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A MINIATURE HISTORY  
OF THE WAR

Down to the Liberation of Paris

By

R. C. K. ENSOR

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD

1944

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AMEN HOUSE, E.C.4  
London Edinburgh Glasgow New York  
Toronto Melbourne Capetown Bombay  
Calcutta Madras  
HUMPHREY MILFORD

*Printed in Great Britain by  
Latimer, Trend & Co., Ltd.  
Plymouth*

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## NOTE

The first part of this Miniature History, down to p. 42, is based on the author's Oxford Pamphlet, *The Uphill War*, first published in March 1944. The campaigns of the first four years, down to the end of 1943, may be followed in detail in *The Oxford War Atlas*, by Mr. Jasper H. Stenbridge (Vol. I: *The First Two Years, Sept. 1939—Sept. 1941*, 2s. 6d. net; Vol. II: *1st September 1941—1st January 1943*, 3s. net; Vol. III: *The War in 1943*, 3s. 6d. net).

## INTRODUCTORY

IN the history of the Second Great War there is already discernible an unusually distinct division. Until November 1942—that is, for three years and two months—the struggle against Germany was a struggle uphill. But in that month, with the victories of El Alamein and Stalingrad, the Allies crossed a dividing ridge. Since then they have been descending. The force of gravity has turned in their favour.

At the first of these phases Germany's success was the affair of her army, powerfully aided by an air force which had been designed in the main for army co-operation. The German sequence of victories was a sequence of land and air victories. But it was conditioned by great and long-lasting superiorities in land and air equipment. When those ended, the German advantage ended.

In the second phase the Allies, after cancelling the German superiorities, proceeded to widen the margins of their own. It was necessarily a gradual process. Since a German advantage, which had been only just not sufficient to knock out either Britain or Russia, had taken over three years to undo, it is not surprising that an Allied advantage adequate to knock out Germany should have taken eighteen months further to develop.

German propaganda had sought to interpret German conquests in terms of German man-to-man superiority. Victory in battle, its pleaders argued, had gone to the braver, better race; whose title to be the *Herrenvolk*, or 'master-people', it was alleged to confirm. This is an interpretation of the events, which cannot survive any frank analysis of them.

The struggle since 1939 has confirmed, what that of 1914-18 had already shown, that at least four of the larger European peoples—the French, the British, the Germans, and the Russians—can each be depended upon to display supreme martial qualities on the battlefield: so that no conflict between them can be decided by those qualities alone^And in that high company of courage the armies also of the United States have now fully and upon the largest scale established their right to be numbered. It follows that the conception of winning wars as a test of manliness—somewhat as the winning of a horse-race is a test of speed—is no longer tenable, at all events as between the leading Powers. The determinants of victory must be sought elsewhere.

## HOW GERMANY PREPARED HER ADVANTAGE

THE war from its beginning on 1 September 1939 has been, to an extent far surpassing all earlier examples, a war decided by mechanisms. Some of them—notably tanks and aircraft—are exceedingly complicated structures, each comprising many thousands of minutely measured and fitted parts. A modern tank has nearly 7,000 parts, composed of about 40,000 separate pieces of material. To build a model in such cases necessitates the employment of highly skilled workmen for perhaps a year, perhaps two years; and replicas similarly made will take nearly as long. But for war purposes a few machines would be useless; nothing less than an output of hundreds per month and thousands per year will avail. How is it attained? By the twentieth-century manufacturing method known (in the broadest sense of the phrase) as Mass Production.

Mass production has had so much to do alike with the origin of this war and with its course, that it is indispensable at the outset to define what it is. It involves replacing the hand-and-brain work of the manual engineer by the automatic work of what are known as machine-tools and jigs.<sup>1</sup> To make the tools and jigs required for mass-pro-

<sup>1</sup> The term 'machine-tool' explains itself; for 'jig' it is perhaps worth quoting the definition from *Lockwood's Dictionary of Mechanical Engineering* (1913), which is the earliest citation in the Oxford English Dictionary: 'Jig, an appliance which locates and holds a piece of work and guides the tools which operate upon it'. A 'master-jig' is often itself a construction of great size and complexity.

ducing any large and complicated piece of war-equipment may consume a year or eighteen months or two years according to the complexity of the task. During all that time there is no output, save perhaps a trickle of copies produced much as the model was. But as soon as the mass-production plant is completed and set going, the products pour forth in a flood. Output figures leap up from, say, five a month to, say, five hundred or a thousand or several thousand a month, as the case may be. Note, however, that the form of the mass-product cannot be varied in its main features; and even such minor improvements as it is practicable to introduce will entail delays and loss of output.

Now quantity, while essential in the case of war mechanisms, is not the only essential. Design, also, is fiercely competitive. New types of aircraft, tanks, guns, etc., are constantly being evolved; and the improvement is often such as definitely to outclass what went before. But it cannot exert its effect in war until it is mass-produced; and that, as has just been shown, involves (i) a period of waiting, up to two years and even more, before supplies begin; (2) the stereotyping of the model from the moment that its mass production is undertaken. It follows that war-preparedness becomes a matter of timing. The authority responsible for arming a given nation or service is always on the horns of a dilemma. If it mass-produces too late, war may catch it unarmed. If on the other hand it mass-produces too early, it may find, when war comes, that its equipment, though plentiful, cannot stand up to the enemy's.

This dilemma gives a new and overwhelming advantage to an aggressor nation. For its government is alone in knowing beforehand the date at which war will be

launched. Blameless peace-loving governments, which will not fight unless they are attacked, let their periods of advantage pass unexploited. But an aggressor government can silently fix the date of its aggression years ahead, and so utilize those years that, when the war comes, it will be found, as if by some curious coincidence, to be at the most advantageous point of mass production in regard to every main requisite of war. Its up-to-date aircraft, tanks, anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank guns, shells, bombs, mines, transport, and equipment of all kinds will then so vastly outnumber everyone else's, that resistance is snowed under.

That is the policy which, from the moment that he entered office in 1933, Adolf Hitler in Germany pursued. As soon as possible the whole nation was harnessed to the mass production of war material. Under the Treaty of Versailles Germany had undertaken not to have either tanks or fighting aircraft or a conscript army; and thus the Powers whom her rearmament primarily threatened, viz. France and Great Britain, had legal as well as practical grounds for stopping it. They also then had overwhelming force. Yet they did nothing; partly because they had already been so much divided over the disarmament agitation, which German propaganda had cleverly twisted to allow German rearmament on the plea of 'Equality'; and partly because the gigantic expenditure on war factories, which did incidentally end Germany's long and painful unemployment crisis, was successfully, if absurdly, represented as having that for its main object. Hitler, of course, was ready to give pacific assurances to anybody at any time.

That his war should yield the fullest return on his mass production, it was necessary that looking ahead he should fix its intended date. This eventually turned out to be

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August-September 1938, when he confronted a bewildered Europe with a threat of instant battle, only averted by the climb-down of France and Great Britain at Munich. Naturally he did not disclose it in advance, but it could be fixed early. An informal but fairly effective conscription had begun under Papen in 1932, and it would take till 1938 to yield six trained classes—probably the minimum for a war. In 1935 conscription was formalized; and in the autumn of 1936 Hitler called to the colours, not only the class of conscripts due then, but the class due a year later. The only possible motive for this was to provide an extra class of fully trained soldiers for a war in 1938; and it is surprising that more notice was not taken of it abroad. He completed its effect by calling up the 1938 class in 1937.

Having his date fixed, Hitler refused to be deflected from it by circumstances. On 18 July 1936 a civil war broke out in Spain between the rival partisans of republican and totalitarian government. The totalitarians had Italian backing; the republicans, Russian. Here was a good 'anti-Comintern' issue for Nazis and Fascists to combine on; an issue, moreover, which would hurt France's strategic sensibilities in regard to Spain, and might goad her into repeating Napoleon III's mistake of 1870 and attacking while ill-prepared a much better-prepared Germany. But Hitler was not mainly concerned to conquer France. He aimed once and for all to conquer Europe. And for that he must wait until his weapons were ready. So he confined himself to sending into Spain a limited number of German aircraft and tanks—too few to commit him beyond withdrawal, but enough to provide his technicians with direct war experience. This proved most valuable in enabling Germany to decide what types to mass-

produce, and also to plan out the strategic and tactical use of them. The Spanish war lasted till March 1939, when the totalitarians won.

Two preliminary moves, however, the Fuehrer allowed himself, because he had correctly estimated that they could be brought off without a war. The first of them—in March 1936—was the remilitarization of the Rhineland. This destroyed the chief remaining guarantee of French security under the Versailles and Locarno Treaties. It had a very direct bearing on war production. For such great munitions centres as Cologne, Diisseldorf, and Mannheim-Ludwigshafen were within the area demilitarized by Locarno, and though the Ruhr industries were not, they lay so near as to be barely defensible.

The second move was made in March 1938, exactly two years later. It was the annexation of Austria by Germany. To Hitler, himself an Austrian, this had always seemed the first pre-requisite for German expansion. He attempted it in 1934, when he caused the Austrian Chancellor, Dollfuss, to be murdered; but Mussolini stopped him by a military gesture. Subsequently Mussolini had been won over; and now without warning columns of armoured and mechanized German troops crossed the frontier at many points. The Austrian army was too weak to resist, and the last Austrian Chancellor, Schuschnigg, was hurried away into captivity. Hitler acquired seven million more German-speaking subjects; and strategically he obtained a projecting salient of land, which could be combined with the parallel German salient of Silesia on the north to hold the Bohemian part of Czechoslovakia as if in a pair of nutcrackers. This part contained Prague, the country's capital, and Pilsen, the seat of its great armament factory, the Skoda Works. Opposite the original German frontier

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it had what was probably the strongest fortified line in Europe; but opposite Austria it was not so strong.

Hitler's next task was to destroy Czechoslovakia and annex its Bohemian and Moravian areas. But he could not expect to do so without fighting, since both France and Russia were bound by treaty to defend the Czechs. And Great Britain, though not herself bound to the Czechs, would probably sink or swim with France. This, then, was the stage which Hitler timed himself to reach in August-September 1938, the long-planned date when he would be ready for war. As *casus belli*, he stirred up the Sudeten Germans in Bohemia and Moravia to demand incorporation in Germany. Since the territory which they inhabited formed a fringe round the country, including both its natural and its artificial defences, their transfer to Germany would leave Czechoslovakia defenceless.

But when the crisis came, neither Great Britain nor France had enough weapons to fight. They had allowed Germany to mass-produce armaments without either stopping her or sufficiently following suit. Great Britain scarcely began serious preparations for mass production till 1937. Even then they were half-hearted. No Ministry of Munitions (or Supply) was set up; no proper system of priorities was developed; the task of armament production was left to the Service ministries, whose insufficiency for dealing with it had been abundantly demonstrated in 1914-18. Some of the most urgent needs (e.g. that for heavy anti-aircraft guns) were scarcely tackled at all. France was even worse off. During the years of Hitler's rearmament her attention had been largely drawn away from it by her own acute internal dissensions. The conflict between her revolutionaries and reactionaries bordered on civil war. 'Stay-in' strikes, 'lightning' strikes, and, most

disorganizing of all, a 40-hours' week<sup>1</sup> abruptly imposed by law on industries accustomed to 52 or more hours, had brought her factories and engineering plants to a standstill. Strikes involving hundreds of thousands of skilled workers in her armament trades were in full swing till within eight days of the order for mobilization. Throughout 1938 her output of aircraft, tanks, and war vehicles of all kinds had fallen to near zero.

It was in these circumstances that Great Britain and France gave way to Hitler and concluded at Munich on 29 September 1938 one of the great capitulations of history. The Fuehrer had brazenly raised his terms during the negotiations, but the two Powers accepted them all. Czechoslovakia, though she was France's ally, was stripped of her defensive territories and left helpless, with no protection against further seizure save a worthless promise from the signatory Powers. These were Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and France. Russia, though she was France's ally and had joined with her in guaranteeing Czechoslovakia's integrity, was left entirely out of the affair—a course from which she could and did draw her own conclusions. On 21 February 1939, a Havas despatch from Moscow announced that she considered herself released from any obligation to France or England.

It is not intended here to discuss the political factors which contributed to this—in particular the policy of so-called 'appeasement', which British and French statesmen had been pursuing towards Hitler, and of which Munich in some of its aspects was the culmination. Militarily the only gain to the Allies was time—eleven months, as it proved in the event—for rearming. Owing to the time-lag

<sup>1</sup> In Germany the working week in armament and related industries had been raised to 60 hours.

involved in mass production, this failed to save France, despite some industrial revival following suspension of the 40-hours' week; and it only saved Britain by the narrowest margin. Had the Battle of Britain come two months earlier it might well have been lost. On the other hand, the eleven months were temporarily a gain to Hitler, because during them his mass-products were pouring out, while those of the Allies were merely being prepared for; so that his immediate superiority in arms when the war came was greater, not less, than it had been at Munich. In addition he had gained Czechoslovakia. The elaborate fortifications, the scientifically equipped Czech army, the unique arms factories of Pilsen and Brno, and immense new facilities for attacking Poland—all succumbed to him in the sequel without his firing a shot. These were prizes indeed.

Those of them not given under the Munich Agreement were annexed on 15 March 1939. At Munich Hitler had insisted that he wanted nothing more beside the German-speaking areas. Less than six months later he overran the Czech areas also. Britain and France, despite Munich promises, protested but did not resist. But the heads of the British Government saw at last where they stood. Hitler went on to enforce the lesson by wrenching the port and district of Memel from Lithuania (20 March 1939); while Mussolini, now fully displayed as his fellow-aggressor, annexed by the same methods Albania (7 April 1939). Meanwhile German troops were poured into Slovakia, which had been declared independent but was obviously to be used as a means of outflanking Poland. It was in these circumstances that (24 March 1939) Great Britain gave a unilateral guarantee to Poland, which already was (as Czechoslovakia had been) in alliance with France. The guarantee was made bilateral by a joint Anglo-Polish

Declaration (6 April 1939). Hitler meanwhile on 24 March and again on 28 April made demands on Poland for the incorporation of Danzig in Germany, and the concession of a road and rail connection (which should be German territory) across the Polish province of Pomorze. These demands, if granted, would have broken Poland much as the annexation of the Sudetenland broke Czechoslovakia. The Polish Government refused them, but Hitler persisted, and on 28 April annulled the German-Polish Pact of Non-Aggression. In Danzig and in Germany he whipped up an artificial agitation against Poland, just as he had a year earlier against Czechoslovakia, at the same time transporting very large forces into East Prussia by sea. By July they were spilling over into Danzig, in violation of that city's status.

As the danger darkened, the British Government, presided over by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, became more active, both at home and abroad. At home it announced on 20 April the formation of a Ministry of Supply, and a week later it carried in the House of Commons against official Labour and Liberal opposition a resolution in favour of conscription.<sup>1</sup> Abroad it gave unilateral guarantees to Rumania and Greece, and signed a treaty with Turkey, whereby each party undertook to assist the other if attacked by any Power except Russia. But the weak point about this diplomacy (and especially the guarantee to Poland) was that we did not secure the support of Russia. We sought it; but Stalin deemed it indispensable for his defence to occupy the three small Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), and this we were unwilling to countenance. Russia therefore conducted paral-

<sup>1</sup> The Bill implementing this passed its third reading on 18 May, exactly fifteen weeks before Hitler struck.

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lei negotiations with Germany; and on 23 August 1939 the world was electrified by the news of a German-Soviet Pact, under which Russia was to have the three Baltic States, provision being made for the transfer of the German elements in them to Germany. Secret clauses arranged also for a partition of Poland, and for Russia to have a strip of Finland.

All was now clear for Hitler to strike his blow; and after a farce of ultimatums, which Poland was given no chance to answer, the Germans invaded Poland across every accessible frontier before dawn on 1 September 1939. The Second Great War had begun.

## HOW GERMANY EXPLOITED HER ADVANTAGE

'NEVER can there have been or ever be', wrote the British Ambassador to Germany, Sir Nevile Henderson, 'a case of more deliberate and carefully planned aggression.'<sup>1</sup> There was not a single Power in Europe, from whom Germany, if she kept the peace, had to apprehend either present or prospective attack. But she began total mobilization in East Prussia on 15 August and elsewhere on 25 August. The Polish mobilization in reply was not dated till 30 August, and even then at the request of Great Britain and France it was postponed till 31 August. This pacific delay cost the Poles dear; but the fate of their army was sealed in any case by the overwhelming superiority of Germany's mass-produced equipment.

The main campaign only lasted three weeks. The Poles fought bravely against impossible odds. The treaty-makers of 1919 had bequeathed to them indefensible frontiers, which the Germans could attack along broad fronts on three sides—north, west, and south. The Poles put into line 22 divisions of infantry and 7 brigades of cavalry; they had no armoured divisions, two tank brigades, and few anti-tank or anti-aircraft guns. The Germans invaded with 54 divisions, of which no fewer than seven were armoured and seven motorized; and they used over 2,000 first-line aircraft. The Poles had about 700 aircraft, but though excellently manned a large proportion of them never took the air; for the very first German blow—struck

<sup>1</sup> Cd. 6115 of 1939, p. 21.

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before any other rupture of peace—was the bombing at dawn of the Polish airfields, and destruction of their machines on the ground. In a short time the Germans obtained complete command of the air; in daylight and from low levels they could bomb at leisure almost any target that they pleased; and at the same time their armoured divisions, aided by fine weather and hard ground, went careering through and behind the Polish lines, at speeds per hour and for distances per day never before seen in warfare. Between them they cut telephones and communications everywhere, and in a few days reduced the greater part of a well-organized army into a mob of disconnected units. By mid-September nearly all Western Poland was overrun; the Polish Government had left Warsaw; and what remained of the Polish army was struggling against desperate odds to hold a line of river-fronts just covering the capital. Then a new weight was cast into the scale. Acting under the German-Soviet Treaty, Russian forces invaded Poland in the rear; the Polish President and Government crossed (17 September) into Rumania; and the end soon came. Warsaw held out ten days longer, but it was ruthlessly bombed into surrender, with heavy civilian casualties, from the air. There followed a partition of Poland, in which Germany took 73,000 square miles with 22 millions population, and Russia 77,000 square miles with 13 millions.

The Polish disaster was misunderstood at the time, and the victims blamed undeservedly. It should have taught two things: first, that against tanks and aircraft troops without counter weapons, however brave and numerous, are merely sheep for slaughter; second, that aircraft can heighten overwhelmingly the effect of an opening blow against an unexpecting adversary. Neither lesson being

learned, the first was repeated in 1940 on the fields of France, and the second in 1941 at Pearl Harbour. -

Meanwhile Poland's Western Allies, Great Britain (with all the Dominions except Eire supporting her) and France, had declared war on 3 September. The French Army duly mobilized, and a British Expeditionary Force under Lord Gort was sent to its aid. Although its transport arrangements were made at high speed and without interference by the enemy, it was not till 3 October that portions of it took over a sector of the French line. This sector ran along part of the Franco-Belgian frontier. The original strength of the B.E.F. was two corps of two divisions each, with corps and army troops; they were increased to three divisions each by mid-winter. There was also an Air Component of the R.A.F.—one Fighter Wing and one Bomber-Reconnaissance Wing; besides an independent Advanced Air Striking Force posted near Rheims.

On either side of the Franco-German frontier were broad zones of defence in depth, known as the Maginot Line and the West Wall respectively. During the Polish campaign French troops nibbled at the West Wall and occupied some of its forward positions. The Germans retook them when the Polish war was over. Then inactivity descended on the armies for the winter, neither side moving for over five months. Air attacks at the same time were, as if by tacit agreement, almost confined to naval objectives. In Poland the Germans had used aeroplanes ruthlessly against civilians, but the French, nervous about their own weak air defences, neither retaliated nor wanted the British to retaliate. This period of inactivity the Americans christened 'the phoney war'. Only the German-British naval struggle still seemed alive.

That had been restarted in 1918 shape. The British

blockaded Germany with a line drawn across the Straits of Dover and another from Scotland to Norway via the Orkneys and Shetlands. The Germans relied primarily on U-boats, one of which as early as 3 September 1939 sank the liner *Athema*, without warning, drowning many passengers. On 18 September another sank the aircraft-carrier *Courageous*, and on 14 October yet another penetrated the anchorage of the British Grand Fleet and sank the battleship *Royal Oak* at her moorings. On the whole, however, the British Navy had the measure of the U-boats at this stage; nor did a German attempt to supplement them by using battleships as commerce raiders succeed for long. On 13 December at the battle of the River Plate the German pocket-battleship *Admiral Graf von Spee* was tackled by three British cruisers with gun-power much inferior, and driven into Montevideo so badly damaged that on 17 December she scuttled herself. This victory, due to all-round superior dash and skill on the British side,<sup>1</sup> was the first heartening event for the Allies in the war.

Meanwhile Russia had followed up the partition of Poland by seeking to realize the other gains, to which Germany in the August treaty had consented. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania submitted, but Finland would not; and on 30 November the Russians launched an invasion. In the ensuing winter campaign the Finns at first had the best of it. Against what was deemed a German-Russian *bloc*, Britain and France were willing to give them direct support, provided that they asked for it and that a virtually solid Scandinavia backed the request. But both con-

<sup>1</sup> The final superiority was in accuracy of gunfire, and there perhaps too little attention has been paid to the fact that the British ships had an aircraft (H.M.S. *Ajax's*) spotting for them, whereas the *Graf Spee's* aircraft, like H.M.S. *Exeter's*, was disabled before it could take the air.

ditions were blocked by the attitude of Sweden and Norway. Russian numbers told; and by the Treaty of Moscow (13 March 1940) Finland conceded the Soviet's demands. The Allies, who had assembled a small expeditionary force, dispersed it. Disappointment in France caused a change of Government there.

As winter ended, Hitler struck again. The Germans had been using the territorial waters of Denmark and Norway to pierce the British blockade. On 16 February the British destroyer *Cossack* rescued 299 British merchant seamen from the German ship *Altmark*, which was carrying them as prisoners through Norwegian territorial waters, and on 8 April the Allies notified the mining of three areas in those waters. But the very next day Germany launched her next long-prepared aggression. Following her invariable technique of a massive invasion at many points without warning at dawn, she fell simultaneously on Denmark and Norway. Denmark yielded without fighting. The Norwegians resisted, and in Oslo Fiord sank a German battle-cruiser. Yet the Germans occupied Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik all on the first day—every fully equipped port in the country. Almost as quickly they seized all its airfields in the south.

The campaign in Norway was difficult for the Germans since they could not get there by land, but must cross the broad Skagerrak. They won it by air power. On 9 April the British Grand Fleet was steaming off Bergen, when a handful<sup>1</sup> of German bombers attacked. A destroyer was sunk, two cruisers were damaged and the flagship *Rodney*

<sup>1</sup> It has been truly said that, had there been more of them, the *Prince of Wales* catastrophe might have been anticipated, and had they carried torpedoes, Pearl Harbour. As it was, we purchased our lesson cheaply.

itself was hit by a bomb which did considerable mischief, though it failed to pierce the deck armour. Thenceforth (with one small exception) no surface naval craft were sent into the Skagerrak, and so the Germans could reinforce in Norway without limit. This fact alone foredoomed the two small Allied forces, which on 16 and 18 April landed on either side of Trondheim, at Namsos and Aandalsnes respectively. But aviation also defeated them directly. As they had no airfield, they could not operate fighter aircraft,<sup>1</sup> and suffered the extremity of low-level daylight bombing; nor could they land anti-aircraft guns, since the bombers destroyed the cranes and jetties. Within just over a fortnight both forces had to be re-embarked. Only far north at Narvik, where in two daring actions on 10 and 13 April the Navy had annihilated the local German warships and supply ships, did a force of British, French, Poles, and Norwegians succeed in taking the town. Later, owing to the French disaster, they had to be evacuated.

King Haakon and his ministers left Norway, with powers from their parliament to continue the war. They settled in England—the first of many exiled Governments to do so. Dutch, Belgians, Free French, Poles, Czechs, Greeks, and Yugoslavs were to follow in due course; and the collocation upon the one island of the leaders of so many suffering nations tended not only to educate their hosts but also in a variety of ways to render them more familiar with one another.

The shock of Norway caused a change of Government in Great Britain; Mr. Churchill succeeded (10 May 1940) Mr. Chamberlain. He at once set up a Ministry of Aircraft Production, destined to make the aircraft industry the largest in Britain. The new Government was a three-party

<sup>1</sup> An attempt to do so off a frozen lake ended in the obvious way.

coalition, and its head on meeting the House of Commons three days later warned the country that he had nothing to offer it but 'blood, toil, tears, and sweat'. Already on that same 10 May (concomitant, but not cause of the change) Hitler had launched his main European offensive. He attacked Holland, Luxembourg, and Belgium. The technique was the same as before. He had treaties of friendship with them all, and had only recently reaffirmed his pacific intentions. At dawn without warning he fell on them, both by land and by air.

From the outset things went well for the Germans. Holland and Belgium endeavoured to combine their strategy, and the northern French armies, including the B.E.F., moved forward over the Franco-Belgian frontier to their aid. But the German plans had been well laid, and made skilful use (as in Norway, but on a larger scale) both of parachutists and of treachery within the invaded country. Thus they were able to attack Rotterdam the first day, and captured its aerodrome and much else. Early also, an armoured thrust pierced to the Moerdijk bridges in the centre of Holland, the vital waist connecting the north and the south of the country. Dutch resistance only lasted four and a half days, and on 14 May all Dutch troops save those in Zeeland (who did not hold out for long) laid down their arms. The capitulation was necessitated by the loss of Moerdijk, but it was expedited by the murderous bombing of Rotterdam. Repeating their Warsaw method, the German aircraft flew low over central Rotterdam in daylight and reduced it to rubble, with great loss of civilian lives; and they threatened to do the same elsewhere, failing instant surrender. The Dutch Queen and Government escaped from the country.

Meanwhile the Belgian defence had also gone badly. At

the outset there was a failure to demolish important bridges over the Meuse and the Albert Canal, in consequence of which the Belgians lost their forward line. The main line, of which the British and French formed part, ran south from Antwerp through Louvain and Namur. But as early as 16 May the Allies were ordered by the French Generalissimo to abandon it and fall back to the line of the Schelde, which they reached on the 19th. The chief reason for this was that already German armoured divisions quickly traversing the Belgian Ardennes had broken through the French Ninth Army and crossed the Meuse between Sedan and Mezieres. Here it must be recalled that the Maginot Line covered France's frontier with Germany only; her frontier with Belgium was unfortified, save for the sector held during the winter by the B.E.F. This armoured break-through proved to be the central feature of German strategy. Five divisions conducted it; Amiens was reached on 18 May; Abbeville on the 20th. Thenceforward the B.E.F. and the northern French armies were isolated from the rest and from their own reserves. The German force turned north up the coast towards Boulogne to attempt the biggest encirclement in history.

It would take too long to trace here the kaleidoscope of the following fortnight. The governing factor in it was that the Allies had neither tanks enough nor anti-tank guns to stand up to the units of massed German armour. The gallant French and Belgians fared no better in this than the gallant Poles had done. On 27 May the Belgian army under its King, hard hit and at the end of its munitions, had to capitulate. The other encircled armies then withdrew into a bridgehead round Dunkirk, and from there the men (but not their equipment) were retrieved by the famous effort of British seamanship under the protection

of the Navy and the home-based R.A.F. No fewer than 224,584 British and 112,546 allied (mostly French) troops were rescued in this way.

The French campaign was not over, but it had been decided. While Dunkirk occupied the Germans, an attempt was made under General Weygand (who had succeeded General Gamelin as French Commander-in-Chief) to reorganize the French armies along the line of the rivers Somme and Aisne. But on 7 June the German armour dashed forward from a Somme bridgehead; on 9 June it reached Rouen; on 10 June it crossed the Seine between Rouen and Vernon; the same day Italy declared war and attacked France in the south. On the 14th the Germans entered Paris. The French Government had withdrawn—first to Tours, then to Bordeaux; there on the 16th the Reynaud Government made way for a Pdtain-Weygand combination, which at once ordered the French army to stop fighting and asked Hitler for peace. This downfall had for accompaniment a complete civil and military collapse, with millions of refugees jostling the soldiers off the roads and the unresisted German aviation bombing both indifferently. On 21 June at Compiegne, in the railway carriage used by Foch for the 1918 armistice, the armistice of 1940 was signed by the French delegates. On 24 June they signed one with Italy.

What would Great Britain do? Outside her people and Empire, few thought she could continue. Friends as well as foes shared Mussolini's conviction that Germany had won the war. But the British never wavered, and their courage was crystallized by its interpreter. Mr. Churchill's broadcast of 17 June and his great speech on the 18th were supreme examples of the creative leadership which moulds history. Many too felt instinctively (and the in-

stinct had much to warrant it) that the loss of a land-front in Europe might really be a gain. They remembered how many British lives it cost in 1914-18 to keep such a front in being.

But for the moment the island was weaponless. Had Hitler after Dunkirk made Britain his first target instead of France, both nations might have fallen. At one stage the equipped troops available for defence numbered but a single division. Even after Bordeaux an immediate heavy night air campaign might have proved irresistible. Spitfires and heavy anti-aircraft guns only began coming in numbers off the lines about midsummer, and priority for the latter had to be given to ships. Luckily the *Luftwaffe*, designed essentially for army co-operation, had then scarcely any trained night-bombers. Meantime on and after 17 June every effort was made to pull our ships and men out of France (including Allies such as Poles); while the bases of the Home Guard were laid in England, and under General de Gaulle a Free French movement was formed. But the Bordeaux Government (soon transferred to Vichy) stuck at little in toadying to the conqueror. Many hundreds of trained German pilots, whom the R.A.F. had brought down, were repatriated against our protests. Most instant was the problem of the French warships, which there was nothing in the armistice terms to keep from German hands save a worthless German undertaking. The British Navy, therefore, took over or immobilized those under its control, and with the same object at Oran and Dakar even fought actions against the French.

The Germans now controlled the coastline of Europe from South France to North Norway. Hitler could use it to attack Great Britain (1) by invasion, (2) by air, (3) by submarine blockade. He prepared all three; but as the

first had to wait on the second, it was not actually launched. On 8 August he began the necessary preliminary—a series of daylight air attacks. Though it never passed beyond the air stage, this was a true counterpart to the Battle of France, and was fitly named the Battle of Britain. The issue of the war turned on it; for, had it been lost, Britain must have shared France's fate. It lasted till the end of October; but the R.A.F., though constantly and often greatly outnumbered, had the better of almost every engagement. In the whole period the number of German aircraft certainly brought down in daylight was 2,375, besides a large number of 'probables'. One day, 15 September, witnessed the destruction of 185. The R.A.F. lost in all 375 pilots killed and 358 wounded; but at the end was stronger in fighter machines and pilots than at the beginning.

The high bravery and superior training of the British airmen counted for much in the victory, but essentially it was due to superior types of machine, put later into mass production than the enemy's, and just—though only just—forthcoming in sufficient numbers. The effect was like that of the Marne in 1914; it did not win the war, but it stopped the rot. 'Never', said Mr. Churchill, 'in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'

Invasion being baulked, the Germans turned to night-bombing, and for nearly nine months (7 September 1940 to 16 May 1941) the British people suffered an intensity of air attack then without precedent. It began in London, which was raided in the first instance on 82 out of 85 consecutive nights. A.A. guns were still so scarce there, that warships were actually hazarded up the Thames to supplement them. Later, following (14 November) a sen-

sationally successful raid on Coventry, the attack was switched to the provinces, and Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Hull, Southampton, Bristol, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Tyneside, Clydeside, and Belfast were among the areas most heavily bombed. Whether judged by damage or casualties, London bore the brunt; yet in proportion some of the smaller cities were even harder hit. In London no fewer than 1,150,000 houses were damaged; and twice as many were made uninhabitable as in all the rest of the country. But in Portsmouth out of 70,000 houses only 5,000 escaped damage.

Down to the end of 1941 some 190,000 high explosive bombs were dropped in Great Britain; 43,667 civilians were killed and 50,387 seriously injured. But the onslaught was a failure. The island was not disabled and refused to be terrorized; and its free people showed remarkable powers of organization and endurance in solving problems of passive defence. Two things helped—one, that bombing was not, as on the continent, the accompaniment of invasion; the other, that the U.S.A. and Canada stood behind, able to go on supplying munitions, even if the British factories were destroyed. But most of them never were; in this and in some other respects the German effort was amateurish.

The development of American supplies drew much stimulus from the air campaign. When the war began, there was a law on the United States' statute-book forbidding any sale of weapons or munitions to a belligerent country. This provision, favourable to the aggressors, was not repealed until 4 November 1939; when war sales were permitted on a defined basis known as 'cash and carry'. The purchaser had to pay in dollars before delivery, and he had to ship the goods himself. On this footing Britain

and France placed large contracts, which after the fall of France enured to Britain only. By degrees the United States Government also became active in developing war production. In May 1940 the President told Congress that the country should be 'geared up to the ability to produce at least 50,000 planes a year', and big appropriations were made for armaments. Later, when Britain ran short of dollars for 'cash and carry', the 'Lend Lease' Bill was introduced at the beginning of 1941, and became law on 11 March. It ensured that no monetary difficulty should limit supplies.

On another side, also, America became increasingly lined up behind Britain—that of the sea war. After her defeat in the Battle of Britain, Germany's best hope of crushing the island lay in her submarines. Britain's naval resources were stretched very tight, especially in destroyers. Early in September 1940 she concluded an agreement with the United States, whereby she received fifty American destroyers, while the United States was given the right to lease naval and air bases in Newfoundland, British Guiana, and certain of the British West Indies. Britain, again, after the fall of Denmark and Norway, had occupied the Faeroes and Iceland. In April 1941 the United States supplemented this by occupying Greenland, and later she took over the burden of Iceland also.

## HOW THE WAR BECAME WORLD-WIDE

CONCERNED though he must have been at Britain's survival and America's backing, Hitler does not seem to have taken either seriously enough. He had (as no one who has studied his writings and speeches can doubt) an overmastering faith in the superiority of land-power over sea-power. If Germany's army, with that of her Italian ally, could subdue continental Europe and adjacent Asia—a conquest on which those of Africa and the Middle East must follow—then she would have land-supplies of all necessary raw materials and might snap her fingers at the sea-going Anglo-Saxons, whose 'pluto-democracies'<sup>1</sup> could not long resist her. As a thorn in America's side, she would favour Japan; but her prime need was to crush the Soviet. For the future which the Fuehrer visualized for the German race involved its absorbing and colonizing vast tracts in Poland, the Ukraine, and South Russia.

Signs of this new trend appeared towards the end of 1940. On 27 September, Germany, Italy, and Japan signed a Tripartite Pact of alliance and demarcation, with a clause pointed at the United States. In the winter Washington received reports that Germany intended to attack Russia, and early in 1941 passed them on to Moscow. In March further reports were received to the same effect, and were again passed on. But for the moment the mover was Italy and the theatre the Mediterranean. The collapse of France had placed Britain in a most difficult situation there, both on land and afloat. It was left for

her commanders—General Sir Archibald Wavell and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham—to work wonders with inferior forces. The Italian armies in Libya and Abyssinia were much too large to be prevented from invading Egypt and Kenya, and, on 13 September 1940, as soon as the summer heat abated, a great force under Marshal Graziani crossed the Egyptian frontier. Harassed by British patrols, it reached Sidi Barrani, but there stayed inactive for nearly three months. In October Italy launched an unprovoked attack (of the usual pattern) against Greece, using Albania as her advanced base. Greece's act in resisting the aggression was one of great courage, since the British Empire, with which she thereby aligned herself, was then fighting alone against a triumphant Axis. Surprise procured the invaders some initial success; but the Greeks rallied, and despite inferior equipment pushed them back. Meanwhile on 11 November the great victory of Taranto restored naval supremacy in the Mediterranean to the British fleet. The striking force were naval aircraft flown from H. M. S. *Illustrious*; they torpedoed at anchor and crippled no fewer than three of the six capital ships composing the Italian battle-fleet. On 11 December it was the British army's turn. General Wavell, who had been reinforced with Indian, Australian, and New Zealand troops, opened an armoured and mechanized offensive which in 62 days drove the Italians not merely out of Egypt but out of Cyrenaica, annihilating the Italian army there, seizing all its strongholds, inflicting heavy casualties, and capturing 133,295 prisoners with 1,300 guns and immense booty. When it is added that his striking force was only about 30,000 strong and inferior to the Italians in equipment, the brilliancy of the exploit can be seen. The army was well served by a superior navy

and air force; but in the main its success was a supreme example of what the new tactics could do.

Defeated by Greeks and British alike, the Italian aggressors were halted, but behind them stood their German partners preparing. During the winter Germany secured the aid of Rumania and Bulgaria, and equipped them with airfields for an offensive. By mid-February the Greek Government realized what this meant, and consulted Great Britain, who decided to send an expeditionary force. It consisted of an armoured brigade, two infantry divisions, and some corps artillery. This was a serious—indeed in the event disastrous—subtraction from Wavell's African strength, yet really little more than a token force in Greece; and after the German push came on 6 April, it and the Greeks were speedily overwhelmed. The push had been prefaced by a demand on Yugoslavia to join the Axis. On 25 March the Yugoslav Regent, Prince Paul, yielded and signed the membership form, the so-called tripartite pact; but on 27 March a popular uprising swept him away, and a war Government was set up under the youthful King, who consented to anticipate his coming of age. Heroism, however, could not make up for unreadiness. The attacking Germans were skilfully directed. They brushed aside the half-mobilized Yugoslavs with but little delay; bombed Belgrade ruthlessly; and fell upon the rear of the Greek army in Albania. The defeat of the Allies was the more crushing because they fought with negligible air strength, while the Germans operated more than 1,000 machines. The transport of the force to Greece had been effected without hitch, attempted Italian naval interference being quelled by Admiral Cunningham's brilliant night victory off Cape Matapan (28 March 1941). But it was otherwise with the re-embarkation (24-30 **April**),

when German air attack inflicted considerable losses—both of transports and of destroyers. The troops brought away their rifles, but no artillery and no transport.

Ejected from the mainland, the British retained Crete, one of the most valuable strategical areas in the Mediterranean. But not for long. Though it contained three aerodromes, the attempt was made to hold it without fighter protection, with the same results as in Greece. The Germans stormed it from the air; and only about half the garrison were evacuated, again at serious cost to the British fleet.

The Greek and Cretan defeats illustrated the heavy handicap under which Britain fought in the Eastern Mediterranean. Her mass production of fighter aircraft was now large, and their quality excelled that of the Germans. But whereas the Germans could fly a machine from airfield to airfield across any part of their area in a day or two, the British had to ship theirs by sea round the Cape, a voyage of three months. Much the same was true of other munitions and reinforcements. Later, a shorter route was developed across central Africa; but to the end the Germans could always reinforce far more quickly.

Wavell's position in Libya was further weakened by the need for dealing with the huge enemy army in his rear in Italian East Africa. The Fourth Indian Division was detached from the Western Desert to the Sudan, and on 19 January 1941 the Italian colony of Eritrea was invaded by a force based on Khartoum. Concurrently a force based on Nairobi moved against Italian Somaliland; and eventually the two forces met like pincers in the heart of Abyssinia. The Eritrean capital was taken by the northern force on April 1; the Abyssinian by the southern on 6 April. The bulk of the Italian and native units were thus des-

troyed; though mopping up lasted long in some areas, and was not completed till 27 November. The hardest fighting was the storming of Keren by the northern force in March; but the southern, which covered 1,725 miles in 53 days, had also a remarkable record.

In the meantime the Germans had moved a large air force into Sicily and a large tank force into Libya, and in a short while turned the balance against us in those areas. The mobile screen, which was all Wavell could keep in the west of Gyrenaica, was routed; by an unlucky mishap its best generals were captured; and in a very short time the British army was back on the Egyptian frontier, though with a garrison left behind to hold Tobruk. The *Luftwaffe* in Sicily made the Narrows so unhealthy for the British fleet, that even the supplying of Malta became most difficult. The loss of Crete was an aggravation of these troubles. About the same time a military usurper in Iraq came out against the British, and the Germans sent aircraft to help him, which were re-fuelled on the airfields of Vichy-controlled French Syria. Rather surprisingly, as it seemed at the moment, when the British proceeded to put down, first the Iraqi usurper, and then the Vichy regime in Syria, Germany hardly lifted a finger to save her friends. Free French troops took part in conquering Syria, which was then placed in Free French hands.

At the end of May the Germans made a notable attempt to weaken Britain's Atlantic cordon by sending out as a commerce raider the *Bismarck*, then probably the world's most powerful battleship. Big-ship interception failed, the battle-cruiser *Hood* being sunk and the *Bismarck* escaping. But ocean-going aircraft rediscovered the runaway, and summoned a naval concentration which overwhelmed her. This sea-defeat emphasized Germany's need to use her

land-power further if she was to escape strangulation. There were two alternatives—pincers movements through Turkey and North Africa with Suez, the Iraq oilfield, and the Persian Gulf as the objectives; or an attack on Soviet Russia. Hitler had decided for the latter; and at dawn on 22 June 1941 the German army, joined by Finns, Hungarians, Rumanians, and later Italians, attacked on a front of over 1,000 miles. On the evening of the same day Mr. Churchill, by yet another act of leadership, broadcast a speech which swung Britain unreservedly on to Russia's side, and helped to swing America also.

In fighting Russia the Germans fought for the first time a Power which was ready for them and had its mass production flowing strongly. Their main advantage was that their soldiers from top to bottom were war-experienced, whereas the Russians were novices. Since tactics and strategy had been so recently revolutionized, this advantage was great. It did not see them through, but it saw them a long way. The fringes which Stalin had secured for his frontiers—the Baltic States, Eastern Poland, and Bessarabia—were torn away in gigantic battles; and the invaders pressed deep into the country, reaching and enveloping but not capturing Leningrad, nearly reaching and enveloping Moscow, capturing Kiev, Kharkov, and the Donetz Basin, and even Rostov-on-Don; though from the last they were soon ejected. Russia's agony was terrible, but she never ceased to hit back. The Germans relied throughout on tanks and aircraft, in each of which they enjoyed qualitative superiority, while the numbers employed on both sides beat all records. Russian supplies were affected by the loss of the industrial Ukraine, but the need was partially met by the war factories of the Urals and by lavish shipments from Britain and America. *One*

of the chief channels for the latter was through Persia; and as a pro-German Shah plotted to obstruct it, British and Russian troops entered the country, and took steps which led to the Shah's abdication.

The Russo-German conflict made for the final widening of the war. On the one hand it brought the United States still closer to the anti-German Powers; on the other, it stimulated the cupidities of Japan. In August 1941 Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt held the first of their meetings, and signed and published the so-called Atlantic Charter. But in July, with Vichy's complicity, Japan had absorbed French Indo-China; and on 7 December without warning she attacked every American and British base within her reach. Four days later both Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. Thus there was no longer any Great Power left neutral.

Japan's start was sensational. At Pearl Harbour, the American naval base in the Pacific, an initial onslaught by her carrier-borne aircraft effected a complete surprise. Two United States battleships were sunk, three disabled, and three heavily damaged, besides extensive damage or destruction of cruisers, destroyers, and aircraft. Only three days later the British battleship *Prince of Wales* and battle-cruiser *Repulse*, having ventured into the Gulf of Siam without fighter escort, were ignominiously sunk by Japanese bombers. These victories gave Japan naval supremacy in Pacific and East Asiatic waters; and she proceeded to exploit it with great vigour against British, Dutch, and American possessions there. Hardly less important than her strength in ships was her strength in aircraft. In November it had been announced that British aircraft output was now equal to German; so that with American and Russian output added the combined nations were fast

winning the lead over the Axis. But advantage had not been taken of it to equip their Asiatic forces. Attempts to hold fortresses and conduct campaigns without aircraft failed disastrously; Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore were successively lost in this way; and the Japanese conquered the Dutch East Indies, the rest of Borneo, the Philippines, the Andamans, and Burma. They cut the Burma Road and so isolated China. Only as Britain and America brought more aircraft to bear, was Japanese expansion checked—eastward by the battle of the Coral Sea (May 1942) followed in June by that of Midway Island; and westward by the defeat of air attacks on Ceylon. The British occupation of Madagascar—till then under Vichy control—saved a most vital island from going the way of Indo-China.

The entry of America into the war was followed by a steep rise in submarine sinkings, as the U-boats pressed into new and undefended waters like the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. Despite local improvements this peril grew as a whole throughout 1942; it was not till 1943 that it began to be mastered. A corresponding growth on the Allied side was that of the strategic air attack on Germany. While she mass-produced U-boats, they mass-produced bombers; and gradually, though only so, the destruction of German industrial plants and towns came to weigh substantially in the balances of the war. The annihilating raid on Ltibeck (28 March 1942) and the raid of 1,130 bombers on Cologne (30-31 May) each marked an epoch in this respect; though the weight of bombs dropped in them was far less than those achieved in the following year.

The winter of the Japanese disasters and the U-boat crescendo would have been still more gloomy, if it had

not been relieved by the rally of the Russians. Following their recovery of Rostov a severe season set in. The advanced German armies suffered terribly; their men were too thinly clad, and their locomotives cracked with the frost. The Russians took advantage of this to dislodge them from one position after another; and the whole German line seemed tottering, till Hitler assumed personal command and restored confidence. In the upshot the worst threats to Moscow were all removed; but Leningrad, though revictualled across the ice of Lake Ladoga, remained within German gun-range.

Unfortunately when the snow had melted and the thaw dried, the Germans recovered themselves. A Russian offensive against Kharkov (May 1942) was defeated; Sevastopol was taken and the Crimea cleaned up; and having thus cleared their right flank, the German armies struck hard eastward between the Donetz and the upper Don. But at a critical moment in their victorious career they divided their effort. One part turned south, took Rostov, and pushed into the Caucasus aiming for oil; the other moved east and reached the neighbourhood of the Volga at Stalingrad. By thus seeking two objectives they eventually failed of either.

Meantime their victories in Russia were accompanied by victories in North Africa. The story there is chequered. After Wavell was driven back to the Egyptian border in the spring of 1941, he recaptured on 15 May the key position called Halfaya Pass, but lost it again eleven days later. ON July he relinquished the command and was succeeded by General Auchinleck, who on 18 November opened another offensive. It relieved Tobruk and on 24 December recaptured Benghazi. But it failed (as Wavell's had) before the lines of El Agheila; and a German counter-

offensive threw it back to Gazala in the middle of Cyrenaica. Four months of waiting followed, and then Rommel, the German commander, attacked. After many days' hard fighting the British force was defeated and chased back into Egypt. Tobruk fell; Wavell's old retiring-limit was passed; and the retreat continued to El Alamein, the last defensive position before Alexandria. The key to the German success—indeed to all their success in Africa—lay in the German Mark IV tank; which down to this point never had to face one that could knock it out at its own range. The British army was saved by its air force, which mercilessly harried the pursuers. Had the Germans reinforced Rommel with aircraft, he might have reached Alexandria. Their omission to do so could only be explained by their not having the aircraft—one of the earliest signs on their side of a definite shortage.

In October with the Germans battering at Stalingrad and threatening Alexandria, the position looked as black as ever. But an offensive launched by Rommel on 31 August had been held. General Alexander, the new commander-in-chief, and General Montgomery, commanding the Eighth Army, were not only able soldiers, but they had a new American tank, the General Sherman, which could knock out the Mark IV. On 2 November it did so on a very large scale, and the Axis army was totally defeated. Six days later new British and American armies were disembarked in Morocco and Algeria; and thenceforward the initiative in the Mediterranean rested with the Allies.

The Russian counter-offensive, which saved Stalingrad and eventually destroyed the whole of Germany's Stalingrad army, was launched about 19 November. It was a strategic surprise on the grand scale. Had the Germans

retained the air superiority which they possessed earlier, they would have seen what was coming and countered it. But their shortage of aircraft blinded them. The 'eyes' of the air passed to the Russians, with momentous results.

These events turned the course of the war. They were made possible, because in output of tanks, aircraft, guns, and material equipment of all kinds the Allies had at last outstripped the Germans. The big handicap, which Hitler had secured for himself before starting, had been worked off. With some delays added by the Japanese intervention, it had taken just over three years to do it.

## IV

### THE ALLIES FREE THEIR HANDS

IF we have distinguished three phases in the world-conflict before its course reached the dividing ridge, we may perhaps find three also after the ridge had been crossed and the force of gravity had turned against the aggressors.

In the first phase Great Britain and Russia each shook off certain particularly clogging restraints, which the success of the aggressors had imposed on them. Each, so to say, freed its hands. In Great Britain's case the liberations were maritime. The modern British Empire, a sea-linked chain extending in the Old World from the British Isles through India and Malaya to Australia and New Zealand, is dependent on navigation through the Mediterranean. The alternative route, over which South Africa stands guard, is much longer and therefore strategically disadvantageous. Again, for its life-line to the New World Great Britain needs secure navigation of the Atlantic. Down to well inside 1943 the Mediterranean route was cut by enemy shore-based aircraft, and the Atlantic, though not cut, was rendered very dangerous by enemy submarines. In Russia's case the fetters were military—the leaguer of Leningrad, the threats which Rostov held for the Lower Volga and the Caucasus, and above all the standing threat at perilously close quarters to Moscow itself. While these lasted, Russia could never develop freely the strategy of a general offensive.

By midsummer 1943 all these bonds had been broken, and in July the second phase opened with two pivotal

events—the first successful Anglo-American landings in Europe (viz. in Sicily) and the total defeat by the Russians of the last great German offensive on Soviet soil. Thereafter followed a long series of successes on both fronts, including the collapse of Italy and in the southern Ukraine a Russian advance to the Rumanian border. This phase ended with the seasonal standstill in Russia imposed by the 1944 spring thaw and with a military stalemate in Italy half-way between Rome and Naples.

The third phase began after many weeks of strained expectation with three carefully timed blows—an offensive (from 11 May) in Italy, which captured Rome; a vast landing operation (from 6 June) in Normandy, which captured Cherbourg; and (from 23 June) a Russian offensive north of the Pripet, which cleared White Russia of the enemy and created a huge gap in the centre of the German line. It is not proposed here to exhibit more than the opening of this third phase, which is in progress while these pages are being written.

Russia's victory at Stalingrad, with which our last section ended, spread itself over several months. The decisive stroke (launched on 19 November 1942) was an affair of a few days. But before it was struck, the German Sixth Army between the Don and the Volga had been attacking the city for eleven weeks; and after the trap had closed on 333,000 men of that army, about another eleven weeks passed before, on 31 January 1943, its principal remnants, headed by a field-marshal and sixteen generals, laid down their arms. In the interval however the Russians had achieved much else. The main attempt by the Germans to relieve their trapped army by a push from the south-west up the railway through Kotelnikovo had been completely crushed; and after isolating and clearing the Don Bend

the Soviet strategy organized two movements, pincer-wise, towards Rostov—one from the north down the railway from Voronezh, and one from the east along the railway from Kotelnikovo. These movements, and particularly the second, threatened the rear of the German army in the Caucasus, which had been held up for the winter in the mountains north of the passes leading to the major oilfields. Fearful of another encirclement, the German Command ordered its withdrawal. This involved the evacuation of a vast food-yielding territory and the abandonment of all hope of the coveted oilfields. But as an operation it was skilfully conducted. The Russians claimed no great toll of prisoners or material, such as had fallen to them on the Volga and in the Don Bend. Some of the Germans retired through Rostov; the rest crossed the Kerch Straits into the Crimea, leaving behind a sufficient force to maintain a strong bridgehead, which included Novorossiisk.

Meanwhile the Russians were not neglecting the liberation of their capitals. The capture (on 1 January 1943) of Velikiye Luki, the hinge of the German fronts directed towards Leningrad and Moscow respectively, had a certain relation to each of them; but it marked also a stage in the art of reducing the German fortresses—the so-called hedgehogs. On 18 January the leaguer of Leningrad was broken by the capture and opening of a sufficient corridor to bring in supplies by land. But the Germans were not dislodged from their main positions, and the city remained under shellfire. On 3 March (largely as a sequel to Velikiye Luki) the Russians captured Rzhev, the nearest of all the German hedgehogs to Moscow, and on 12 March they took Vyazma, the nearest along the direct Warsaw-to-Moscow railway. These two successes freed Moscow from the short-range threat, under which it had lived since the

latter part of 1941, and which had constituted a standing military embarrassment.

The eventual surrender of the Stalingrad Germans set free a large Russian force in that quarter, which quickened the southern advances. Kursk fell to them on 8 February, Rostov on 14 February; the Germans were driven out of most of the Donetz Basin; and on 16 February they even lost Kharkov. But soon afterwards the luck in the Ukraine turned. The thaw down there began much earlier than usual; the roads became nearly unusable; and the Russians, who had advanced hundreds of miles in a few months depending entirely on road transport, were heavily handicapped against the Germans, whose railway system was in full working behind them. A powerful German counter-offensive was launched, which on 15 March regained Kharkov and afterwards most of the Donetz Basin. When the thaw finally immobilized both armies, the position was that the Germans had shown they could still strike hard, and were left favourably placed for striking further. But they had been through a most disastrous winter.

Meanwhile a parallel drama was unfolding itself in North Africa. After the defeat of Rommel's tanks at El Alamein on 2-3 November 1942, he concentrated upon withdrawing what was left of them together with the German troops. The Italians he robbed of their transport and left to be taken prisoners wholesale. The R.A.F. hampered his going, but was itself hampered by rainstorms; and both armies moved rapidly out of Egypt and across Gyrenaica, reaching El Agheila at the western end in just over three weeks. Here there was a pause for another three weeks, while the British Eighth Army organized new supply lines through the recaptured port of Benghazi. The pursuit then continued into Tripolitania, interrupted only

by rearguard actions; and on 23 January the pursuers occupied the city of Tripoli. In 82 days they had traversed about 1,350 miles.

But the movement to expel the Axis from North Africa was twofold; it came from the west as well as from the east. The first landings of British and American troops in French North Africa, on 8 November 1942, were made on beaches adjacent to Casablanca and Rabat on the Atlantic coast and Oran and Algiers in the Mediterranean. There was little French opposition save from naval units and coastal batteries. Late in the afternoon Algiers capitulated; British and American warships and transports steamed into the harbour unopposed; and with that the success of the occupation was assured. At this early stage a leading part in bringing over the French forces to the Allied side was played by Admiral Darlan. Long a conspicuous figure in the Vichy Government, he had been sent to Africa by Marshal Pétain with full authority; which he now proceeded, against the Marshal's protests, to use on behalf of the Allies. His action was resented by Frenchmen of both extremes, and on 24 December 1942 he was shot dead in his office at Algiers by a youthful assassin. But the realignment of the French oversea forces went forward, and by degrees they all joined the Allies.

The landings in North Africa constituted much the largest amphibious operation undertaken down to that time. Some 850 warships and merchantmen were employed, and the number of troops put ashore, with full equipment and stores, may have been 140,000. They were all under the supreme command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, of the United States Army. The sea movements were not only remarkably timed, but they were kept secret from the enemy, who was taken completely off his

guard. Recovering from the surprise, Hitler acted promptly. In direct breach of his 1940 armistice, he sent German troops into 'unoccupied' France and so assimilated its condition to that of 'occupied'. Petain protested, but in vain. Secondly he despatched a large German force by air and by sea to Tunisia to seize the great ports of Bizerta and Tunis. A race ensued between this force and a small advanced Allied force which was pushed forward across the Algerian border; but favoured by a local French commander the Germans just won. Hitler's other move, the total occupation of France, missed the biggest prize, the French war-fleet at Toulon. On 12 November Admiral Darlan appealed to it to sail out and join the Allies, but its officers refused. A fortnight later swift German land dispositions barred their exit, but the same officers balked their would-be captors by scuttling the ships. Only a few of the smaller craft got away.

When the first clashes occurred in Tunisia, the Axis had locally for the time being a considerable air superiority, and the Allies' single line of land communication with Algiers was inadequate. Checks and reverses resulted; and the Germans, having seized the key positions in Tunisia, were able to build up there a large new German army. This army (under General von Arnim) faced west, while Rommel's faced east; the latter falling back at the end of January 1943 behind the Tunis-Tripoli frontier to Mareth, where the French had earlier constructed for defence against the Italians a sort of Maginot Line. The German programme was to hold Tunisia permanently, as a bridge-head into Africa and as a bar to that re-opening of the Mediterranean sea-route which was so much needed by Great Britain. So long as enemy aircraft was shore-based on each side of the Narrows, her supply-ships could not

navigate between them; though the most pressing of all her difficulties there, the re-victualling of Malta, came to be solved under fighter-protection from the east after the conquest of Tripoli.

On 14 January 1943 Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt met at Casablanca, and held a conference which lasted ten days. To counter the German programme in North Africa it was obvious that Allied military action from west and east must be under a single direction. This was achieved by appointing General Eisenhower as supreme Allied commander in North Africa with General Alexander as his deputy to direct the operations in the field. General Alexander did not take up his new position for nearly a month, but on 19 February he definitely transferred his headquarters from Egypt to Algeria. At his disposal he now had two British armies—the Eighth on the east and the First on the west—and an American Corps on the west. French units co-operated at both ends, but their most important contribution was made on the west also. The moment was a difficult one. Rommel on settling into the Mareth defences had sent back his tanks to conduct an offensive on the west front, where for a short time they did much havoc. But on returning to the east they were heavily defeated by the Eighth Army, and then the balance turned. Rommel lost the Mareth Line, and the line succeeding it, and retired to Germany on the score of ill health. The two German armies, now both under Arnim, still fought hard, but were steadily hustled closer, till on 6 May an assault upon the western one broke it utterly. Tunis and Bizerta both fell next day; the pursuit was relentless; and within a week the entire Axis force in Africa—over 250,000 men—were made prisoners with all their material.

This victory was a worthy pendant to Stalingrad; actually the number of prisoners was greater. It gave the Allies the whole North African coast, and therewith liberty to sail or fly from one end of the Mediterranean to the other under fighter protection. Apart from the strategical advantage of quicker communications, this was equivalent to adding a large tonnage to their available shipping. Here the effect coincided with that elsewhere of a sensational improvement in the war against the U-boats. Throughout 1942 this had gone badly for the Allies. The Germans turned out submarines by mass-production much faster than the Allies could sink them, and their fleet had reached dimensions threatening the very existence of the transatlantic lifeline. As compared with the situation in 1918, the Allies were terribly handicapped by their deprivation of bases in northern and western Ireland and the necessity of flying round and not over that now neutral territory. Indeed had the island been united and no part of it available to them, it seems probable that they might have lost the war. This damage was all the greater, because the Germans now had airfields in France nearly as far west as any in Great Britain, and their method was to send aircraft far out into the Atlantic, whence they wirelessly to their submarine packs the position and direction of Allied convoys. Another very grave factor was that the priceless British secrets of radiolocation, which had been communicated to the French as allies, were made available to the Germans after the collapse of France.

Two nations so inventive and resourceful as the British and the American were not likely to stand still in face of such a peril. The problem was approached on many sides at once. The R.A.F.'s bombers attacked factories making special U-boat essentials, and the yards (notably Ham-

burg, Kiel, and Stettin) where the U-boat parts were assembled, as well as the 'pens' in their base-ports (notably Brest, Lorient, and Cherbourg). Small convoy-protecting vessels, christened 'corvettes', were mass-produced (notably in Canada); and later a larger type appeared known as 'frigates'. Far-flying aircraft (notably Sunderland flying-boats and Liberator aeroplanes) played a special role; as did smaller types catapulted from the decks of merchantmen. Probably the turning-point in the long struggle was reached through the use of improved radiolocation apparatus fitted to surface ships and aircraft alike. Aircraft so equipped proved particularly deadly; and shore-based long-range machines flying from America, Canada, Newfoundland, Greenland, and Iceland as well as Great Britain could cover a great part of the northern Atlantic between them. Even so a large mid-ocean area remained uncovered, and there in due course the U-boats congregated for good hunting. What before long defeated them, was the use of carrier-borne aircraft, to convey which carriers of a rather small type were built in America in great numbers. The last stage of all came in October 1943, when Portugal agreed to allow the Allies to use bases in the Azores. This enabled convoys, especially in winter, to take more southerly routes.

It might have been expected that in November 1942, when the U-boats were still strong, they would have taken advantage of the great target offered by the Allied expeditionary force to North Africa. But they did not, probably because the Germans were caught napping and the bulk of their submarines were far out in the Atlantic avoiding the range of shore-based aircraft. Soon afterwards the balance turned heavily against them; and in May 1943—the month which also saw the opening of the Mediterranean

—Germany for the first time lost more submarines than she put into service. Thereafter (though only at the price of unceasing effort) the seas were made once more reasonably secure for Allied navigation.

The Allies' strategic air attack on Germany's production, which was their counterpart to her U-boat attack on their supplies, encountered no such defeat. Throughout the second half of 1942 its importance continually rose. The three 'thousand-bomber' raids in May and June (on Cologne, Essen, and Bremen) had been carried out abnormally with numbers swollen by second-line aircraft. That was not repeated; but though the numbers were smaller, the bomb-loads dropped grew steadily and rapidly larger. A contributory factor was the advent of the Lancaster bomber—a heavy four-engined aircraft, which not merely showed a certain improvement over its predecessors in that class in respect of bomb-load and performance, but was so designed that it could be built in a number of man-hours per aircraft approximately only one-third of what they had required. Partly in consequence, the output of British heavy bombers in 1942 was trebled. American machines also came into play, the first all-American bombing raid on the European front being made on 17 August 1942. The American heavy bombers, in their early trials in Europe, proved deficient in two respects—in armour against *flak* and in bomb-load, the latter being little more than one-third of the British. On the other hand their armament (as distinct from armour) was extremely powerful and effective, rendering them far more able to face fighters unescorted than were any other types of bomber. Thus they became naturally specialized for day operations, as the British were for night. At first used only for near targets, they gradually lengthened their range, and in

February 1943 were able to co-operate with the R.A.F. in a scheme of bombing Germany 'round the clock', i.e. for a succession of nights and days.

The R.A.F. in 1942 developed not only the amount but the quality of its bombing. To give but one example, it began the year with bombs of 2,000 lbs., i.e. nearly a ton—the heaviest used by it until then. Later it doubled the size to 4,000 lbs., and later in the year doubled it again to 8,000 lbs., i.e. nearly four tons.<sup>1</sup> Attacks were organized with extreme concentration, hundreds of these giant projectiles being showered on a target at such a rate that the defences were smothered. Accuracy was also greatly improved by the system of 'pathfinders' dropping 'markers' to guide the rest. The application of these methods in 1942 to one great German city after another was, as far as Germany was concerned, a turning-point in the struggle. Not only did it bring home to her people, for the first time some of the misery of war to which they had so wantonly subjected other nations, but it dealt crushing blows to her war industries—blows for whose ultimate scope and range no limit could be foreseen. As the danger developed, the Germans tried to evade it by moving industries eastward. But the bulk of the heavier ones could not be moved far, if at all, owing to their dependence on Ruhr coal and the difficulty of transporting it in war-time. Meanwhile the scale of the raids went on rising in the spring of 1943—900 tons of bombs on Essen on 3 April; 1,300 tons on Duisburg on 26 April; 1,500 tons on Dortmund on 4 May. Heavy raids were made also on the Italian munitions towns—especially Turin, Milan, and Genoa; Turin had in November 1942 been

<sup>1</sup> Its 12,000-lb. bombs, very effective for certain targets, were not used till 1944.

the first target to experience on a large scale 8,000-lb. bombs.

The conference in January 1943 between Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt at Casablanca adopted and published a formula regarding peace terms. It was that there must be 'unconditional surrender', not merely on the part of the dictators (with whom it had previously been declared that we should never negotiate), but on that of the three Axis nations. The intention of this was to shut out in advance the prospect of anything like the Fourteen Points advanced by President Wilson in the previous world war, and also to disentitle the enemy nations from claiming any rights under the Atlantic Charter of 1941. Russia did not take part in the conference, because Stalin, who by this time acted not only as Premier of the Soviet State but as generalissimo of the Soviet armies, was so closely engaged in directing their winter offensive that he could not leave his country. But she was understood not to dissent from the Casablanca conclusions.

Throughout this period the Japanese war took second place. British and American statesmen had early agreed that Germany might win the war, even if Japan lost it, but Japan could not win the war, if Germany lost it. And accordingly they had decided to concentrate against Germany first. But they could not leave Japan where she was, because she too was exploiting certain strangleholds. On the one hand by her advances in the territory of Papua (which forms the south-eastern end of the huge island of New Guinea) she directly threatened the mainland of Australia; on the other, by her conquest of Burma she isolated China from all contact with the Alljss except by air. In Papua her fanatical soldiers had at one stage crossed the lofty dorsal range to within a few miles of Port Moresby itself.

But in a difficult campaign over jungle and mountain Australian troops drove them back, captured Gona and Buna, their bases on the north coast, and finally exterminated them. While this was in progress, American marines landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomons, and seized an aerodrome which the Japanese had recently constructed there. For months the enemy fought hard to recover it. But in the end (February 1943) the Americans won the island; and it proved the starting base for a process of 'island-hopping', which gradually pierced the far-flung strategic screen covering Japan from the Pacific. These military achievements, hard in themselves, were only made possible by the growing air and naval superiority on the side of the Americans, tested in battles and exerting itself from day to day.

In Burma there was no parallel success. An attempt was made to invade the Akyab area from eastern Bengal. But the difficulties of supply were too great, and after some chequered progress had been made at high cost (especially in malaria), the monsoon compelled the troops' withdrawal.

## THE PENULTIMATE PHASE

BETWEEN this phase and the foregoing there was a well-marked interval in the European war on both the Anglo-American and the Russian fronts. Axis resistance in North Africa had come to an end on 13 May 1943; but it was not till 10 July that the victors invaded Sicily. In Russia a German offensive was expected when the thaw dried, and the Russians decided to await it and not (as in 1942) to strike first. But it was not launched till 5 July, i.e. two months late.

Half-way through the interval the Allies captured (chiefly by overwhelming air bombardment) the small fortress-island of Pantelleria. Technically this was European soil; but the real problem of breaching the 'fortress of Europe' did not meet them until they attacked Sicily. In devising a technique for their landings they had now much experience besides the North African to draw on—gained by the Americans in the Pacific and by the British in a series of coastal raids; the largest of which, that on Dieppe (19 August 1942), had been a reconnaissance in force on a big scale. Their methods differed vastly from the primitive tactics employed at the Gallipoli landings in 1915. They involved using great numbers of elaborate landing-craft, which could discharge quickly upon open beaches, not only the personnel, but the heavy weapons and equipment of a large army. But these vessels could not have been in production long beforehand, because their design had to conform to quite recent experiences; and,

although many were built in Britain, it may be doubted whether they could in sufficient numbers have been supplied at all within any useful period, but for the remarkable applications of mass production to shipbuilding, which had been evolved in American shipyards by Mr. Henry Kaiser and others in response to the previous demand for replacing merchant tonnage. Even so, the time needed to furnish them probably explains why the interval above noted was so long, as also why the operations in Italy were at no stage supplemented by an invasion of the Balkans, although the British 'Middle East' Command appears to have had further forces sufficient for one. Indeed then, and for long after, in timing Anglo-American operations landing-craft would seem to have been the bottle-neck.

For the landing in Sicily over 2,000 vessels of all kinds were used. In one respect it was more difficult than that in Normandy in the following year. The convoys had not their starting-bases so near. Some, it is true, came from Malta or Bizerta, but others from Gibraltar and Alexandria, while some sailed direct from Britain or the United States. The combined staffs synchronized them with notable success. For reasons of fighter air-cover, which was provided from Malta and Pantelleria, it was necessary to land near the south-eastern corner of Sicily. The American Seventh Army attacked the east end of the southern coast, and the British Eighth Army (with a Canadian division) the south end of the eastern. Three airfields were taken on the opening day, and on the next the seizure of Syracuse supplied the Allies' need for a deep-water port. The defenders of the island were five Italian coastal divisions, *five* Italian field divisions, three German divisions (one armoured), and an additional number of German troops

belonging to administrative or air units. The coastal divisions made little resistance to the landings; but the Germans, with fair support from the Italian field divisions, fought with much skill and stubbornness. The British advance up the east coast was blocked by them for three weeks before Catania, while the Americans conquered the west of the island. Catania fell on 5 August, but in the difficult areas between Etna and the sea the obstinate enemy still fought delaying actions; and Messina did not fall until the 17th. By a heavy concentration *otflak* at the Straits, the Germans got most of their own men across to Italy; only 7,000 were captured. But the Allies took virtually all the Italians and all the equipment, the latter including no less than 1,000 aircraft.

Sicily's conquest was complete. But it had taken 58 days to prepare and 38 days to achieve; and it took 17 days more to prepare Italy's invasion. The delays which swelled out this total of 113 days may have been inevitable, but they were certainly expensive. Not only did they leave too narrow a margin of the campaigning season for the conquest of Italy, but they gave the Germans time to readjust themselves to the loss of their principal Ally. For the first fortnight of the Sicilian invasion had brought down the Fascist regime. It suffered not only military but moral defeat. Mussolini had exhorted the Sicilians to fight to the last. Instead they welcomed the invaders as deliverers from Fascism and the hated Germans. The great city of Palermo, capital of the island, went wild with joy over the incoming American troops. No politician in Italy, from the King downwards, could ignore such a portent; and the general trepidation was increased by the heavy bombing of Italian cities, which culminated (19 July) in that of the railway yards at Rome. On 24 July 1943 a meeting

of the Fascist Grand Council was held—the first convened since 7 December 1939, six months before Italy entered the war. Shortly after the Sicilian landings Mussolini had met Hitler, asked for German reinforcements, and been refused. The refusal completed his discredit with the Council meeting. By 19 to 7 it passed a resolution asking the King to assume command of all the armed forces, and by inference dethroning the Dictator. He resigned and was shortly placed under arrest. The veteran Marshal Badoglio became executive head under the King; he formed a non-Fascist Government; dissolved the Fascist party; and expelled Fascist officials from their posts everywhere.

Badoglio in public pledged support to the Axis^but three weeks later he opened secret negotiations with the Western Allies. These resulted in an armistice, which was signed on 3 September and published on the 8th. By its terms the Italian armed forces surrendered unconditionally, and were to assist everywhere in handing over the soil that they occupied to Allied occupation. They were, said the Marshal's proclamation, to 'oppose the attacks of any other' (i.e. German) forces. On the day of signature the British Eighth Army from Sicily landed on the 'toe' of Italy, and began moving gradually up the difficult Calabrian country; but the Allies were in other respects not ready to take advantage of the armistice before 8 September, until when publication was delayed. Even then they missed a great deal of their opportunity. The ships of the Italian Navy, with a few exceptions, made good their escape to Malta and Alexandria; Sardinia was evacuated by the Germans; and French troops from North Africa scuffled them out of Corsica. But Crete, the Dodecanese, and the Balkans generally remained in their hands, the Italians being unwilling, unless helped, to put up any

resistance, even when, as was usually the case, they heavily outnumbered the German troops. An airborne descent had been planned on the airfields near Rome, but the Italians lost them before it was attempted. Consequently the Allies could not obtain fighter protection for landing further north than the Bay of Salerno; and there on 9 September they put ashore their Fifth Army—half American, half British—under the immediate command of the American General Mark Clark.

The Germans, on their side, had acted at high speed, doubtless divining what was afoot from the date of Mussolini's downfall. They met the Fifth Army in force, and though they could not prevent its landing they confined it to a narrow strip, where but for the deadly fire of the Allied warships they might have driven it into the sea. For a week its fate wavered in the balance. Finally it was saved by the advent of the Eighth Army under General Montgomery; which, after capturing Taranto and Brindisi and Bari and so obtaining ample supply-ports, moved swiftly north, and joined hands with the Fifth on 17 September. A week later an offensive was launched from Salerno; and in another week Naples was occupied (1 October 1943). The Germans, to create difficulty for their opponents, had destroyed not merely the military and port installations, but the city's sewage system and its water supply. Shortly afterwards the Eighth Army, which on the Adriatic side had taken the great system of airfields at Foggia, was helped by a landing operation to get past the Gargano promontory and extend its front as far north as Termoli. But at this stage the penalty for delays declared itself. The Italian winter rains began; they lasted with few intermissions till the following spring; and with them mobility ended. After a few short withdrawals the Germans were

able towards the end of the year to stabilize a very strong line running from sea to sea across a narrow part of the peninsula, protected by difficult mountains and rivers, and covering Rome at a safe distance. Behind it two-thirds of the Italian nation remained under Axis rule.

The upshot of these events was that Germany was dealt a shattering blow by the detachment of Italy, yet suffered less from it than might have been hoped. She lost the service of the Italian Army and was left to defend her southern front alone; but she was able to do so on a short strong line still far from her own frontiers. On several minor points she scored: thus the British war-prisoners in Italy, due for release under the armistice, were mostly conveyed to Germany; and Mussolini, also due to be handed over, was rescued by a German aircraft and restored to the society of his fellow-dictator. In the Dodecanese ill-planned British attempts to seize islands without air support were easily crushed; and the German bases there and in Crete continued to bar access to the Balkans from the south. In Greece and Yugoslavia the removal of Italian garrisons gave much greater scope to guerrillas. The fact that in each country these were divided into two bodies not much less anxious to kill each other than to kill Germans somewhat restricted their utility; but the one led in Yugoslavia by the self-styled Marshal Tito eventually tied up a number of German divisions. Meanwhile in France, also, the new strain upon German man-power to cover the country caused a great increase in guerrilla activity: and even in Italy (the Badoglio Government having declared war on Germany on 13 October 1943) the population began to take a more active part.

But the regular Italian campaign stagnated. Through the winter the Allies attacked heavily at one point or other

whenever the rains allowed, but at best they nibbled gains of ground. There was one ambitious exception. On 22 January 1944 a new big landing was staged sixty miles higher up the western coast on the beaches of Nettuno-Anzio. Surprise was achieved; the troops went ashore without loss; and the blow had only to be pressed a few miles inland in order to cut the communications of the German troops holding the western part of the enemy defence-line. But it never was. The first three priceless days went by in a strange inaction, like that at Suvla Bay in 1915. On the fourth the Germans reacted; and soon the beach-head was 'sealed off'. Attempts to drive the Allies into the sea were foiled, as at Salerno, by the fire of their warships; but they remained cooped on a flat strip from four to eight miles deep, the whole of which (and the ships supplying it) was under enemy shellfire directed by observation from overlooking hills. The position was not evacuated even so, but held for four months—more of a liability than an asset—till the May advance of the main armies relieved it.

We must now turn to the Russian theatre, in which the mid-1943 lull had lasted till 5 July. Till then it had twice been the rule for the Germans to prevail in the summer and the Russians in the winter. Now the third year of their struggle opened; and the Germans concentrated a maximum effort, with a particularly high proportion of tanks, upon a great initial offensive. The target was a salient in the Russian line of which Kursk was the centre. After a week's tremendous fighting the Germans were heavily defeated with immense losses in men and tanks. This episode had consequences not unlike those of Ludendorff's offensives in 1918. It exhausted Germany's reserves, and left her incapable of parrying the blows that were now to fall on her.

Encouraged by proof that they could win even in summer, the Russians returned to the attack.

Their first move was against the Orel salient (the Germans' counterpart to the Kursk salient, which it adjoined on the north). Orel fell on 4 August. Next they attacked in the sector to southward, and on 23 August retook for the second and last time the great city of Kharkov. Then they widened their offensive in many directions. They cleared by degrees the German bridgehead in the Caucasus, taking the naval fortress of Novorossiisk on 16 September and the last position, Taman, on 3 October. They took Taganrog on 30 August, and from it started moving along the north side of the Sea of Azov. Pressing west from Kharkov they took the key-town of Poltava on 23 September, and Kremenchug on the Dnieper on the 29th. Further north towards the centre of the front the great railway junction Bryansk had fallen to them on the 17th, and on the 25th they entered Smolensk, the biggest centre on the direct route to Moscow, made famous by Napoleon in 1812 and in 1941-2 used by Hitler as his Eastern headquarters. While these moves were in progress the Germans, with the Russians pressing them, once more evacuated the Donetz Basin; and eventually their defensive plan in the south revealed itself as an intention to hold the great bend of the Dnieper with a switch-line to the Sea of Azov through Melitopol.

But the Russians were not to be stopped. On 23 October they stormed Melitopol; and having broken through the switch-line pushed west, so that by 1 November they had cut off the land-exits from the Crimea, leaving the large German force there no way of escape save by sea. The Dnieper Bend resisted much longer; but higher up the river the Soviet armies regained Kiev on 6 November, and

quickly developing a salient beyond it actually captured Zhitomir. At that point their very long line of road communications was hampered by mud, while their enemy was well served by railways. The German Command used its advantage to stage a counter-offensive, recapturing Zhitomir (12 November) and dealing heavy blows at the Kiev salient. But these only repeated the error of the July offensive. They necessitated staking tanks which were much needed elsewhere; and eventually the stakes were lost. The Russians resisted doggedly, and, when they surged back, not only (31 December) recovered Zhitomir, but (5 January 1944) took Berditchev as well. This placed them on one of the two main railways leading into Poland.

The Russian effort in January 1944 was most active at the Leningrad end—a district of marshes and lakes best attacked when frozen over. At the New Year the Germans still had the city under shellfire, but an offensive launched in the middle of the month soon expelled them from the ring of positions which they had held since the autumn of 1941. In the course of a fortnight Krasnoye Selo and Peterhof were recaptured; 50 miles of coast were freed, so that supplies could be landed from ships; the main line from Leningrad to Moscow was recovered; and so was Novgorod, long the German headquarters for the northern front. In February the south became active again; an advance from Berditchev crossed the pre-war Polish frontier, and reached Rovno and Luck; while a heavy offensive stamped out the German positions inside the Dnieper Bend. The way for it had been prepared (9 January) by the taking of Kirovograd; the other strongholds—Apostolovo, Nikopol, and Krivoi Rog (the last two being great sources of manganese ore and iron respectively)—were

captured between the 6th and the 22nd February. This time the Germans did not pull out soon enough, and ten of their divisions were trapped round Korsun. Few from them escaped; the Russians buried 52,000 dead and took 11,000 prisoners. In March came the culminating effort in the south. The southern Bug was crossed on the 15th; the great river Dniester on the 19th; and finally the Pruth itself on the 29th. Cernauti, which between 1919 and 1941 had been a Rumanian town, was occupied on the 30th; and eleven days later the Russians recovered their great Black Sea port, Odessa. After that thaw or rain ended operations over all the Eastern fronts save in the Crimea. There the Russians invaded on 11 April, and in a week conquered the whole peninsula except Sevastopol. The famous fortress did not fall until 9 May. Twenty-four thousand prisoners were taken; but the Germans' total Crimean loss was put at 111,587 killed or captive.

At the end of this penultimate phase the Russians had completely established themselves as the attacking side. In the south they stood on Rumanian or pre-war Polish soil, but had not reached the Danube or crossed the Carpathians. In the centre they were well advanced on White Russian territory. In the north below the Gulf of Finland they were on Estonia's doorstep; but considerable distances still divided them from the other Baltic states. The Germans had sustained irreparable losses through their July and November offensives and through failing to clear out in time from the Dnieper Bend and the Crimea. The strategy of the Russians throughout depended on an exceptional ability to maintain lines of supply without railways. This, which rendered them more mobile than their antagonists, seems to have been made possible by the hundreds of thousands of American motor vehicles shipped to

Russia. Here they had at their service the greatest machinery of mass production in the world.

Yet it would have profited them nothing, if the vehicles had been unable to reach them across the seas. Much else reached them in that way—tools, tanks, aircraft, clothing, boots, medical supplies, and a very large tonnage of food. Less than Britain or America, yet to a decisive extent, Russia too needed sea-power on her side in order to survive. In this sense the U-boat part of the war was fundamental; had the U-boats won, not only Britain but Russia would have been strangled. But the defeat of the U-boats, which became a principal achievement of the war's previous phase, was maintained and confirmed in this one. Some figures given in March 1944 by the British First Lord of the Admiralty tell the story. Among ships sailing in the main Atlantic and United Kingdom coastal convoys the proportion lost in 1941 was no less than 1 in 181. In 1942 it was still as high as 1 in 233. But for 1943 it dropped to 1 in 344, and in the last six months of that year it dropped to less than 1 in 1,000. Nor had the Germans any better fortune with their surface ships. They sent the biggest, the monster battleship *Tirpitz*, up to the Alten Fiord in Northern Norway, intending that it should prey on Allied convoys to North Russia. There in September 1943 it was heavily damaged by British midget submarines; and in April 1944 was further attacked by British carrier-borne aircraft and disabled by 16 direct hits. The next biggest German battleship, the *Scharnhorst*, was sunk in northern waters (chiefly by big-gun fire) on 26 December 1943.

\* The other side of the struggle over war production was seen in the rapid further growth of the Allied strategic bombing. In the spring and summer of 1943, when the nights were too short for the longest flights to be made

both ways in darkness, the R. A.F. concentrated on western Germany. The industrial cities of the Rhineland and the Ruhr were one after another methodically subjected to attack, many hundreds of four-engined aircraft dropping huge tonnages of high explosive and incendiaries within half an hour or less upon areas designated by 'pathfinders' with navigational aids. Targets long nibbled at were now devoured; Essen, for instance, with the great Krirpp works was so thoroughly dealt with in seven big attacks (the last, of 2,000 tons, on 25 July 1943), that it was not thought worth raiding again for eight months. But besides the half-dozen most obvious west German centres, the R.A.F. attacked now the score or so of immensely important factory towns standing behind them—places like Elberfeld and Barmen, which hitherto had been untouched but now were crushed. This destruction of the Ruhr was a landmark for German war industry; it never recovered from it. A spectacular incident in the devastation was the breaching (16 May) of the Mohne and Eder dams—a great *tour-de-force* on the part of the Lancasters concerned. Then in July a series of huge attacks were made on Hamburg, at the conclusion of which nearly the whole city, the second largest in Germany, was more or less ruined. In their aggressive days in 1940, flushed with pride in their raid on Coventry, the Germans had coined a verb 'to Coventry', meaning 'to destroy utterly from the air'. Now, seeing the thing from the other end, they coined the passive 'to be Hamburged', with much the same meaning. Thus men asked when it would be Berlin's turn to be 'Hamburged'; and the lengthening nights brought the answer. In mid-November the R.A.F. started on the German capital in earnest, and between then and mid-February dropped on it in a series of 15 night-attacks no less

than 22,000 tons, or about twice what had fallen on Hamburg. The general scale of the R.A.F.'s bomb-loads went on increasing, till on 20 April they dropped 4,500 tons in a single night—a third of it on Cologne.

In that month, however, the United States bombers, which now operated both from Great Britain and from Foggia in Italy, dropped a greater tonnage of bombs in Europe than R.A.F. Bomber Command—38,840 against 33,000—and began to figure as an almost more alarming menace to Germany. They had throughout preserved their main features; they were day-bombers, heavily armed against fighters and flying in close formation, but carrying a much smaller bomb-load per machine than the R.A.F. A feature of their operations was the destruction of large numbers of German fighters who came up to engage them. Even so they had found the value of fighter escort, and from an early stage employed long-range fighters in that role. They now developed fuelling devices which enabled fighters to accompany them for almost any distance. Thus escorted they carried out on 4 March 1944 their first day raid on Berlin; and they repeated it upon a much enlarged scale upon four subsequent days in the same month. So successful were they against the German fighters, that on the fifth occasion (when they dropped 1,400 tons of bombs) none came up to oppose. This omission to oppose—repeated in the next month over Berlin and over Leipzig—marks a new stage downward in the decline of German air-power. A special effort was made at this time by the Allied bombers against aircraft factories and against oil; and in both directions the effect was felt.

America's contribution to the air war in Europe was the more remarkable, because at the same time she was deploying very great naval and air forces against Japan in

the Pacific. For nearly five months after the expulsion of the Japanese from Guadalcanal no major land action was fought in that theatre; but the Americans persistently bombed Japanese bases, and repelled by combined sea and air actions repeated efforts by the Japanese to reinforce their positions. In one of these, the 'battle of the Bismarck Sea' (2-4 March 1943), they reckoned that the Japanese lost ten warships, 12 transports, 102 aircraft, and 15,000 men. A month later the Japanese took the offensive in the air on a large scale, but it was a forlorn hope; the American air forces by quality as well as numbers decisively worsted them. Shortly after midsummer the Allies moved forward, the Americans landing on New Georgia and the Australians pushing further west along the north coast of New Guinea. Progress was difficult; it took two months to conquer New Georgia and not much less to clear the adjoining islands; nor did Salamaua and Lae, the two chief targets of the New Guinea advance, succumb to the Australians till mid-September. The Japanese were dogged defenders, nearly always fighting till they died; and it was costly to storm their positions. The better way was to close their supply routes by air action; for in the Pacific no supplies are to be obtained on the spot. As this came to be realized, a policy of by-passing Japanese bases and securing airfields in rear of them began to replace a policy of conquering them one by one. Thus in December, when the turn came for the Americans to deal with the great Japanese base at Rabaul in New Britain, instead of staging a military attack upon it, they were content to land in a part of the island some hundreds of miles away, and establish airfields from which it could be controlled. A similar policy greatly quickened Allied progress along the northern coast of New Guinea, so that after a few

months it reached Dutch New Guinea (25 March 1944), and an Allied base was formed at Hollandia. With this and a base on the Schouten Islands Allied aircraft could operate across the vital enemy routes.

But these moves did not occur alone. North of the Equator other strong American forces made a parallel progress. They began in the Gilbert Islands in November 1943, where they took Tarawa, the most important atoll, after a heroic landing in face of heavy casualties. Their next jump westward was in February 1944, when they landed in the Marshall Islands, capturing the important atoll-harbour and airfield of Kwajalein. This was the first territory taken from Japan, which was not a mere recovery, but had been in Japanese hands before the war. It gave a base for bombing Truk, in the Carolines, the greatest of Japan's Pacific bases; which had previously been attacked only by carrier-borne aircraft, but was now bombed heavily three times in April. But it was to do more; for continuing their westward and northward course from it the Americans came at midsummer to the Marianas and captured the strong island of Saipan, where for the first time they had an air-base within long bombing range of both Japan and the Philippines.

In Burma, where British-Indian and Japanese forces confronted each other, three campaigns were conducted. The long north-west frontier of Burma falls into three sections; the first, part of which is not mountainous, marches with Bengal; the second, all mountainous, marches with the Indian Native State of Manipur; and the third, also all mountainous, marches with Assam. Invasions were planned across each of these. The first, which entered the Burman province of Akyab, repeated the fortunes of the previous year; it had successes, but was unfruitful. The second met

a Japanese counter-invasion in superior force, and most of the fighting occurred on the Manipur side of the frontier, where the Japanese made heavy but unsuccessful attempts to capture the capital, Imphal, and strike through against the Assam railway which served the Allied air-service to China. The total defeat of these attempts amounted to a valuable victory. The third, by much engineering, continued the Ledo Road in northern Assam across the Patkai Hills into the Hukawng Valley of Burma, whence it eventually reached and captured the important north Burman towns of Mogaung and Myitkyina. This last expedition, which alone obtained offensive results, was composed largely of Chinese troops under the American General Stilwell; but it owed much of its success to a British airborne force operating in rear of the enemy positions. The organization and conduct of this force proved one of the high lights of the Eastern war; but its heroic originator, General Wingate, was killed in a flying accident prematurely.

The tale of Pacific successes, welcome in itself, could only be and was purchased by a lavish employment of men and material—in particular, of aircraft, ships, and landing-craft. For political reasons this sacrifice had to be made, since to a large fraction of the American public the war against Japan seemed more important than the war against Germany. But militarily it was a misfortune, and undoubtedly delayed the defeat of Hitler. Aircraft, ships, and landing-craft were all wanted without stint in the Mediterranean and in the English Channel; and landing-craft in particular was a bottle-neck. For shortage of it in 1943 the Balkans could not be invaded when Italy collapsed; and for shortage of it in 1944 the invasion of Normandy could not take place till June 6, a month after the ideal date.

It must not be supposed that such policies were adopted without full discussion between the major Allies. Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt were in almost daily communication on the telephone, and on six occasions before 1944 they and their advisers met together for prolonged consultations.<sup>1</sup> It was more difficult to overcome geography in the case of Russia. Mr. Churchill went himself to Moscow and conferred with Marshal Stalin in August 1942; but for the rest the only personal meetings for over three years after Russia entered the war were those of Foreign Ministers or Chiefs of Staff. Special importance attached therefore to the Teheran Conference of November 1943, when for the first time Mr. Churchill, President Roosevelt, and Marshal Stalin met personally for a tripartite consultation. Here military plans for 1944 were agreed, the broad effect of which was that in late spring or early summer, when the principal European campaigning season reopened, Germany's 'fortress of Europe' would be simultaneously assailed on three fronts—the east, the south, and the west.

The east and south everyone knew; great armies fought there already. The west implied an immense landing operation. Of this much no secret was made, and before long the names of the commanders were announced, General Eisenhower, General Montgomery, and Air Chief Marshal Tedder being brought round from the Mediterranean to fill the highest military and air posts. The Germans therefore knew what to expect, but they did not

<sup>1</sup> (1) August 1941 at sea; (2) December 1941 (with the Prime Minister of Canada taking part) at Washington; (3) January 1943 at Casablanca; (4) May 1943 at Washington; (5) August 1943 at Quebec; (6) November-December 1943 at (a) Cairo (with General Chiang Kai-Shek), (b) Teheran (with Marshal Stalin), (c) Cairo again (with President Inomi of Turkey).

know when, where, or in what shape to expect it. All secrets of time, place, and method were closely and successfully guarded; and amid world-wide tense anticipation the war slid into its final phase.

## VICTORY ON THREE FRONTS

THE delay before the triple campaign opened was employed by the British and American air forces in preparing the ground for the western landing. A bare recital of what they did illustrates the wide difference between modern mechanized warfare and even such a war as 1914-18. The main objects were four. The first was to obtain, what had in 1940 been denied to the Germans by the Battle of Britain, viz. air superiority over the intended battlefields. The second was to disrupt the enemy's rail and road systems so thoroughly, that he could not by land build up his armies in the invasion area faster than the Allies built up theirs by sea. The third was to destroy his radiolocation system, so as to deprive him of warning in its most modern form. The fourth was to make the fullest possible air reconnaissance of Western Europe, while preventing him from reconnoitring Great Britain.

All these aims were realized. The first involved harrying and wrecking, not once but persistently, every German airfield within 100 miles or so of the Channel coast, and at the same time blasting the enemy's air factories, including those which he had intentionally sited far east. Great numbers of German aircraft were destroyed in the air or on the ground. For the second object two policies were adopted—a long-term and a short-term. The long-term was directed to ruining the enemy's railway organization; and for this 22,000 sorties were flown and 66,000 tons of bombs dropped upon 80 principal railway centres (some far away),

of which by invasion day 51 had been completely destroyed and 25 severely damaged. The short-term policy of smashing bridges and blocking lines was concentrated into the last days; it included destroying just before the invasion the Seine bridges and just after it those over the Loire. As for radiolocation, almost the whole of the enemy network was wrecked; while as for air reconnaissance, the Allies flew 5,000 sorties in the six weeks beforehand, but of 129 attempted in the same period by the enemy only 11 got past the island's defensive screen.

While this prodigious work was progressing, on 12 May 1944 the military programme opened with an offensive in Italy. About midway between Rome and Naples the Germans under Field Marshal Kesselring still stood on the chain of well-sited defensive positions extending from sea to sea, which they had held successfully for months past against a series of strong attacks. The Allied commander-in-chief, General Alexander, had at his disposal two armies comprising besides British and Americans a great variety of other contingents—Poles, Canadians, French (including native Moroccans), Indians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and also a body of Italian troops. Under much better conditions of ground and weather than formerly, he now attacked with his centre and left; the Eighth Army, which formerly occupied his right, having been moved to the centre. He had powerful artillery, a monopoly of the air, and naval support at the sea end. During the first few days initial progress was made in most sectors, such as a well-mounted attack on strong positions might expect to obtain, but scarcely more. But on the third day French Moroccan troops, hardy hillmen operating over mountains like those to which they were native, not merely captured Monte Majo, the enemy's strongest natural bastion between the

river Liri and the sea, but broke right through his so-called Gustav Line and reached points six miles from their start. This break-through caused in the days following a gradual abandonment of the whole line between the position south of Cassino and the sea; and six days after the offensive opened Cassino itself fell. Thenceforward the Germans were slowly but steadily forced back through the difficult country, the Allied advance leading along the coast until, 60 miles forward on the fourteenth day of the offensive, contact was made with the force in the Anzio beach-head. The beach-head itself enabled General Alexander to deliver an outflanking thrust at the retreating enemy; the Alban Hills were forced; and though no large encirclement was obtained, the Germans were obliged to pull out quickly with heavy losses, and to head northward abandoning Rome. The first European capital to be liberated by the Allies was entered by them on 4 June 1944. Kesselring, since the offensive began, had lost much material, 25,000 prisoners, and other casualties in proportion. He now ordered a retreat northward along his whole line.

The shock of these events was still felt when it was superseded by another. On 6 June British and American armies were successfully landed in France. The operation was on a scale never before approached in this kind. Over 4,000 ships were employed, together with several thousand smaller craft; and in addition a British and an American airborne division were transported by gliders. At the last moment the enemy's coastal batteries, which had all been photographed beforehand, were attacked from the air along the selected coast, and most of them were knocked out. The elaborate obstacles, which he had constructed in the sea, had likewise been photographed, and counter-measures devised. Complete tactical surprise was effected;

the defence had only local reserves; and its forward troops on or near the beaches were smothered by fire from the warships and aircraft.

The French departments attacked were Calvados and Manche. The successful beach-landings were quickly linked up along all the coast between the mouths of the Orne and the Vire. East of the one and west of the other, inland airborne landings were made by British and Americans respectively. The aim of the British airborne troops was to seize the Orne Valley bridges between Caen and the sea. Caen with its port would have been an immense gain, if taken intact in the first onset; but the attempt on it failed. The Germans had their chief strength here; and it was not till after more than a month's fighting that the British occupied even part of the town. However the Allies were equipped to dispense with a port. Not only had they a variety of landing-craft invented to put equipment and stores of every kind ashore on beaches nearly as fast as they could have been on wharves; but they actually erected two temporary ports of prefabricated materials. The weather turned very unfavourable, and on one occasion it blew a gale unexampled in June for many decades, but fortunately not till these harbours were in operation. In spite of all, the 'build up' of the attacking armies proceeded faster than that of the defenders.

The German idea was to hold back at all costs the Allied left wing, as being pointed towards Rouen and Paris. In so doing they over-neglected the western end. The Americans advancing inland not only liberated intact the cathedral town of Bayeux, but won ground giving them a defence in depth. Their airborne force had been landed in Manche near Ste. Mere-Eglise astride the road to Cherbourg; and the main army was soon linked up with it by the capture

of Isigny and Carentan. Twelve days after landing, they reached the western coast of the peninsula, isolating Cherbourg; and then advanced on that fortress with such suddenness and vigour, that on 26 June all organized resistance in it ended. This development was part of General Montgomery's unfolding plan, but it had taken the Germans completely by surprise. They lost a fortress of great value to them and about two divisions of troops; while the invasion area gained a first-class port, which extensive demolitions could not for long keep out of use.

At this critical moment came the long-expected news that the Russians were striking in their turn. The Germans had announced beforehand what their policy about it would be. They regarded, it was said, the Western attack as the prime danger, and in order to crush it they would be content in the East to fight a defensive and even a retreating campaign, relying on the fact that many hundreds of miles everywhere still separated their front from their frontiers. That reliance was not to avail them for long. On 23 June powerful Russian armies broke the front in White Russia on both sides of Vitebsk. On the 26th Vitebsk fell, and five German divisions trapped around it were exterminated but for 10,000 prisoners. On the same day the area of attack spread south; Mogilev fell on the 28th, Bobruisk with 18,000 prisoners on the 29th. Minsk, the capital of White Russia, more than 100 miles west of Mogilev, was outflanked on both sides and captured on 3 July; while Polotsk, at the north end of the offensive, succumbed- twelve hours later. Over a width of 200 miles the German front now ceased to exist, and the Russians swept forward in overwhelming numbers capturing their routed opponents by droves at a time. Of the 50 German divisions grouped on the central stretch of the Eastern war

area about half disappeared. There was nothing ready in their places. Hitler's senseless refusal to shorten his line during or after the winter had left him without any reserves to caulk a leak of such dimensions.

The fall of Polotsk, unbarring the way to Dvinsk, was quickly followed by that of Molodetchno, pointing to Vilna. The Soviet armies surged towards Lithuania and southern Latvia, endangering the large number of divisions which the Germans had retained uselessly strung out through the Baltic States up to the very north of Estonia.<sup>1</sup> At the other end of the line they extended their advance to the south of the Pripet Marshes and occupied Kovel, on one of the routes to Warsaw. Vilna, with 5,000 prisoners, fell on 13 July, Pinsk on the 14th, Grodno on the 16th—all great strongholds. The Germans now began drawing out somewhat on the north; Pskov fell on the 23rd, Narva on the 26th. But it was in Poland that the main landslide followed. Lublin and Siedlce fell on the 24th, Deblin (on the Vistula) on the 26th; on the 27th Lvov, Stanislavov, and Bialystok; on the 28th Przemysl, Yaroslav and Brest-Litovsk. On the 27th there also fell further north Dvinsk and Shavli—the latter a railway junction which blocked the last rail exits into Germany from Latvia and Estonia. Mitau, 25 miles from Riga, fell on 31 July and Kaunas, the capital of Lithuania, on 1 August. Seldom if ever in history have so many great fortresses covering so much territory been taken by one Power from another in the

<sup>1</sup> The explanation of this serious military error was probably political. Following abortive negotiations with Finland, Russia had during the spring interval fought a special local campaign against that country to press her to make peace. Had the Germans at the time made any kind of Baltic withdrawal, she would probably have done so; and this they were very anxious to prevent, because they derived from Finland invaluable supplies of nickel and cobalt, used for alloy steels.

course of a week. By far the greater part of the occupied territory which screened Germany till midsummer, had been torn off in a little over a month and the areas left from Riga northward were now only a liability. On 2 August the Germans even withdrew from Finland troops sent to maintain the pro-German Finnish President so recently as in June. The President had resigned the previous day.

These events had a startling repercussion in Germany itself. On 20 July, while Hitler was consulting with high officers in his room at Berchtesgaden, a small bomb exploded on his desk. He was not in his place at the time and suffered no serious hurt, but most of his company were gravely and some fatally injured. The bomb had been placed by a high staff officer, who was afterwards executed; and some very high officers in Berlin had planned to seize power there, but were defeated by Hitler's survival. The event enabled Hitler to appoint Himmler, the chief of the Gestapo, in command of the Army within Germany, and also to effect a 'purge' of high officers. Two generals and two colonels committed suicide; one general, two colonels, and another officer were shot by court-martial; and a field-marshal, *HVG* generals, two colonels, and five other officers, after being expelled from the Army, were sentenced by a 'people's court' to be hung. The design attributed to them was to seek peace over Hitler's dead body. Only a fortnight earlier Goebbels had written: 'There is nobody in Germany whose attitude to the war differs from that of the German Government.' The chief hope held out to the German public was 'secret weapons'. The first of these—a self-propelled flying bomb capable of reaching London from the Pas-de-Calais—made its appearance soon after the Normandy landings. Militarily it proved to have

only a nuisance value; but it inflicted serious hardship and many thousand deaths on the much-tried civil population of the English capital.

Early in August the pace of the Russians was halted. After their lightning advance they needed time to reorganize communications. Before Warsaw and before East Prussia the Germans had rallied and temporarily beaten back the spearheads. But at this moment the French campaign took up the tale. After the loss of Cherbourg the Germans had still hoped to corral the invaders inside a small area with a short front and little room to manoeuvre. With this object they fortified themselves strongly at the two corners—Caen and St. Lo—and in the difficult country of the Bocage between them. The war became temporarily one of positions, and for several weeks the Allies struggled fiercely but unsuccessfully to break out at either corner. Then on 18 July they carried both. The Americans captured St. Lo, and the British, who had taken the part of Caen up to the Orne on 9 July, now stormed the indispensable part beyond the river. The British success did not lead at the time to mobile warfare, but to continuance of heavy positional fighting, with only short distances gained. But the Americans, who in accordance with the main plan were at this juncture reinforced by the arrival of a whole new army specially organized for high mobility, went rapidly ahead with one surprise after another.

Their first task was to clear the west of the Cotentin peninsula down to its southern limit at Avranches. Throwing forward large forces of tanks, preceded by low-flying aircraft and closely followed by motorized infantry and guns, they reached and captured their goal on 31 July. From there they made three simultaneous thrusts—east to Mortain to widen their grip, west to Dinan to probe the

Breton peninsula, and south to Rennes to cut that peninsula off. All three places were reached on 3 August; and by 5 August the thrust through Rennes prolonged itself to the Loire estuary on a broad front, and the cutting-off was achieved. The Germans had again been caught napping. Their reply was a counter-offensive with tanks towards Avranches; but though it reached, retook, lost, and again retook Mortain, it could not succeed further. American tanks and French guerrillas speedily mopped up Brittany save for three garrisoned ports—Brest, Lorient and St. Malo.

But the leading American effort now turned east into Maine, crossed the Mayenne river at Laval, and on 9 August reached and captured Le Mans. From thence spearheads probed in the direction of Paris, but the strong thrust turned sharply north to Alençon. As British, Canadians, and Poles had been slowly but appreciably working south and east from the Orne area, and a Canadian offensive had come within a few miles of Falaise, the battle now suddenly assumed the aspect of a vast envelopment. The gap between the Canadians and the Americans, which was fast narrowed as the Americans fought their way up to Argentan, provided the only outlet for the Germans' Normandy army, into which the best of their troops from other parts of France had been sucked for weeks past. Their westward offensive round Mortain had aggravated their position. By 13 August they were everywhere hastening back east again, but all roads through the gap were under shellfire, and immense execution was done elsewhere on the German vehicles by Allied aircraft of all types operating in maximum numbers. On that day General Eisenhower issued an appeal to all arms for a supreme effort. On the 14th the French Provisional Government proclaimed

a national revolt. On the 15th, as a climax to German embarrassment, a new Allied landing was made in strength in southern France on a strip of coast round St. Raphael. Encountering and crushing only local resistance, it achieved a quicker success than any previous landing anywhere. Within six days it had taken over 14,000 prisoners (including three generals), and was strongly based on a lodgment of over 2,000 square miles. During the same days the German army in Normandy was completely shattered, as the sides of the pocket closed on it, and the units which passed the gap ran the gauntlet of enfilading gunfire and unremitting air attack. Only on 19 August, when the weather changed and some days of rain and low cloud grounded the Allied aircraft, did the retreating army obtain a temporary respite; thanks to which some of its survivors were able to cross the Seine below Rouen in barges.

But at this stage it became obvious that Germany could no longer afford to hold France, and would need every man she could salvage from it to defend her own frontier. From Paris and elsewhere her administrative personnel streamed eastward to Metz or beyond. In Italy General Alexander had handsomely evicted the able Field Marshal Kesselring from the Arno line (Florence was finally freed of Germans by the 22ndV. and the still remaining 'Gothic' line no longer held hope of permanence, since an Allied army from the Riviera could at any time operate in its rear. The movement of German withdrawal was felt as far away as southern Greece. Meanwhile American tanks swarmed about the Ile-de-France; by 17 August they had taken Dreux, Chartres, and Orleans; by the 20th they had reached Mclun and Versailles eastward, while westward they had thrown a strong bridgehead across the Seine at Mantes, and were also pressing down the left bank to cut

off more remnants of the German army. On the 19th the authorities controlling the French 'resistance' movement ordered a general insurrection in Paris; the Paris police, which was already on strike, joined in; and after four days fighting the enemy were pushed out piecemeal. On 23 August 1944, when liberation had gone far, a French armoured force under General Leclerc, forming part of the Allied armies, entered the French capital and linked it up to the forces of the victorious invasion. On the same day in the south Marseilles was captured after short fighting; and Grenoble 130 miles further north, after being liberated by local insurgents, was entered and linked up by troops from the southern invading army. Also on the same day Rumania, where on the 22nd the Russians had announced the capture of Jassy, capitulated to the Allies and accepted the Russian peace terms.

The war against Germany was not over. Not a mile of Germany had been trodden by an Allied army. But of the conclusion there could no longer be doubt.

## VII

### AN EPILOGUE

IN surveying briefly such a long and tangled course of events countless episodes have necessarily been omitted. Many readers may feel it a grievance, that this or that has not been included, which in their opinion should have been. Yet if satisfaction were given to each of them, not only would the length of the story have to be more than doubled, but its unity and meaning would be lost in the maze of details and digressions.

Nevertheless there are certain features which, although rightly, let us hope, passed over in their places, ought not to be entirely ignored in a final review. It may help us to correct the balance, if we glance at them here.

One is the very real contribution made by others of the United Nations than the Big Three to the success of the whole. Fighting each in relatively small units and in most cases as exiles equipped by the major Allies, they could seldom, of course, have sustained any part by themselves. Yet their total effort was far from negligible, and their individual exploits often inspired the greater forces. One might instance the gallantry of the Free French at Bir Hakeim, the magnificent conduct of the Dutch navy in the East Indies during the early and disastrous phases of the war with Japan, and the wonderful fighting spirit shown by the exiled Polish units in association with all three British services—particularly, perhaps, their airmen. Alongside these one might recall the fine record of the non-British elements in the British Empire; with such high

points as the devoted heroism of the people of Malta and the many brilliant exploits of the 4th Indian Division. The position of the Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa—is rather different; for out of proportion to their populations they rank with the major participants.

Again, it has not been practicable to trace the earlier phases of Japan's aggression in the Far East as those of Germany's in Europe have been traced. The omission could not be avoided, but it may be regretted. The growth of the aggressive temper in Japan, exhibiting behind all the obvious differences so many singular analogies to the parallel growth in Germany, throws much valuable light on the psychology of modern aggressor nations. And the part played by China in the world-collision regarded as a whole was for many reasons more conspicuous before Pearl Harbour than after. The military importance of that part may indeed be variously estimated; but that it has been important, and that the gigantic sacrifices of her martyred people are bound to affect decisively both their future and the world's, no one can seriously doubt.

Another matter needing mention is the degree to which the war defined itself as one not merely against aggression, but against barbarism—against, that is, the abandonment of all those canons of humane conduct painfully built up during three centuries and taken at the end of the nineteenth century for granted. If any one, for instance, had said fifty years ago that one of the greater West European nations would revive the torture-chamber, not as a black exception but as a daily practice, and having organized and staffed immense numbers of them would subject tens of thousands of human beings to the extremes of calculated cruelty, he would not have been believed. Yet that is what

Nazi Germany did. When one further considers the new attitude shown by it towards human life—not merely the butchery of all sexes and ages in massacres like those of Lidice and Oradom, or the military extermination of Poles and Russians, but the deliberate export of huge Jewish civilian populations to be killed in gas-ovens and cremated in furnaces, a veritable factory-planning of mass-produced death—then the issue of the war is seen to be not the triumph of these or those nations, but the survival of civilization itself.

And with this is connected a fourth point. Stress has been laid (rightly, it is submitted) in the foregoing pages upon the dominance of mechanism in the war. No battle can be won against more than a certain degree of inequality in armament. Men with bows and arrows cannot defeat men with machine-guns. But what has not been sufficiently realized is that whereas in the past such inequalities were developed seldom and at long intervals, to-day the perpetual leap of modern invention generates new ones every year, and the time-lag involved in mass-production adds an enormous advantage to the aggressor who can choose his date. Hitler grasped that early, and to it, in the main, he owed his victories. But he had also grasped very clearly the importance of the moral factor in military strength. In his own queer way he was an arch-educationist, believing, despite his insistence on races, that the warlike qualities of a nation could be stimulated by teaching (in the broadest sense) to a decisive extent. Hence from the moment of his advent to power he set about controlling every avenue to the German mind—books, press, radio, films, theatres, schools, universities, and churches. By such methods he blinded, brutalized, and fanaticized his people, producing through the *Hitler Jugend* organization a whole

generation of young barbarians, whose psychology may for long blacken the shadows of his country's future.

Lastly, we must not overlook, behind and above the war's other determinants, the factor that may be called spiritual. The greatest poets of the ancient world, Hebrew and Greek alike, were at one in thinking that success evilly won cannot last, because it ends by infatuating the winner. The single greatest turning-point in this war was Hitler's unprovoked attack on Russia. That is not to say that but for it he would have finally prevailed; the probabilities on the whole point otherwise. But that in launching it he over-reached himself is now obvious; and if one asks why he did so, it is difficult not to give weight to the ancient argument.



