank. Though strapped into his seat and wearing a parachute, Balbo managed to get out of the machine and reached the surface after being under water for nearly a minute. He was injured on the face, chest, and legs, but took another seaplane and flew himself to Rome, where he attended a meeting of the Fascist Grand Council the same evening.

Born at Ferrara, Balbo studied law at the university there, and served as an officer in the *Arditi*, or shock-troops. He was one of Mussolini's earliest associates, and took a vigorous part in the Fascist struggle against Communism. Collecting 3000 men, he captured Ravenna from the Reds in 1921, and was one of the *Quadrumvirate* which organised the march on Rome.

In 1934, after Balbo had been Minister of Air for some eight years, he was unexpectedly transferred to the Governorship of Libya. There his astounding energy has been diverted into new courses, among them the building of the magnificent motor-road twelve hundred miles long, from the frontier of Egypt to that of Tunis, which Mussolini inaugurated in March, 1937.

The Duce's tour for that purpose, which I accompanied, was organised with an efficiency and lavishness characteristic of Balbo's opulent nature. At a great camp pitched on the edge of the Sahara Desert, where even the water had to be brought many miles by motor-lorry, the Marshal gave a dinner to about twenty people in his tent, at which we had caviar, fresh fish, and iced wine and fruit flown from Italy that day by aeroplane.

Everything possible had been done to make this desert camp picturesque. Mussolini's great tent, standing alone in the centre, was surrounded by a guard of white-robed Arabs on cream-coloured camels, standing ghostly and motionless under the velvet darkness of the African sky. And, as if to complete the 'Imperial Cæsar' setting, before the tent-door was tethered a cheetah, whose eyes shone green in the darkness.

Balbo looks and acts like a reincarnation of the militant and magnificent Italian princes of medieval days. His robust figure, powerful frame, short red beard, lively, roguish eyes, and thick auburn hair help the resemblance.

The Marshal's adventures continue. Only a month before I was in Libya he had a forced landing when flying alone over the desert far back in the interior, and might have died of thirst if his invariable good fortune had not brought up a group of nomad Arabs who, by still further good luck, instead of murdering and robbing him, provided food and water until his stranded machine was sighted by one of the scores of aeroplanes that had been sent out to look for him.

Dino Alfieri, the Minister of Popular Culture, is another of the Duce's close collaborators. A dark, handsome, clean-shaven man in the thirties, Signor Alfieri has much charm of manner and is a popular figure in Roman society. Like several other leading men in the Fascist Party, he was originally a lawyer by profession, and has headed successful missions abroad.

The question "Who will succeed Mussolini?" is asked less frequently in Italy than in other countries. Italians do not expect Mussolini's powers to be passed on intact to anyone. They think that the Fascist engine has now acquired a momentum of its own which will keep it running even without the Duce to act as supercharger. Mussolini's work will be carried on, they believe, by the Corporate State, with what they term an 'aristocracy of Fascism' at its head. It was under such an oligarchy that Venice reached her greatest prosperity. Another precedent is to be found in Britain, where national affairs, throughout the nineteenth century at least, were conducted by a close group of families which made statecraft their vocation

To continue the concentration of supreme power in the hands of one individual might be dangerous, for no successor could inherit the prestige and authority which Mussolini has established by personal achievement.



The Duce on his visit to Libya, March, 1937

[Associated Press Photo.]

Dictatorship is proved by the experience of Germany and Italy to be a very powerful tonic. Like other stimulants, its benefits may be undone by too protracted use. As Bismarck said in his Reichstag speech on June 12, 1882 : " There are times when Government must be liberal,

and times when it must be dictatorial. Conditions change. Nothing is eternal." (*Es giebt Zeiten wo man liberal regieren muss, und Zeiten wo man diktatorisch regieren muss; es wechselt alles; hier giebt es keine Ewigkeit.*)

Modern Dictatorships are largely a consequence of the impulse given to the spirit of nationalism by the Great War. If peace can be preserved in Europe, there is a prospect that increasing approximation of standards of life, together with better communications and closer intercourse, may modify the present jealous division of that small continent into rigidly defined and mutually suspicious compartments. It has been one of the greatest achievements of Fascism and Nazism to abolish class distinctions and unite all citizens in the service of the State. When this ideal has been extended to the union of all peoples in the service of civilisation, mankind will enter on a happier age.

Though Mussolini keeps all branches of the national administration closely under his control, he shows no anxiety about the possible consequences of his own sudden disappearance from the scene. At fifty-five, he leads a life which with his constant flying, motoring, fast motor-boating, and horseback-jumping is more full of physical risk than that of the average young man.

In addition to sporting dangers he has to face those perils which surround many heads of Governments, especially those who have introduced great changes entailing hardships on minorities. About these he shows the same unconcern.

The belief prevails abroad that the Duce is closely guarded, but the only occasions when such precautions become at all conspicuous are those when large numbers of foreigners are present. During the Stresa Conference in 1935, young men in plain clothes belonging to the secret police clustered about him like a swarm of bees, and detectives stood in pairs under almost every lamp-post.

For contacts with his own fellow-countrymen such vigilance is not thought necessary. When he gets out of his motor-car on journeys through the provinces the peasants often surge round him without hindrance.

Mussolini's confidence in himself and his destiny is so complete that the risk of assassination never worries him. Yet the earlier years of his *régime* produced a dozen plots against his life. Some of them came so near success that his belief that he will die in bed might seem to be well-founded.

The first attempt was made on the night of August 31, 1924. Some person who was never discovered fired a rifle-bullet from a house-window in Rome as his car passed by, hitting the one that followed it.

Little more than a year later, the world was startled by news of a melodramatic plot to shoot him as he addressed the crowd from the balcony of the Palazzo Chigi on Italian Armistice Day, November 4. A former Socialist Member of Parliament named Zaniboni, wearing officer's uniform, had taken a room in the Hotel Dragoni, opposite the Palazzo Chigi. He was arrested there on the morning of the day that Mussolini was to speak, and found to have with him a Mannlicher sporting-rifle with telescopic sights. By aiming from behind the window-shutters he could hardly have failed to hit his mark about fifty yards away.

Mussolini himself has stated that Zaniboni was the agent of the Czechoslovak Socialists, who had paid him 300,000 francs to start an anti-Fascist revolution. The plan was alleged to be that when the country had been thrown into confusion by Mussolini's death, General Ricciotto Garibaldi, an anti-Fascist living abroad, should land on the coast like his famous forbear, with a few hundred Socialists from France, and attempt to seize the Government.

General Capello, commander of the Italian Second Army in the War, and a prominent Freemason, was accused of complicity. He and Zaniboni both received sentences of thirty years' imprisonment.

The next attack was even more extraordinary, for the would-be assassin turned out to be an Irish lady of good family, named Miss Violet Gibson. It happened on April 7, 1926. Mussolini had been opening an International Congress of Surgeons in one of the buildings on the Capitol, and was walking slowly, at the head of a large group of people, down the broad, shallow steps that descend the hill. Among the throng of onlookers was Miss Gibson, dressed in black. She had already attracted attention by trying to get into the Congress and asking where the Premier was.

Suddenly a revolver-shot rang out. Mussolini afterwards said that the report made him instinctively jerk back his head. This may have saved his life, for the bullet missed entering his brain by less than half an inch. Instead, it only scraped the bridge of his nose.

“ A woman! Fancy! A woman!” he exclaimed, staunching with a handkerchief the blood that poured down his face. Then he shouted orders to the crowd to leave Miss Gibson to the police, for they had seized her and she was being roughly handled.

Mussolini was hurried back to the hall, where the greatest surgeons in Europe were collected without any expectation of so distinguished a patient. It fell to Professor Bastianelli to apply the lint and plaster which were all the slight wound required. The Duce then drove to the Palazzo Chigi and addressed the crowd through a mask of bandages from his balcony. “ Though you cannot see my face,” he said, “ my voice will convince you that I have not changed and that my heart is beating no less strongly than before.” Next day he left, as arranged, on a visit to the African colony of Tripoli.

Miss Gibson had had an unhappy mental history. Her mind had been still further deranged by the death of her mother a fortnight before. She was living in a convent in Rome, where she told the sisters that she was “ contemplating a great deed,” urged upon her, as she said, by her 'advisers.' She had asked the nuns to help this undertaking with their prayers, and they believed her to be referring to some work of charity.

This unfortunate lady received the clemency due to her condition. She had a nun to stay with her in prison while inquiries were made into the case. At her lawyer's request she was soon moved to a mental home, and after a few months, was deported from Italy.

In the autumn of the same year, on September 11 1926, a young anarchist stonemason, named Lucetti, who had recently come back on foot from France, threw two army bombs at Mussolini's car, which bounced off into the street, killing one person and injuring seven by their explosion.

Six weeks later yet another revolver-bullet struck him at close range, as he was driving slowly in a procession through the streets of Bologna. It was deflected by a buckle on the Duce's uniform, and went through the sleeve of the Mayor, sitting next to him. A boy whom the crowd believed to have fired the shot was seized and instantly lynched.

On all these occasions Mussolini showed complete calm and self-possession. “ It is useless for anyone to attempt my life, he told Mr J. H. Henderson, the Commercial Secretary of the British Embassy, who had an appointment to see him a quarter of an hour after Lucetti had thrown his bomb. “ It has been foretold that I shall not die a violent death. That is a prophecy in which I believe.”

CHAPTER VIII

MUSSOLINI AND THE ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGN

THE Italian conquest of Abyssinia interrupted one of the oldest of Britain's international friendships. Anglo- Italian interests had never before clashed. The idea of conflict with Italy was so remote from the mind of British Governments that I have heard on good authority that Italy was the only important European State against which the General Staff had never prepared a plan of campaign for a war between those two Powers alone. It was believed that Italy's dependence on imported raw materials and the vulnerability of her coast-line to naval attack were factors which would discourage the Italian Government from falling out with any nation powerful at sea.

The charges brought against Italy by a section of British public opinion with regard to the Abyssinian campaign were reciprocated by equally violent abuse in the Italian newspapers, which Mussolini doubtless encouraged to keep the fighting-spirit of his people high.

But behind the diatribes of the Italian Press the Duce displayed a different attitude towards Britain, which he defined to me on a number of occasions. For purposes of record these are worth relating.

I always made a point of repeating to him the criticisms which were brought against Italy in England. He showed no resentment of my doing so, but would reply to them calmly and good-humouredly.

The quarrel between the two countries was aggravated by the fact that both felt themselves in the right.. The British Government accused Italy of breaking faith with the League of Nations Covenant. The Italians replied that in protecting their colonial interests against neighbours on a lower level of civilization they were only doing what the British had repeatedly done.

“ You ought to be glad that I am invading Abyssinia,” said Mussolini to me during the campaign, “ for I am only following an example that your people have so often set in the past.” And again: “ I can always get on with British Imperialists. They realise that my action in Abyssinia will help to justify the existence of many dependent races within the British Empire. Your own Imperial history does not entitle you to display so much concern for the independence of the Ethiopians.”

This Abyssinian campaign was a personal undertaking of Mussolini's. The people of Italy felt no desire for such an enterprise until he infused them with it. The defeat of Adowa, forty years before, had filled Italian hearts with detestation for the very name of Abyssinia. The Italian General Staff believed that the conquest of that country would be a long and costly process.

Besides misgivings at home, Mussolini had to face violent opposition abroad, which found a focus at Geneva. Though, as a slave-owning and barbaric State, the Empire of Ethiopia was obviously unsuited for membership it had been admitted to the League with the support of Italy herself. The League had recently proved so ineffective as an international instrument that the British Government, which had often declared its policy to be based on the Covenant, determined to make this Italian attack on Abyssinia a real test of the resources of Geneva.

The campaign was thus not only a war between Italy and Abyssinia; it was *Mussolini contra mundum*.

Few statesmen have ever had to face such world-wide criticism and obstruction. The sincere belief prevailed abroad that Mussolini was a victim of megalomania. He was declared to be a paranoiac. In my own contacts with him during the war I never found him anything but self-controlled and confident. Since the standing of Italy as a Great Power and even the survival of Fascism itself depended on the issue of the campaign, his composure seemed uncanny.

Typical of this attitude was his air of detachment on a hot evening of August, 1935. War-preparations were then at their climax. Scores of transports were landing troops and stores at Massawa. Hundreds of thousands of labourers were building roads to the Abyssinian frontier. A Three-Power Conference was being held in Paris to try to stop the war. While the rest of the world was so busy, the desk from which the whole of this venturesome enterprise was being directed was empty, except for two or three faded red-leather folders marked '*Segretaria*.'

The sole document lying before Mussolini was a news-telegram reporting that the British Cabinet had just held a five hours' meeting. He had pinned this to a sheet of paper which bore a few notes in his own handwriting. The only thing that recalled the problem which was engrossing the attention of every other first-class Government was a pile of books on the window-sill by his side, dealing with Abyssinia and the Moslem religion.

No Prime Minister could have looked more carefree than the Duce. He was wearing a cream-coloured silk suit over a blue linen shirt, and white tennis-shoes. Most of his conversation was about a run he had had that afternoon in his new motor-boat at Ostia.

Even when Anglo-Italian tension was at its worst, he was emphatic that none of his aims, direct or indirect, immediate or remote, were hostile to British interests.

The arrival of the British fleet in the Mediterranean was a critical development. I visited Mussolini on the day the news reached him. His mood appeared to be one of regret rather than perturbation.

"What have these ships been sent for?" were his first words. "We don't like it. They are the equivalent of a pistol pointed at the breast of Italy."

Even when the fleet had taken up its station at Alexandria and the sanctions campaign was at its height, the Duce displayed no antagonism towards Britain.

"The danger of war between us does not exist so far as I am concerned," he said. "I am ready, if required, to give guarantees, not only to respect, but to defend British interests everywhere. We have done it in the past.

We helped Britain to conquer the Sudan by capturing Kassala and handing it over to you. And it was at the direct instigation of the British Government that we founded our East African colony of Eritrea by landing at Massawa in 1885."

The attitude of the Powers which opposed Italy's action in Abyssinia was complicated by the fact that they did not show their hand earlier. The effort to force Mussolini to give up his enterprise was not begun until he had gone too far to retreat.

In January, 1935, he had had a meeting with the French Premier, M. Laval, in Rome, at which he received the impression that France was prepared to leave him a free hand in Abyssinia, in return for Mussolini's renunciation of Italian claims in Tunis.

The Stresa Conference, in April, 1935, where the French and British Prime Ministers met Mussolini, provided an obvious opportunity for them to protest against the preparations which Italy was already openly making for the war. It was not taken because Hitler had just repudiated the military clauses of the Peace Treaty, and the French and British Governments wanted to form what was called 'the Stresa Front' against him.

On the other hand, Mussolini was at that time denying any purpose of attacking Abyssinia. On April 17, 1935, immediately after the Stresa Conference, he said to me in Rome, " We have no intention of taking the offensive." But the rest of his conversation made it plain that his aim was one of conquest.

" Italy needs territory for overseas settlement" he said and the plateau of Abyssinia is one of the last unannexed regions in the world suitable for colonisation by Europeans.

Two-thirds of the surface of Italy consists of mountains. Only by the greatest efforts could the Italian mainland be made to support even two or three million more people. Our country is only one half the size of France, and has but one-fifth of her cultivable area, yet its population is larger by several millions than the French."

I asked the obvious question why, if there were no intention to attack Abyssinia, so many troops were going to Eritrea. Mussolini said that it was quite possible that the Abyssinians would take the offensive, as Belgians and Czechs' were pouring arms into Ethiopia. That country could put 500,000 men into the field, and the Wal-Wal incident (an attack on an Italian force in December, 1934) had been only one of many similar acts of aggression.

Within a month of the Stresa Conference, however, the Foreign Office had begun to draw the attention of the Italian Ambassador to the fact that Mussolini's policy towards Abyssinia was putting Britain in an awkward position. Although there were differences of opinion about the League in the National Government, the Cabinet was agreed in considering it a useful international instrument. They did not want to see its representative character reduced still farther by a breakaway on the part of Italy for the purpose of attacking Abyssinia.

In reply to such representations, the Italian Government put forward another explanation of its East African policy. If war should ever break out in Europe, it was said, the Mediterranean would be full of enemy submarines, and whichever side Italy might be on, it would be impossible for her to reinforce her East African colonies.

The Abyssinians might use such an opportunity to invade Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. What would Mussolini's position be if lack of timely precautions on his part resulted in the loss of these colonies, which had been acquired by the democratic *régime* that he had displaced, and which represented almost the whole of Italy's colonial possessions?

For such a humiliation no military success in Europe could atone. The Duce's intention, therefore, was to create a standing army of 100,000 white troops and 200,000 natives in Eritrea and Somaliland, so as to make those territories secure.

A little later the British Government was told that it might be necessary for Italy to carry out a preventive invasion of Abyssinia. The Italian Government therefore suggested that since Britain attached so much importance to respect of League authority, it might be well for the Council to give Italy a mandate for the reform of Abyssinia, where slavery, despotism, and other abuses were rife. This proposal was supported by allusion to the fact that Britain had been the only Great Power to oppose Abyssinia's admission to the League, on the ground of such defects in the Government of that country. When this proposition was rejected, Mussolini defined his intentions more clearly. In June, reviewing troops that were starting for East Africa, he said :

“ In that part of the world Italy has old and new aims to achieve, and will not be turned from them by outside pressure. She will imitate the deeds of those who now presume to act as her teachers, and who, when they were building up their own *Empire*, never allowed themselves to be influenced by public opinion.”

This open defiance of the British Government's disapproval for the Abyssinian campaign was accompanied by an outburst of anti-British articles in the Italian Press and a police-guard was posted at the Embassy in Rome which remained there for two years.

The British Government's next idea was to put Abyssinia in a position to buy off the threatened Italian attack. As compensation, Abyssinia was to receive a strip of British Somaliland.

On June 24, 1935, Mr Eden, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, went to Rome to sound Mussolini about this arrangement. It was widely reported at the time that this interview ended in an angry scene between the two statesmen. Nothing of the kind occurred. Mr Eden's mission failed because Mussolini was not satisfied with the concessions which it was proposed that Abyssinia should make. The peaceful course of the negotiations is shown by the fact that when Mr Eden had returned to his Embassy, he received a telephone-call from the Palazzo Venezia to ask if the British Government had really said its last word.

There is a more reliable version of this interview, about which so many sensational stories have been told. The British Under-Secretary asked whether there was nothing he could say which would induce Mussolini to give up the invasion of Abyssinia. “ It is too late for me to draw back. I must go on,” was the Duce's reply.

“ I can only deplore your decision,” said Mr Eden, “ but I must say that I admire your courage and determination.”

“ I hope it is Captain Eden of the King's Royal Rifle Corps who says that, and not Mr Eden, the diplomat,” was Mussolini's sly rejoinder.

“ How *could* I draw back? “ said Mussolini to me later. “ The 200,000 Italian rifles on the frontiers of Abyssinia would go off of themselves. You cannot send troops to a tropical country three thousand miles away and tell them that they have only gone there for a picnic.

“ The League of Nations is confusing its own functions. It was intended to limit international conflagrations, not to spread them. I shall state my whole case at Geneva, supported by documents and photographs about the abuses existing in Abyssinia, which will include a book by Lady Simon, the wife of the British Foreign Secretary. Such evidence makes it outrageous that the League should treat Italy and Abyssinia on the same level.

“ We need Abyssinian territory so that we may expand overseas without interfering with the interests of Britain or France. Italy wants to take her place among the 'satisfied Powers.' We shall become a menace to Britain only when Britain menaces us. At present it is the Empire of Haile Selassie that we are threatening, not that of George V.”

As the campaign of sanctions increased in its intensity and the threat of an oil-embargo grew, Mussolini began to express himself with greater indignation.

“ Why should Italy be made a scapegoat to restore the League's prestige? “ he exclaimed. “ Why should she be sacrificed to give the League back its virginity? The League did not interfere when Japan invaded China or in the war between Paraguay and Bolivia. When a quarrel broke out between Irak and Persia, the British Government actually forbade League intervention.”

He insisted with rising emphasis upon the risk of the extension of the war to Europe. "It would cost millions of lives," he said, "in a quarrel that is not worth the bones of a single British soldier or airman."

Gradually the new orientation of Italian policy which has since taken place began to be foreshadowed in his words. "Those who obstruct our efforts to find a colonial outlet must face the consequences of antagonising us," he said to me one day. "We might make friends with Germany again. What would you think of a new line-up of Rome and Berlin? It is dangerous to restrain the expansive tendencies of overcrowded countries like Italy, Germany, and Japan."

The sanctions campaign, which was meant to break Italian spirit, had the contrary effect of consolidating it. In April, five months before the war began, I found many Italians full of anxiety about the risks and cost of the approaching campaign. Before the end of the year the same people were enthusiastic for it. It is often said in Italy that no two statesmen have more reason to be grateful to each other than Mr Eden and Mussolini - "for without Eden, the Duce would never have conquered Abyssinia, and without Mussolini, Eden would never have become Foreign Secretary."

If anyone alive is entitled to echo the old saying "Save me from my friends; I will deal with my enemies myself," it is the unfortunate ex-Emperor of Ethiopia. Three times he was ready to make peace on terms which would have left him his throne and the territory round Addis Ababa belonging to the Amhara tribes which were the dominant race in Abyssinia. Three times his European friends dissuaded him from doing so.

The first occasion was in September, 1935, when a Committee of Five appointed by the League offered to Italy part of the Danakil territory in the north, and of the Ogaden province in the south, on condition that he recognised the independence of the rest of Abyssinia, which was to be put under the control of an international gendarmerie.

It was thought that Mussolini would jump at this chance of avoiding the risks of war. There was talk in *The Times* of "the anxiety of Italians in face of the rally of world-opinion against them."

The Duce displayed no such anxiety when I saw him on the evening that the terms reached him.

"They are absurd," he said. "I am just offered two more deserts, one of stone, the other of salt - places where not even an Abyssinian could make a living.

"What use is such territory to me? When I made an agreement about the frontier of Tunis with the French they gave me 100,000 square miles of the Sahara Desert. Do you know how many people live in that whole region? Sixty-two."

"Perhaps the League thinks you are collecting deserts, Excellency," I suggested.

This mild joke roused Mussolini's always ready laughter. "*C'est ça! On doit me prendre pour un collectionneur de déserts!*" he repeated gaily. "In one of Mark Twain's books there is a man who liked echoes so much that he found two mountains which each had an echo, and built his house between them. But I have no such passion for parched wildernesses."

Nevertheless, three days later, Mussolini made counter-proposals which would have spared Abyssinia the fate of total conquest. He asked for Adowa and Aksum in the north, and for a strip of Abyssinian territory to connect Eritrea and Somaliland. He also demanded the disbandment of the Abyssinian army.

The League rejected these terms, and so the war began.

Three months later came the Hoare-Laval peace-proposals, which were first approved and then, as a result of pro-Abyssinian clamour, repudiated by the British Cabinet. The unfortunate results for Abyssinia of this change of attitude are revealed by the fact that a month later Mussolini told me that he had been ready to accept them, but had no time to say so before they were withdrawn.

Even as late as March, 1936, when the League made an appeal to both sides to discuss peace, Italy would have been prepared to leave the Negus in possession of his throne, but pro-League and anti-Fascist influences decided Haile Selassie against opening negotiations.

In circles hostile to Italy much indignation was expressed at the news, in April, 1936, that the Italians were using gas. When I mentioned this to Mussolini he answered that it was not asphyxiating gas, but only tear-gas and a mild kind of mustard-gas, which raised blisters but was not fatal.

“ To call that an 'atrociousness' is simply stupid,” he said. If you want to talk about atrocities I will show you pictures of what Abyssinians have done to our men which are too horrible for any newspaper to print. We have never used gas-clouds like those of the Great War, and to drop mustard-gas bombs into ravines down which Abyssinians might have crept to attack an isolated Italian column was really a measure of humanity, for it had the effect of saving lives.”

The campaign was nearing its end. On the day before the Italians entered Addis Ababa, Mussolini again repeated his assurances of good-will to Great Britain.

“ We never meant any harm to the interests of the British Empire and we mean none now” he said.

“ Italy does not hanker after Egypt. We look on Egypt as an independent country - not an African country, but a Mediterranean one-with which we shall always be on good terms.

“ We have no political interests in the Sudan and none in Palestine. It is untrue to suggest that Italy has stirred up trouble between Arabs and Jews.

“ What can I do or say more? “ he added flinging out his hands. “ I have always been ready; I am ready now; and I shall continue to be ready to confirm what I have said to you in any way that may be required.

“ Our Victory in Abyssinia ought to be welcome to Britain and France,” he declared, “ for it will turn Italy into a satisfied Power.

“ I assure you we have no other colonial aspirations. We no longer belong to the discontented proletariat among the nations. We have come over to the other side of the barricade. Henceforth Italy, too, is a conservative Power.”

Mussolini himself was to announce to the Italian nation the army's entry into Addis Ababa. Wireless loud- speakers had been set up in every town and village, and when the sirens and church bells sounded, everyone was to gather in the public squares to hear the Duce speak to the whole country.

“ There will be half a million people round the Palazzo Venezia,” he told me. “ Come here tomorrow night, and you will see one of the sights of your life.”

At six o'clock on the evening of May 5 the sirens suddenly began to wail, and the 1,200,000 people of Rome, like the rest of the 45,000,000 inhabitants of the country, poured

out of their homes, shops, and offices into the streets. Flags, bands, and uniforms were everywhere.

I drove down to the Palazzo Venezia with Signor Alfieri, the Press and Propaganda Minister. The large ante-chamber to Mussolini's room was full of Italian Ministers and high Government officials. I was the only person present not wearing the black uniform of the Fascist Party.

From a latticed window in one of the thick walls of the old palace, I looked down on the Piazza Venezia. It was a vast mosaic of pink faces under the soft evening light, gazing eagerly upward at the closed window of Mussolini's room. The square itself can hold 200,000 people, but for as far as one could see down the broad Via del Impero, stretching away to the Coliseum, and in every other street leading to the Piazza, at least as many more were wedged in solid masses.

Surging waves of movement swept through the excited multitude. People who fainted were held upright by the pressure round them. The police were continually fighting their way into the edges of the crowd to rescue children. The hundred-yards-broad marble steps of the white, temple-like National Monument, where Italy's Unknown Soldier lies guarded by two sentries, were hidden beneath dense swarms of school-children. Every window and roof was crowded to capacity.

Slowly, while the nation waited in suspense, a honey-coloured moon rose in the green evening sky. It hung over the broken outline of the huge Coliseum, which in two thousand years has looked down upon so many mighty spectacles.

Then, at 7.30, a sudden roar like a volcanic eruption broke from the crowd. Mussolini, in the grey uniform and round black cap of the Fascist militia, had stepped out on to his flood-lit balcony.

“To-day, at four o'clock,” he shouted in the strained silence that followed the cheering, “our victorious troops entered Addis Ababa. I announce to the Italian people and to the world that the war is over. Ethiopia is Italian!”

A storm of enthusiasm drowned his voice. I have never seen such jubilation in so many human faces. Mussolini was called back to the balcony again and again by the tempestuous cheering of the crowd. He stood there, leaning on the parapet and looking down on them so calmly that he might have been a casual spectator of the tumultuous scene. At that moment the whole of Italy was worshipping its victorious Duce like a god, yet, watching a few yards from him, I saw no trace of excitement in his face.

If a man's character can be tested by his bearing at the crowning moment of his career, Mussolini's behaviour amid these tremendous scenes of triumph is worth recording.

“Did you hear my speech?” he asked me, when he had stepped back into his great room and the windows had been closed to shut out the roar of the crowd. “At least thirty million people were listening to it all over Italy.”

The chief Ministers and Government officials who were standing close around broke out at this point into a demonstration of their own, clapping their hands and shouting, “*Duce! Duce!*”

Mussolini silenced these plaudits with an imperious gesture, as if to say “I have had enough of that outside.”

A silence followed, and as no one broke it, I remarked to the Duce that without broadcasting, a simultaneous demonstration of this kind all over the country would have been impossible. “ It shows what a dangerous instrument wireless might be if it got into bad hands,” I said.

“ That has happened already,” replied Mussolini. “ The Bolsheviks broadcast propaganda every two hours in different languages.”

To me this readiness to exchange commonplace remarks at such a climax of his career, when all Italy was worshipping him as its national hero, with half a million people cheering him outside, and all his Government sub-ordinates gathered round him in a ferment of emotion and enthusiasm, seemed proof of qualities which many foreign critics would deny to Mussolini. Such self-control testified not only to nerves of steel, but to an almost Olympian disregard of popular adoration.

I told the Duce that I was leaving by air in the morning for Jerusalem, where I expected to see his defeated foe, the Negus, who had fled from Abyssinia.

“ Tell him I have no feeling against him personally. Our quarrel has been a clash of historic forces. Personal factors play only a small part in such matters.

“ I know the Negus,” Mussolini went on. “ When he came to Rome in 1928 I showed him round the city for ten days. He made the mistake of not believing in my friendship. When I say that I am ready to be anyone's friend, I mean it, just as when I say I am anyone's enemy, I mean that too.”

CHAPTER IX

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE 'GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT'

MOST Britons believe that Anglo-Italian rivalry in the Mediterranean arose from the Abyssinian campaign. Nearly ten years earlier, however, landing for the first time in Tripoli on April 8, 1926, Mussolini had said: "We are a Mediterranean people, and our destiny has been, and always will be, on the sea."

The control of the Mediterranean by the British Fleet was an artificial situation that could not last after Italy became a strong naval Power. Its end was hastened by the simultaneous development of a great Italian Air Force, which completely changed the strategical situation in those waters.

Italy not only straddles them with naval, military, and air bases in her colony of Libya and the southern provinces of the Peninsula, but she has converted into fortified aircraft and submarine depots the small islands that lie between her mainland and the African coast, and also those of the Dodecanese, which gave her a firm foothold in the Levant.

The concentration of the British fleet at Alexandria in the autumn of 1935 to support the League's campaign of sanctions turned out to be a demonstration, not of the strength, but of the weakness of British naval resources in the Mediterranean under the changed conditions of recent years. Those who, like myself, had the opportunity of hearing expert opinion on the spot, could have no doubts as to the vulnerability of the fleet at Alexandria to aircraft, submarine, and mine-laying action. It had no fortified bases. No docking-facilities existed for battleships, big cruisers, or aircraft-carriers nearer than Gibraltar, three thousand miles away. For a crippled ship to reach a repairing-yard she would have had to travel the whole length of the Mediterranean, running the gauntlet of Italian aeroplanes, submarines, and fast motor-craft on the way.

The naval-supply establishment which had been set up at Alexandria could have been taken in the rear by an invasion from the Italian colony of Libya, which there were not sufficient forces in Egypt to repel. It was plainly shown that there is now no security for a British fleet any- where in those landlocked waters which lie between Gibraltar and Suez.

Nothing less than the creation of another Singapore base at Alexandria or Haifa would give the Royal Navy security for action in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its function in a war with Italy could only be that of maintaining distant ocean blockade, and British forces in Egypt or on the Suez Canal would have to be supplied by way of the Cape of Good Hope.

This change in Mediterranean conditions, brought about by the growth of Italian armaments, does not imply that Italy's future attitude towards Britain will necessarily be hostile. The increased interest that she is taking in her African colonies and in the security of her communications with them had its origin in the virtual closing of the United States to Italian immigration. As Mussolini once put it: "Italy cannot feed her people. She must expand or explode." The Mediterranean means as much to her as the English Channel does to

Britain. It is natural that the Italian nation should strive to assert itself in the waters that wash its shores.

British Ministers have declared that their country's interests in that sea are confined to those of transit. So long as Britain is on good terms with Italy those interests will not suffer. They were put in peril in 1935 only because the British Government embarked upon a quarrel with Italy about matters of principle rather than practice.

The safety of the communications of the British Empire calls for a policy of friendship, not hostility, towards Italy. Despite the harm done by the recent attempt to block Italian action in Abyssinia, a good understanding with Mussolini about British rights-of-way through the Mediterranean is still possible.

To try to prevent Italy from using the advantages of her geographical situation would be futile, and unbecoming to a Power which has obtained so many artificial advantages of the same kind throughout the world. Nor is there any reason to suppose that Italy aims at any improvement of her natural position at the expense of Britain.

Since the Spanish Civil War began, Mussolini has strongly denied any intention of trying to obtain naval or aerial bases for Italy in Spanish Morocco or the Balearic Islands, or on the mainland of Spain.

“Such a thing has not even crossed the threshold of my mind,” he assured me. “I should have no respect for any Chief of State who would so much as contemplate giving away any of his national territory.”

On November 4, 1936, after Lord Halifax had made a speech in the House of Lords expressing the British desire for a renewal of good relations with Italy, I saw Mussolini in Rome.

“Speeches like this are so soon forgotten if they are not followed up by acts,” I said. “I have often heard your Excellency speak in the same way about Britain. Could you suggest any practical means of giving concrete form to these friendly inclinations on both sides?”

The clear-cut, common-sense qualities of Mussolini's mind appeared in his instant answer to this question, of which he had had no previous notice.

He replied with three words in English. “A gentleman's agreement,” he said.

“Would that be an agreement defining Anglo-Italian spheres of influence in the Mediterranean, or do you mean a pact of non-aggression?” I asked.

The Duce made an impatient gesture.

“Such things would only lead to fresh complications,” he said. “There has been too much of the pact-mania lately. I don't want to increase it. What I should like is something simple and clear, of the kind that both the Fascist and the British temperament appreciate.

“There is nothing antagonistic about the interests of Britain and Italy in the Mediterranean. They are complementary. Neither nation can afford the luxury of being hostile to the other in that sea.

“A gentleman's agreement would protect the interests of both sides, and it should be drafted in such a way as to reassure all other Mediterranean States.”

So frank and reasonable a proposal had immediate results when published in London, and provided a point of departure for diplomatic negotiations which brought the 'Gentleman's Agreement' into existence less than two months later, on January 3, 1937.

In accordance with Mussolini's wish, it was very short, containing only about 300 words. Britain and Italy pledged themselves not to modify the existing situation, and to respect each other's rights and interests in the Mediterranean.

It was put on record that: "Freedom of entry into, exit from, and transit through the Mediterranean is of vital interest both to the different parts of the British Empire and to Italy, and these interests are in no way inconsistent with each other." Both Powers disclaimed any desire to modify the *status quo* as regards the sovereignty of territory in the Mediterranean area, and they undertook to respect each other's rights and interests in that region.

This was a realist measure implying recognition of a change in strategic conditions in the Mediterranean, and it cleared the air by transferring Anglo-Italian relations from a basis of suspicion to one of fact.

Exaggerated Nationalist boasting in Italian newspaper articles had made many people in England believe that Mussolini was aiming at complete domination of the Mediterranean, and the extension of the Italian Empire all round its shores. British tourists returning from Rome told excited stories of having seen maps carved on the walls of that city in which the Italian Empire of Mussolini's dreams was shown as including even the United Kingdom. Such tales referred to one of the maps in stone that ornament the Via del Impero, but it must have been ignorance of Italian that prevented such observers from reading the inscription, which identified it as a delineation of the Roman Empire in the days of Caesar Augustus, nearly two thousand years ago.

The ease with which false reports about living statesmen are accepted in Europe today is enough to shake one's faith in all records of the past.

It is, for instance, a matter of common belief, even in well-informed circles in England, that Mussolini in March, 1937, declared himself the protector of Moslems throughout the world. Having been present on each of the occasions on which he referred to the Moslem religion, I can testify to the fact that he said nothing of the sort. The story arose from his acceptance, as a gift from the Arabs of Libya, of a sword, made for the occasion in Florence, to which for propaganda purposes the fanciful name of 'The Sword of Islam' was given.

The ceremony was a romantic one, taking place on horseback among the palm-grown sand-dunes that border the Sahara Desert. Mussolini received the sword from a deputation of chiefs, held it at arm's-length above his head, and then delivered a speech in which he said: "The Moslem populations of Libya know that under the Italian tricolour they will have peace and well-being, and particularly that their religious beliefs will be scrupulously respected."

No head of a Government under similar conditions could have made a more cautious and guarded statement, and Mussolini went on explicitly to disavow all those ambitions which British public opinion believes him to have proclaimed on this occasion.

"This journey of mine is imperialist," he said, "in the sense that has been, is now, and always will be given to this word by virile peoples.

"There is nothing secret about it, and nothing aggressive against any other nation. Inside and outside the Mediterranean we wish to live in peace with everyone, and to collaborate with all nations that manifest the same intention."

Though Libya has been turned into a strong base for all Italian arms, the character of these dispositions is not necessarily more aggressive than the far greater works and preparations which the British Government has carried out at Singapore.

In all the talks I had with Mussolini in Libya he gave me the impression of concentrating his energy upon the peaceful development of that colony. He took me over one of the model houses for settlers which have been built at five-mile intervals along the great new coastal road. Each house accommodates two families, and cost £1600 to build. The people who live in them are brought over from Italy.

The Duce was so proud of the comfort provided for them that he even showed me the shower-bath with which each family is provided. Marshal Balbo, who had come in search of us, found Mussolini flooding the tiled floor with vigorous tugs at the chain.

“ They have everything they need, even a rifle for their defence, though that is unnecessary, as the native population is quite peaceful,” said the Duce.

“ And with wireless they are not really so isolated, after all,” I said.

From the expression on Mussolini's face I saw that I had stumbled upon a deficiency in the equipment of these colonists. He thought for a moment, then called out, “ Balbo !” The Governor-General stepped up and saluted with a click of his heels. “ It would be well,” said Mussolini, “ to supply each of these houses with a radio. You had better order 250 sets.”

“ It shall be done tonight, Duce,” was the reply, the promptness of which proved the rapidity with which things are done under authoritarian sway.

“ What a grand place Libya would be for a motor-caravan holiday! “ mused Mussolini. Then he went on: “ If only we could turn this desert into a sea, it would change the whole climate of North Africa, and produce a rainfall that would make it possible for a hundred million Europeans to live on the produce of the country. To flood the Sahara from the Mediterranean is only a question of overcoming technical difficulties. I am going to have them investigated. If it can be done, I shall do it.”

I believe thoughts of this kind, rather than dreams of conquest, to be uppermost in Mussolini's mind. He is too practical and level-headed a statesman to set himself visionary aims. Nearly two years before the Gentleman's Agreement was signed he made a remark to me about British foreign policy which showed that he fully understands its character:

“ The foreign policy of Britain is always clear, because, it is traditional,” he said. “ It is based on the fact that Britain must always have free passage over the seas. The possession of Gibraltar, Suez, and Singapore is therefore essential to her. I don't think that a book has ever been written in England on the principles of British foreign policy, because they are so clearly understood by everyone. The mistake of the Germans in 1914 was their failure to realise that, according to these principles, any new Power which approached the shores of the English Channel had to be treated by Britain as an enemy.”

The good results which might have followed on the Gentleman's Agreement were frustrated for a time by the outburst of sarcasm and scorn with which some of the British Press greeted the partial reverse endured by Italian formations attached to the Spanish Nationalist Army at Guadalajara in March, 1937, and, on the other side, by suspicions that Italian submarines had had some part in the torpedoing of foreign ships registered in England for the purpose of carrying supplies to the Reds in Spain.

The survival of the British Empire through so many dangers of the past has been largely due to the readiness and resource of its statesmen in facing new facts and adapting themselves to fresh situations. Seldom in history has a new fact emerged of such importance as the reorganisation of Germany and Italy into highly armed and superbly disciplined States under dynamic leadership.

If this process has been accompanied by severities at home and breaches of international engagements abroad - some of which had been imposed by force - the German and Italian peoples hold that such measures were justified by the principle *Salus populi suprema lex*.

The belief that the predominant British attitude towards their task of national reconstruction is resentful, sceptical, and censorious has embittered them, while the fact that this criticism has proved powerless to obstruct the success of the Dictators' plans creates in many German and Italian minds the erroneous and dangerous impression that Great Britain is becoming a spent force in world-affairs.

The respect in which the British Government used to be held has considerably declined. Many Germans- and more Italians-have come to regard its international authority in much the same way as stalwart and self-willed youths look upon an old schoolmaster whose discipline they no longer fear. There are people of high position in both countries who recommend the policy of deliberately flouting England, believing that in no circumstances would she fight, and, if she did, that she is too unorganised and ill-prepared to face the concentrated powers of the totalitarian States. The Dictators do not respond to these views, but they hear them from some of those to whom they give their confidence.

Sentiments like these tend to generate, in Germany and Italy, a mood of public opinion which might, at a time of crisis, influence the action of the Dictators.

The paramount factor of their authority is personal prestige. To tolerate any rebuff or humiliation in international policy would put that prestige in danger.

Loose talk in other countries about "calling the Dictators' bluff" is futile and foolhardy. Gamblers they may be, but not bluffers - for even if their hand were weak, they would rather overturn the table than allow it to be called. They have enough control of public opinion to convince their countrymen that it was the other side who upset the board and began the shooting. Unwilling though Mussolini and Hitler may be to incur the risks of war, they would not recoil from it as an alternative to a glaring reverse in foreign affairs.

It should be the aim of other Governments to prevent the development of that contingency. The surest way to avert it would be to engage in closer and more confidential relations with these men who have the entire fortunes and resources of two powerful and tensely strung peoples in their hands. Had this been done earlier, the present state of European insecurity might never have arisen.

The Dictators had not always the same foundations for self-confidence that they now possess. At the outset of their rule a more sympathetic bearing towards them on the part of Britain would have aroused their gratitude and might have exerted a moderating influence on their policy.

Because some of the things they did in their own countries violated modern British standards of Governmental action, they were kept at arm's length. Personal contacts between members of the British Government and the new administrations in Germany and Italy were restricted to the minimum. The few British Ministers who have visited Berlin and Rome went there like *parlementaires* under a flag of truce rather than as friendly envoys.

The result is that British relations with the Dictatorships have steadily deteriorated. In the early days of their responsibilities, the heads of these Governments asked for nothing better than to range themselves beside Britain, provided that their fundamental claims to parity of standing were conceded. They have now formed independent plans, and their aspirations for British friendship have cooled with non-fulfilment.

A foreign policy can be judged only by its results, and that followed by the British Government in recent years has brought about a mutual understanding between all our potential enemies-in Central Europe, the Far East, and the Mediterranean-which may yet develop into a closer and more hostile coalition.

Yet Britain and Germany are still the key to the European situation. Agreement between them would be a sure guarantee of peace among the nations of Western Europe.

It is too late to disarm Germany by force; it may not be too late to disarm her by friendship. This can never be achieved, however, while a large and influential section of British opinion refuses to credit her with any but malevolent intentions.

However much other people may dislike the National Socialist and Fascist *régimes*, no one can deny that they have raised Germany and Italy to greater strength and self-reliance than those countries have ever known. The methods by which they rebuilt their national life are their own affair, and-unlike Soviet Russia - neither Government has tried to force its ideas and principles on other peoples.

To fit these new national formations into the European family is the most urgent task at present before humanity. It can be carried through only with sympathy and understanding.

Every great human undertaking has imperfections. Abuses and oppression occur under democratic as well as under authoritarian rule. Hitherto the tendency in other countries has been to concentrate upon a few melodramatic aspects of the Dictatorships, and to overlook the solid, though less conspicuous, good that they have done.

It is not by sham or humbug, but by solid benefits bestowed, that Hitler and Mussolini have earned the fervent devotion of their peoples. Criticism of the Dictators and their works leads nowhere, but unprejudiced study of the energy and patriotism with which they have inspired their fellow-countrymen may provide valuable lessons for every nation in the world.

EPILOGUE

WE live in days when history is made at high speed.

Europe is moving through great events towards events still greater. The driving-force behind this process is the personality of the two men whose characters are the subject of this book.

Since the first edition of it appeared in October, 1937, the Dictators have drawn closer together, and nearer to their respective goals. Men and measures alike have fulfilled the expectations expressed in the preceding pages.

Will this course, which the history of our times is so swiftly following, lead to war?

The curve of war-probability constantly fluctuates; periods of strain are followed by intervals of calm; but in mid-1938 the trend was towards another conflict.

To localise a war that began in Central Europe would be difficult. It was only the geographical isolation of Spain that made it possible there.

There is no reason to doubt the declarations of the Dictators that they desire no war with France and Britain, but the risk of it may not deter them from their aims.

Those aims are:

For Germany: Hegemony in South-eastern Europe and the restitution of her colonies, or of substitute colonial territory.

For Italy: Expansion in the Mediterranean area.

It is unlikely that these far-reaching ambitions could be fully achieved without eventually bringing into action the mighty armaments now accumulated in Europe. Many Germans and Italians feel that, as regards preparations for war, time is working against them.

The high-pressure nationalism generated under the Dictatorships has so far encountered only passive resistance.

Hitler abolished the Treaty of Versailles, reoccupied the Rhineland, and annexed Austria without any opposition more forcible than protests and reproaches.

Mussolini conquered Abyssinia in defiance of the organised pacific obstruction of the Western Powers and a host of minor members of the League of Nations.

Ineffective antagonism of this kind provokes not only the anger but the contempt of those against whom it is directed.

Britain and France were for a time ill served by the statesmen responsible for their foreign policies. The attitude they adopted towards Germany and Italy was one of bluster, bickering, and rebuke, while they neglected the rearmament which alone would have made their disapproval formidable.

Europe is now divided into dynamic, heavily armed Dictatorships and static, half-armed democracies. In her international relations there is a positive pole and a negative pole.

Such conditions make a discharge of electricity all but inevitable, unless some means of 'earthing' the high potential of the Dictatorships can be devised. If Hitler and Mussolini, with all their energy and vision, could be induced to co-operate with Britain and France for ends of common benefit, Europe would enter at once upon a golden age.

The outstanding event of the first half of the year 1938 was the annexation of Austria to the Reich. That operation had first place upon the agenda of the Nazi Government. The decision to carry it out and the method of achieving it were alike characterised by the rapidity which is the prerogative of Dictators.

By adding to Germany 7,000,000 inhabitants, an army of seven divisions, and large reserves of iron ore the union with Austria increased her warlike strength, while the extension of German territory to the frontiers of Italy, Jugoslavia, and Hungary improved the strategic position of the Reich.

When Germany had seemed to be contemplating this step in July, 1931., Mussolini took vigorous measures to prevent it by mobilising troops on the Austrian frontier.

Though Germany was then only at the outset of her rearmament programme, the Duce had no desire to have that formidable nation as a next-door neighbour

This antipathy continued. In 1936 Mussolini sent an unofficial message to M. Léon Blum, then head of the Popular Front Government in France, through M. Bertrand de Jouvenel, son of a former French Ambassador in Rome offering an alliance with France as the only effective means of guaranteeing the independence of Austria and Czechoslovakia.

By March, 1938, however, when the *Anschluss* actually came about, a great change had occurred in European international relations. The disastrous and futile policy of sanctions had turned into antagonism the former friendly relations between the Italian nation and the two Western Powers, with the result that Mussolini was driven to make common cause with his fellow-Dictator in Germany.

The Duce had been fully aware, since his visit to Berlin in the previous September, of Germany's fixed intention to bring about the *Anschluss*. He was shown a map upon which Austria appeared in German colours, and made only the dry comment that it was ahead of events.

Mussolini had reconciled himself to the union of the two countries as the price which Italy had to pay for partnership with Germany; but to the Italian nation the sudden appearance of German troops upon the frontiers of Italy during that fateful week-end of the occupation of Austria came as a great shock.

After the Great War Italy had annexed the former Austrian port of Trieste, on the Adriatic. 'Would not the recovery of Austria's outlet to the Mediterranean be the next goal of her Nazi rulers?

Would the Germans stop short at the Brenner Pass, when from their new national boundary they could look down upon 200,000 of their blood-brethren, transferred against their will to Italian rule in order to provide Italy with a strong strategic frontier?

For Mussolini this was the most difficult moment since he came to power. His fellow-Dictator knew it, and did his best to ease the tension for him.

On the day before the Germans entered Austria the Prince of Hesse, the King of Italy's German son-in-law, was sent by aeroplane to Rome with a letter from Hitler containing the formal pledge that German expansion into Austria would not be followed by a demand for the restoration of the formerly Austrian inhabitants of South Tyrol to the old allegiance which they still so strongly coveted, nor by a German drive towards the Adriatic.

Whatever may be the result of coming events [wrote the Führer], I have fixed a definite frontier for Germany on the French side, and I now fix another, equally definite, on the Italian - the Brenner. This decision will never be subject to doubt or alteration.

The renunciation of the 200,000 Austro-Germans living just beyond the Brenner was the price that Hitler paid to save the Rome-Berlin axis. The Duce, as his share of the bargain, accepted the creation of a common frontier between his own country and the strongest Continental Power.

The bond between the two Dictators was thus sealed by mutual sacrifice. Two months later it was publicly confirmed by the Führer's visit to Italy. Impressive displays of the efficiency of the Italian Navy, Army, and Air Force considerably increased Italy's prestige as an ally in the eyes of the chief personages of the Nazi *régime*. At the State banquet in Rome Hitler renewed his declaration that the Brenner was to be the eternal frontier between the two countries, and solemnly bequeathed this decision as a " legacy" to the German people.

There was good reason for this renunciation: Germany needs Italian support to achieve the European aims towards which she is still striving.

Those aims are :

(1) The extension of the political and economic authority of Germany in South-eastern Europe.

(2) The preparation of a strong base for the war with Soviet Russia which the Nazi Government regards as ultimately inevitable.

In this programme of German expansion the first step was the annexation of Austria.

The second is to limit the effective authority of the Czech Government to the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, where the people of that race are concentrated, by securing full local autonomy for the German minority in Czechoslovakia. This would involve a similar concession to the other minorities.

The third step will be an attempt to secure the co-operation of Hungary, now a next-door neighbour of Germany. She can supply enough wheat to make Germany independent of imported grain, and open the door to a further German advance down the Danube valley. This part of the programme should be easy, for German control of South-eastern Europe would put her in a position to restore to Hungary a substantial part of those 3,000,000 people of Hungarian race and speech who were transferred mainly to Czechoslovakia and Rumania by the Peace Treaty of Trianon.

The fourth step in Germany's intended expansion is to bring Rumania into her orbit and, for military and economic purposes, beneath her sway. For a war with Russia, or anyone else, Germany must have more petrol. The Rumanian oilfields produce 9,000,000 tons of crude petroleum a year, and are capable of great development.

The small States of South-eastern Europe would thus become the independent but co-ordinated 'Dominions' of a German Commonwealth of Nations. Of all these stepping-stones from the present frontiers of Greater Germany to the Black Sea the most difficult is Czechoslovakia.

The Czechs are stubborn folk, and have as allies France and Russia. The western end of the territories of varying race that were joined together to form Czechoslovakia is thrust forward as a wedge into the centre of Germany, like a dagger pointed at her heart.

The possession of this potentially hostile salient by a people linked with the Soviets would be enough to account for the strained relations existing between Germany and Czechoslovakia. To procure the renunciation by the Czechs of their Russian alliance is certainly a German aim. But the situation is further complicated by the fact that the Peace Treaty with Austria put 3,500,000 Austro-Germans under Czech rule. They occupy a band of typically German territory just outside the present frontiers of Germany, and the Czechs, most unfortunately for themselves, have never given them equality of treatment.

These Germans under Czech rule are now demanding local autonomy. All the other racial minorities along Czechoslovakia's borders have followed their example.

At the time of writing the Czech Government is negotiating with its discontented foreign fringes, but it is unwilling to grant them full local autonomy, lest this should lead to the disruption of Czechoslovakia.

The Germans in the west might use it to vote themselves into union with Germany. The Poles in the north would pass over to Poland. The Hungarians in the south would join up again with Hungary; and the Slovaks behind them, though not of Hungarian race, have natural economic ties with Hungary, based on geographical conditions, which might well lead them also to resume their former Hungarian allegiance.

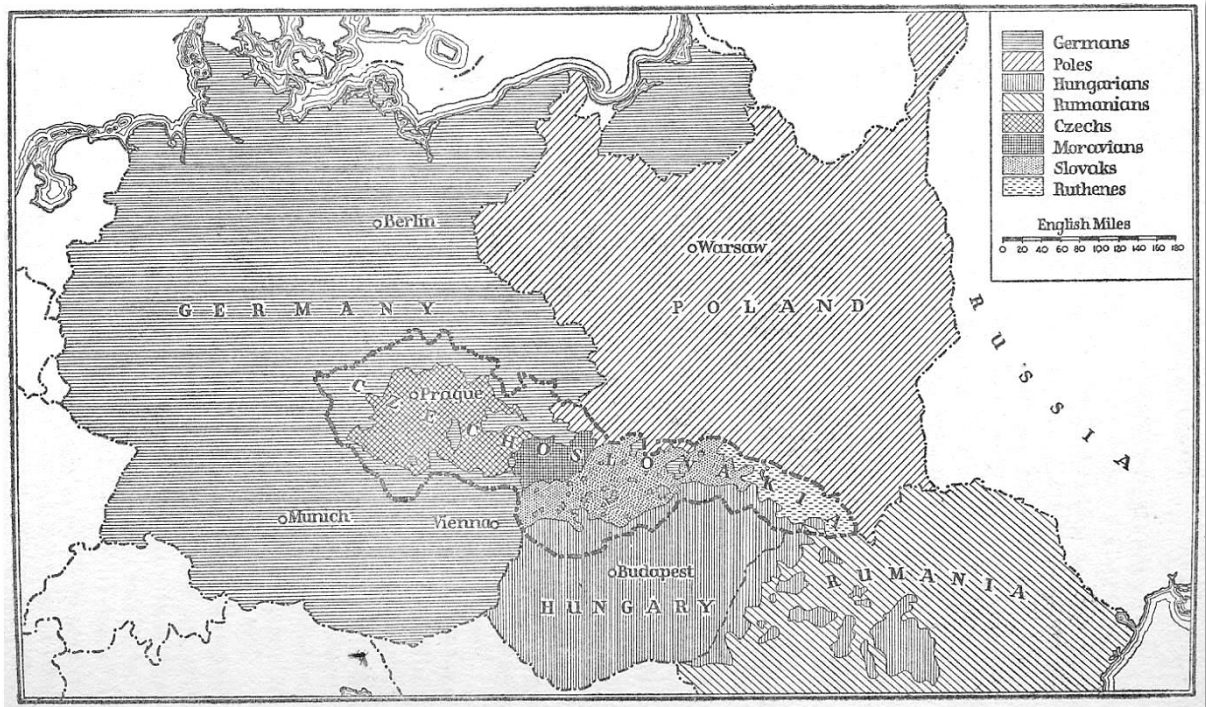
What would be left of Czechoslovakia?

A small Czech compartment, consisting of part of Bohemia and Moravia, 250 miles long by about 100 miles broad, and inhabited by some 7,000,000 Czechs.

Herr Hitler, in July, 1938, sent his A.D.C., Captain Wiedemann, to assure the British Foreign Secretary of the Führer's desire for a peaceful settlement of the question of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia.

This brightened the atmosphere, but could not entirely dissipate the two war-clouds that hang in the Central European sky.

The closest of these is the possibility that if the Czechs were to prove obstinate the Germans might intervene by force to rescue the Sudeten Germans from their yoke, and to open the road for a further advance down the valley of the Danube. The other, more remote, is the prospect of a war between Germany and Soviet Russia. If the first cloud breaks it may precipitate the second.



Czechoslovakia, storm-centre of Europe in 1938

Would the Czechs attempt to resist Germany?

They have a well-equipped army of twelve divisions, but as about half of it is made up of members of the disaffected races its military value against Germany would be small. Moreover, the western end of the country, where its capital and the main part of its wealth are situated, is now surrounded on three sides by German territory.

It has been calculated by military experts that a force of fifteen German divisions could occupy the whole of this province of Bohemia within four days, and, in case this action led to a general war, might then be replaced the Nazi political formations of the S.S. and S.A.

No one who knows the Czechs will doubt their courage or the strength of their national spirit, but in a war 'with Germany, brought about by failure to satisfy the demands of their German minority, there would be no hope for them, unless their French and Russian allies came swiftly to their aid.

Neither of these Powers has a common frontier with Czechoslovakia. Two hundred miles of German territory separate her from France. Between the Russian province of the Ukraine and the farthest extremity of Czechoslovak territory lie a hundred miles of Poland or Rumania.

Foreign help could not reach the Czechs in time to save them from the swift onslaught of German mechanised divisions. Many Czechs admit this fact, but point to the precedents of Belgium and Serbia, which were overrun at the outset of the last War, yet afterwards restored. Few people outside Czechoslovakia, however, cherish its territorial integrity so dearly as to be prepared to pay the cost of that process over again.

The main hope of the Czechs, therefore, is that the danger which they believe to threaten them from Germany may be averted by a demonstration, in advance, of the readiness of their allies to stand by them.

And not their allies only. It is believed that the attitude of France in a Central European crisis might largely depend on that of Britain. Would British pledges to France be held to apply if she went to war with Germany in defence of Czechoslovakia?

The British Government has wisely declined to commit itself to any course of action in such a contingency. Many efforts have been made to induce it to do so.

Some of these take the form of representing the situation as more critical than it is, in the hope that Britain may be stampeded into a declaration of solidarity with Czechoslovakia. There are people who regard the sudden and, as it proved, quite unnecessary mobilisation of part of the Czech Army on May 21, 1938, which produced a moment of dangerous tension, as the work of certain members of the Czech Government who hoped that by thus sounding the alarm they might provoke some impressive proof of British devotion to the Czech cause.

Europe's most pressing peril is the situation in Czechoslovakia. How can it be averted?

There is no remedy but the full satisfaction of the claims of the minorities in that country. That these claims are high is mainly due to the unfair treatment which the minorities have received from the Czech authorities. If the Czechoslovak Government had set itself to weld into a contented community the heterogeneous populations placed by the Peace Treaties under its rule the present emergency might never have arisen. It failed to do so, and must pay the price of its failure.

The time for reparation is growing short. On the day that Hitler proclaimed the union of Austria with Germany I questioned him about Czechoslovakia. He replied that the *Anschluss* would necessarily be followed by a "period for digestion." He expressed the hope that during this pause the Czechs would come forward with a satisfactory settlement of the Sudeten German question.

Two months later the Czech Premier, Dr Hodza, told me that he was convinced of the need for a "reconstruction" of Czechoslovakia. It remains to be seen whether that "reconstruction," when its details are finally revealed, will satisfy the German demands.

In any case there is no British interest to be defended in Czechoslovakia. Neither by military nor by economic means can Britain oppose the extension of German paramountcy in South-eastern Europe. Germany's natural advantages in that field make it impossible. She is the nearest customer for the products of the small nations existing there, and the chief purveyor of their needs in manufactured articles.

Great Britain's efforts should be devoted to the development and defence of her own Empire, rather than to attempts to obstruct the German *Drang nach Osten* in Europe, which would be foredoomed to failure, and could only have the effect of antagonising the German nation. Theirs is a Continental destiny; ours an Imperial one. If we want them to leave us alone the best thing is to leave them alone.

In this survey of the European situation at the outset of the summer of 1938 I have dealt mainly with Germany for two reasons. In the first place, her aims in Czechoslovakia are the next European problem likely to acquire great urgency.

In the second, Italy's future course of action will depend upon that of the other Dictatorship, with which she is now allied. The reluctance with which the Duce saw himself driven into partnership with Germany by misguided British invocation of the theoretical principles of the League was due to his realization of the fact that, in such a combination, Italy would necessarily play a subordinate role. The wheels at either end of the Rome-Berlin axis are of different weight, and the heavier one controls its course.

Italian hopes of further aggrandisement are bound up with the success of Germany. If Italy supports the German plans in South-eastern Europe that are now in preparation, her reward may be the fulfilment of Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean. Were Russia one day to be conquered by the three Powers of the Anti-Komintern Pact, which unites Berlin and Rome with Tokyo, it is conceivable that Italy might even aspire to a colony in the Crimea, for so vast a change in the balance of power in the Near East would quickly open free passage through the Dardanelles to the Black Sea.

Already the two Dictators have been allies on the battlefields of Spain. Their air forces and military technicians have benefited to the full from the experience of modern war which that campaign has afforded them. In his speech to the Fascist Grand Council at the beginning of July, 1938, the Duce referred openly to the possibility that Fascism might one day measure its forces against those of Bolshevism on a still wider field.

As Europe enters upon the second half of the eventful year of 1938 the omens for her future peace are far from reassuring.

In every country those who have personal recollections of the last War dread its renewal. But the young men who make up the fighting and political forces of the dissatisfied nations have had no such deterrent experience.

On the other hand, the General Staffs of all States are reluctant to incur the risks of another and incalculably more "terrible conflict.

The Dictators themselves were both front-line soldiers. I have repeatedly heard them declare their conviction that another war in Western Europe would wreck its civilized institutions and plunge the Continent into anarchy.

Hitler and Mussolini would prefer to pursue their national aims by peaceful methods. The danger is that in the course of that pursuit some unexpected incident may suddenly strike a spark which will detonate the explosive war-material now piled so high in Europe, and that the conflagration will quickly spread.