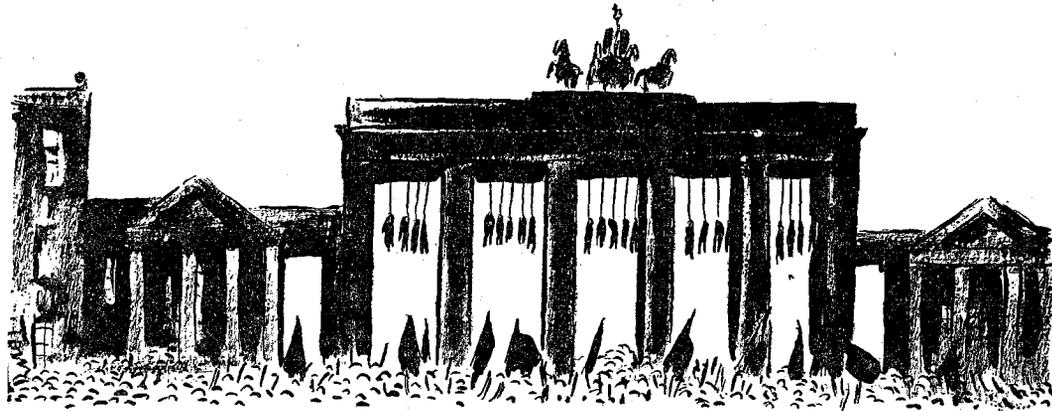


# THE COMING EUROPEAN CIVIL WAR



*by Maurice English*

ON THE AFTERNOON of August 27, 1941, there was a military ceremony in the parade-grounds of the Borgnis-des-Bordes barracks at Versailles, France. The Nazis were busy mounting their "Anti-Bolshevik Crusade," and several thousand French volunteers took part in a march-past in honor of certain guests from the staff of the German Army of Occupation. These guests were accompanied by the two show-animals from the French kennel of Quislings: Pierre Laval and Marcel Déat. The occasion was one for mutual felicitation between conqueror and "collaborationist"; it seemed to set a seal on the policy of Franco-German rapprochement.

At this moment in their history, the self-respect of the French people was saved by a young man who suddenly stepped out of his place in the files of the "volunteers" and aimed a series of shots at the review platform. This young man was Paul Colette. He was neither a Communist nor a "British agent." What gave his gesture its full meaning was the fact that Colette deliberately ignored the German officers on the reviewing-stand—"They were only doing their duty in being there," he remarked later. But he unhesitatingly levelled his re-

volver at his countrymen, Laval and Déat.

This action of Colette, who struck his blow not at the conqueror but at his own fellow-countryman, the collaborationist, is symbolic of what has been going on in almost every country of Europe. In Amsterdam, crowds jostle and sometimes assault native storm-troopers of Adrian Mussert, the ersatz Dutch Nazi. In Yugoslavia, Serb guerrillas and Croatian Fascists spend their days and nights in alternate raids and ambushes. In Transylvania, a double fatherland, Rumanians and Hungarians are tranced into a temporary truce only by awe of their common master, Adolf Hitler. And in Norway, a newspaper controlled by Major Vidkun Quisling describes the situation as "a civil war without weapons."

An apocalyptic vision is beginning to take shape in the tragic theater which lies between the sands of Africa and the battlefields of the Caucasus. The "land of silent people" is not one segment of the continent, but all of it; and this silent, hungry, desperate Europe has never in the past known a major conflict which did not explode into civil war in the end. And it has never in the past known a major conflict that embraced so much of its territory, re-

duced the majority of men to such misery, or divided them so absolutely. The first World War was followed by civil wars, including several in Germany alone, and a series of revolutions ranging from republican to communist. There was street-fighting in Austria, and a Communist Soviet in Hungary. From the Mediterranean to the Baltic, Slavic and Balkan communists and nationalists waged a series of fratricidal struggles which did not die out until after the Versailles Peace had been signed.

With our eyes fixed on the Far East and Russia, and on our own preparations, we do not realize that civil war is already raging in some parts of Europe, or we mistake the signs of this civil war for mere gestures of resistance to the invader, and nothing more. The world of officials even sometimes talks glibly about the enslaved nations of Europe having rediscovered their unity in opposition to Hitler. In most cases, it is actually the contrary which is true.

Look at the map of Europe: Of how many nations can it be said that their inhabitants are deeply and fundamentally reunited by resistance to the Nazi invader?

In a perfectly true sense, the French civil war is already on. The anti-Bolshevik "Crusaders" recruited by Paris are fighting against Russia, side by side with the Germans and Italians. The Free Frenchmen of General de Gaulle turn up in Commando Raids on Dieppe, in RAF sweeps over the channel, or fight with the British in Africa. These Frenchmen of General de Gaulle's are the military enemies of the French "anti-Bolshevik forces" of Vichy and Paris, and of every Frenchman who favors appeasement, just as truly as though they were fighting face to face. Pétain knew this when he ordered the death penalty for De Gaulle, and Hitler when he threatened that Frenchmen who continued fighting after the Armistice would be shot upon capture.

Young Colette's shots at Laval and Déat might be said to be the prelude to civil war on France's metropolitan soil; elsewhere the French civil war had already begun. From Alsace and Lorraine, thousands of loyal Frenchmen, faced with an option between Hitler's Reich and exile, chose the latter and abandoned their homes, their

goods, and their traditions to move into the occupied zone. The fall of Hitler will provide the opportunity for these exiles—including whole sections of cities as large as Strassbourg—to return to claim their property, now in the hands of people who from one standpoint or another, abandoned France when it fell. There have been exodi and homecomings of populations in other wars, but it is doubtful if Europe has often seen anything like the prospect which a Nazi defeat holds out for Alsace and Lorraine, when thousands of Frenchmen may be expected to descend on the locusts now settled in the rich cities and fruitful valleys of France's eastern marches.

The Civil War which can be predicted for the rest of Europe, remains endemic in Spain. It is only the harshness of the Spanish censorship, the most rigid in Europe, that prevents the outside world from getting word of the occasional clashes between "bandits" and soldiery, and the rumors of troop movements in the interior of Spain which are common gossip in the legations of Madrid. The actions of the Spanish Government are those of a government which feels that it is living in a state of siege, as the country itself quite literally is. Secret executions are an established feature of Falangist justice, as Merry del Val, former head of the Foreign Press Service, admitted quite frankly when he told me in Madrid that the execution of Reds was a frequent occurrence in Madrid and other cities.

In terms of random forays by guerrillas in the Asturian mountains, of savage reprisals by Civil Guards and Spanish soldiery for acts of "banditry," and in terms of sullen, unshakable passive resistance by half the population, the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 has never ended. The fever is still in the flesh. Government officials will privately admit that there are at least half a million prisoners in Spain as a result of the Civil War. Any observer who has seen how many of the wives and children of these men are begging in the streets will not challenge this figure as an exaggeration.

For the prisoners themselves, the Franco government has inaugurated a "rehabilitation program" that enables those who renounce their allegiance to the Republic to

work out their sentences, which are reduced in some cases by as much as two-thirds. An ardent admirer of Franco's Government admitted to me, out of personal knowledge, that the number of prisoners who had accepted the terms of this rehabilitation program up to January, 1941, was not more than 30,000—out of half a million or more.

Incidentally, though Spain has been on short rations longer than any country in Europe, it was not until virtually every other government—including some neutrals—had done so, that the Franco Government enforced rationing in the de luxe restaurants, at the doors of which miserable beggars used to group to beg alms. I myself have seen beggar women and their children turned away, a few days after a law against mendicancy was passed, from public shelters which lacked food and room to offer them. In reality, Spain is like a man strapped hand and foot, and too weakened by hunger and loss of blood to burst free. When his bonds are loosened by the destruction of nazism, this sick man will have his mind set on a frenzy of revenge.

## II

THE potential battlefields of the coming European civil war are limited only by the number of countries which have escaped totalitarian enslavement. Resistance to Hitler has given a negative unity to Poland, in the sense that Jews and Poles know that they are faced with a common destiny, and even the Ukrainian nationalists are finding out that they have no favors to expect from Berlin. But anti-nazism has not automatically resolved the contradictions which made Poland itself a fascist regime before September, 1939.

Nor has anti-fascism unified what was left of Czechoslovakia after Munich; rather, it drove a final wedge into what remained of the dismembered Republic. Since 1938, millions of Czechs have watched the career of a fascistized Slovak state which has made common cause with their deadly enemies. There are Czechs in the armies of the United Nations; there are Slovak regiments fighting with the *Wehrmacht* in Russia.

The center of what has been called "Hitler's Third Front—the front of revolt," is Yugoslavia. But the Yugoslav war against

Hitler is already mixed up with a civil war, or what might even be described as a welter of civil wars, in an extravaganza of fratricide such as even Balkan Europe has seldom seen. In terms of the old kingdom of Yugoslavia, there is a civil war between the Serbs and the Croat Ustachi, that ultra-nationalist group which has made common cause with nazism and fascism, and which maintains a Quislingite Government in Zagreb. It is less commonly realized that there is also a civil war in Croatia itself between the Ustachi and anti-fascist Croats, and in Serbia between the Serb patriots and the collaborationist Serb government in Belgrade.

The government radio of Zagreb, capital of the new Croatia, has broadcast reports of fighting between Croat Moslems and anti-fascist Croat irregulars. This radio has also repeatedly denounced deserters from the nazi-dominated Croat army, whom it has accused of "menacing the security and internal order of the country." Last November, newspaper reports revealed that Field Marshal Milan Nedic, head of the nazi-dominated regime in Belgrade, had led a "punitive expedition" to suppress General Mikhailovitch's forces. The failure of this expedition prolonged Serbian guerilla fighting not only against the Germans and Croat-Fascists, but also against those Serbians of Field Marshal Nedic's allegiance. Meanwhile in Bosnia, and in the Moslem districts of Yugoslavia, thousands of Serbs are said to have been slain or driven out of their villages by the Croats since the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Two remarkable glimpses into the situation in Yugoslavia were given by Associated Press dispatches filed from Zagreb. The first of these dispatches—which, remember, was passed by the nazi censor there—contained this sentence: "Politically and militarily, the situation here is described as strikingly similar to that which resulted in Germany in the blood purge of June, 1934."

The second dispatch may be read as an indication of the pattern that similar stories from other parts of Europe may eventually follow:

Information reaching here from points throughout Axis-dismembered Yugoslavia indicates a situation charged with distrust,

## III

unrest, terrorism, and even in some cases, virtual civil war. Well-equipped soldiers of the puppet Serb Government, supported by the German army of occupation, are described as engaged in desperate fighting with remnants of Yugoslavia's army, rebellious Chetnik guerrilla units, and what are described as communist bands. . . . Field Marshal Nedic, the Serb Premier, has himself appealed for a halt in the fighting, warning recently that full-fledged civil war was developing.

Yugoslavia is, of course, not the only country where civil war is anticipating the downfall of Hitler, and is carried on simultaneously with resistance to the occupation forces. Rumania broke into violent internal revolt at the moment when King Carol's departure forecast the subjugation of his kingdom to the Axis. This revolt raged bloodily while the German Army occupied the country, and even after Rumanian troops had joined in the attack on Russia. Early this year, the German radio broadcast a warning to Rumanian soldiers who had returned from the Russian war zone and had failed to surrender their arms. The warning stated that unless they did so within ten days, they would be executed "even if the reason for neglecting to surrender arms was not a political one."

Transylvania, the border-march between Hungary and Rumania, claimed by each with an equal fervor of patriotism, is occupied by a hopelessly mixed population, which in addition to Hungarians and Rumanians, includes a scrambling of Slavs, Germans, and Jews. In August, 1940, Germany and Italy resorted to forced arbitration to settle the secular blood-feud between Hungary and Rumania over Transylvania. Half of the region was turned over to Hungary, and the occupants of the ceded territory, as well as the Hungarians in that part of Transylvania which remained Rumanian, were given the choice between deportation and change of allegiance. Rumania and Hungary both stake their national policies on the possession of Transylvania. There is every reason to believe that they are merely waiting for the destruction of the "arbitrators," to resume their own traditional form of arbitrating territorial disputes.

IN January of this year, the Norwegian newspaper *Oslo Aftenposten*, published an article which asked why there was not wholesale civil war in Norway. This newspaper, a mouthpiece of Quislings, gave the following answer: "We Norwegians could not come to active war because firearms were taken away from us while there was yet time. Nevertheless, there is no other way out than an open fight, although without weapons." The *Aftenposten* then asked the question whether Quisling's followers should "remain on the defensive or attack." Again, its own answer was: "We are going into action. . . . We have no other choice."

Here is a quotation from another Quisling organ, *Folkets Roest*, discussing the "oppositionists," i.e., loyal Norwegians: "If one happens to talk to these oppositionists, they say frankly that we are traitors to our country. We are asked whether we realize what fate awaits us when help from England comes, and *we are told who will then be eliminated.*"

The seaboard nations of Europe, on the farthest fringes of the Nazi empire, supply additional battlefields of the coming civil war. Most of these nations have now littered a profusion of puppet dictators, imitation storm-troopers, nazified industrialists, and labor-leaders who have learned to kiss the jackboot. Mussert in the Netherlands, De Man and De Grelle in Belgium—these are inconsequential men, but each of them has his little contingent of traitors and the German occupation troops to back them up in the state of desperation they will know when they see their pathological Bonaparte trapped at last, and all the knives of Europe at their throats.

Italy today appears too dispirited for the toils of civil war and revolution. The country is like a temple where a weary and cynical assembly sits waiting for its middle-aged Samson to bring down the Pillars. The Italians, it is true, have always been the most reluctant people in Europe to indulge in passionate nationalism; but it would be a mistake to conclude from this fact that an awakening will not come, and come violently.



Consider the Italian Army. Tricked, frozen, and massacred in Greece, abandoned in Ethiopia, wrecked in the sands of Libya, derided by its own Ally, this Army has a terrible account to settle with the Fascist party which brought it into the war by an act of treachery, and finally sold it to complete subservience to the *Wehrmacht*. Information from inside Italy makes it clear that the Italian people are stung by their humiliating role, and that underground movements already exist which are paving the way for civil war. That was the official interpretation put by the Fascist Government itself on the activities of the Italians who were tried at Trieste for subversive activities extending as far back as 1938. It is confirmed by numerous reports, some of which may be taken as straws in the wind rather than literal truth, that both communist and nationalist groups are organized throughout the Italian peninsula.

IV

**B**UT the greatest battlefield of the civil war will, of course, be Germany. Premissions of that war have already been felt in the past, in the struggle which has gone on between the army and the Nazi party.

Its victims have ranged from General von Fritsch and his friends to the coterie around Ernst Roehm, and some of the twenty-six generals who have died since the war began may be included among the victims of this strife. But the issues of revenge in Germany will ultimately be placed on other grounds.

The end of the first World War was heralded in October, 1918, by the bloody mutiny of the sailors of the grand fleet at Kiel. Though speedily suppressed, this revolt was followed by other uprisings in the armed forces, and by the formation of soldiers' and sailors' councils and the emergence of communist groups. The issue of civil war was firmly planted in Germany the following month when Kurt Eisner proclaimed the Bavarian Communist Republic. Thereafter Germany was shaken by a series of social convulsions which came to a head in the Spartacist revolt in January of the following year, and in the militarist putsch of March, 1920, which forced the Republican Government to flee to Dresden. And the whole period of Hitler's rise to power was one of half-suppressed civil war, involving Communists and Nazis and other extremist groups.

One of the factors which had a limiting effect on civil strife inside Germany after the last war was the hope inspired by President Wilson and his Fourteen Points for a just and equitable peace. This is a hope which few Germans will entertain in 1943. Persons who have been inside the Reich during the present war are unanimous in agreeing that fear of domestic chaos worse than that of the Weimar Republic has been a paramount factor in keeping the German people lined up behind Hitler thus far.

When the Reich collapses the next time, every family which has sacrificed a son—and this will include every family in Germany—will be at the throats of those responsible. The elaborateness of the Nazi hierarchy has extended this responsibility down the lines from the Fuehrer to the party ward-boss, the storm-trooper who lives across the street, and the next-door neighbor. That day will also be the day when the remnants of the defeated *Reichswehr* reel back across Poland. It will be the day of the opening of the concentration camps,

where so many hundreds of thousands of anti-Nazis have been victimized. Revenge will be the theme of all those who have accepted Hitler's promise of salvation by *schrecklichkeit*—but most of all, of that forgotten half of Germany which never voted for Nazi rule.

V

IT would be a mistake to think that the civil war threatening Europe will be fought for revenge primarily. Civil wars too, are economic, like our own and Spain's. We are faced with a starving continent, where the most desperate eat bark from the trees, where dog and cat-meat are esteemed a blessing, where the very peasants can go hungry for olive oil and bread. Europe is now a region whose instruments of production have been trundled off and turned into military engines and the wrecks of engines, whose meagre supplies of oil have been spilled out in the sands of Cyrenaica or frozen in Russia's winter, whose soil, starved of foreign fertilizer and robbed of its man power, is yielding less and less to feed 40,000,000 people.

The motif of the civil war will be revenge, but its mainspring will be loot. This loot, however, will not be the scientific plunder of Hitler's *Wehrmacht*, card-indexing the systematic spoliation of states. It will be the looting of the hungry, the desperate, the rabble, and the snatching of life's meanest necessities. In such a civil war, every man who is ready to rob or kill for food is a soldier, and every woman and child is conscripted by hunger.

We have seen this army waiting, we who were in Europe during the war; we have heard its whimpers for charity die away into a waiting silence, in Brussels and Madrid and on the quays of Marseilles, where the phrase, "*le pain americain*," was for a while as familiar on the lips (but with a difference!) as the phrase, "*l'heure allemande*." Correspondents have described its pinch-bellied recruits on the streets of Athens, in the rubbleheaps of Belgrade, in the ghettos of Poland. Its numbers have even been estimated.

A news agency dispatch from Ankara, Turkey, on March 17, 1942, said that a winter of German-Italian occupation had

left an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 "famine orphans" in Athens alone. These are the children of parents who either abandoned them or themselves died of starvation. In Finland, 100,000 children have been reported as living on the borderline of starvation. In Italy, the whole population is existing on 15 per cent of the food it used to consume. In Spain and France, the entire working-class population is on sub-normal food rations. This condition, however, may be better than that of the citizens of Holland and Belgium, countries of excess population and limited food resources.

In addition to hunger, revenge, and resurgent nationalism, there is a final element which must be reckoned with in assessing the nature of the coming European civil war. This is what used to be called "the Bolshevik menace." There is no doubt that all through Europe the demonstrated power and reborn prestige of the Stalinist state has galvanized the Communists. *Rote Fahne*, the underground organ of the German Communist party, has been reported to be circulating again in the working-class districts of the Reich. Hostages arrested in France and elsewhere in occupied Europe are more often than not described as Jews and Communists. It would be a mistake to dismiss this label altogether as a Nazi propaganda tag: before Paris and other capitals of Europe closed down as news sources, American correspondents made it clear



that the police were most active in the proletarian and industrial regions where the Communists have been entrenched.

Would Stalin seize the occasion of a victory over Hitler to revive the Comintern and its program of world revolution? No one can predict, and it is not, in fact, essential to know. What can be asserted reasonably is that such a victory would tend immensely to popularize the prestige of communism, and also increase the striking power and boldness of its adherents in Europe. A Soviet victory would also be calculated to increase the resistance of nationalists. It adds a final explosive ingredient to the cauldron of revolution in Europe.

This is a factor which helps to give its full meaning to the statement that the present conflict is a world revolution as well as a world war. It also gives a special urgency to the thesis that a second front must be opened in Europe by an American expeditionary force. Apart from the military imperatives which indicate a second front, it is clear that only by active participation in Hitler's defeat in Europe will the Western Democracies earn the right to work with the Soviet Union for the rehabilitation of the continent.

The policy of the United States, if it is followed firmly enough and backed up with an American expeditionary force in Europe, has every chance to dominate the eventual post-war policy of the United Nations. It must necessarily be one to guide the European revolution through the inevitable civil war toward appropriate forms of democ-

racy and federalization. To do this it will be imperative to bring Europe's civil war, when it breaks out, to the speediest possible end.

Those who see these aspects of the post-war problem clearly will recognize that there are certain obligations confronting the United States, in addition to that of creating the second front. One of these is to establish a diplomatic rapport with the Soviets, so that the two dynamic forces in the United Nations will have a common European policy, or the nearest approach to a common policy, when the war ends. We must be prepared also to help in the feeding of Europe, and to enlist South America in that enterprise. And finally, we must have completed our diplomatic preparations within the conquered countries.

If the present war is a world revolution, the trend of that revolution will be decided by those powers which back up a program of revolutionary action with the prestige of victorious arms—and which know, like Cromwell or like Lenin, how to give a civil war the course which they want it to take. But for that, their arms must be victorious on the scene where the revolution is to occur. The extent to which our policy makers understand these things, and implement their understanding in action, will determine not only whether we rescue Europe from Hitler, but also whether we will be capable of drawing a durable and unifying peace out of the spasm of revolutionary civil war through which it has yet to pass.

***THE*** article of Mr. English, written sometime before the latest developments in France and in Africa, naturally does not refer to the resulting situation, not to the disquieting news about Mikhailovitch. A more serious omission is the consideration of the democratic character of the government and people of Czechoslovakia which would dispel the author's fears as to the future of that country. The entire subject of the democratic and socialist traditions of Europe and their effect on the post-war world will be discussed by Louis Dolivet in a forthcoming issue.

# LETTERS

## from the Libyan front

by

HAROLD L. BERMAN

**G**UNNER HAROLD BERMAN, of the Second Light South African Anti-Aircraft Regiment, was hardly eighteen years old when he joined the Union of South Africa Expeditionary Forces. He took part in the Campaign of Abyssinia, 1940-41, and in two Libyan campaigns, until the disaster of Tobruk this summer, when he was trapped with the entire Second S. A. Division and subsequently reported a prisoner of war in Italy. He was twenty when captured. The letters are selected from his long correspondence with his father, Major A. Z. Berman of the South African forces, and other members of his family.

DEAR DAD,

I am writing this letter from our forward positions somewhere in the Western desert. I am sitting in the dugout which provides shade and shelter from the sun and wind and helps camouflage our position from the enemy reconnaissance aircraft. Our gun, too, is dug in to its gunpit and sand-bagged, etc.; we maintain a constant and alert vigil for planes and are ready to "stand to" at the first alarm and swing straight into action. You get used to this sort of life remarkably quickly, with gas mask and tin hat always at hand—"desert rats," they call us. . . .

We were previously stationed near Alexandria, and as we came up from there to our present positions, we passed through several places, evacuated and deserted, just crumbling ruins and half-smashed walls, quiet in the day time, but very, very alive

at night, with searchlights scanning the sky, the angry rattle and colored lights of the anti-aircraft barrage, and the dull thud and boom of Jerry's calling cards.

Honestly, in a way I am quite glad to be back here again; it is certainly a relief to be away from the dismal routine of a base camp and, despite the fact that there is a sandstorm in the offing, I am not very sorry to have reached this place at last. You develop quite an affectionate regard and a sort of perverted pride in the hell holes you have lived in, a sort of left-over from childhood. I've-lived-in-a-worse-place-than-you-have-so-there!—sort of thing. Anyway, breathing the desert air once more, and it smells quite all right.

Despite the continuous hunger gnawing at my vitals, I feel pretty well alive, but not kicking as much as usual. I am getting very tanned here, for with a water shortage,