

FODOR M.W. ~~W. Fodor~~
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The Muddy Streams of the Totalitarian Revolutions

Mr. Fodor Traces Their Courses With a Notable Grasp and Much First-Hand Information

THE REVOLUTION IS ON. By M. W. Fodor, 239 pp. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$2.75.

By WILLIAM H. CHAMBERLIN

EUROPE today is under the sway of three revolutionary dictatorships. A few countries maintain a precarious formal independence; but Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini are in control of the continent's destiny. Of the twenty-six independent states which existed in Europe before Hitler set out on his career of conquest seven, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, have vanished into the capacious maw of the Third Reich. Three, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, have been swallowed by the Soviet Union. Poland has been again partitioned between Russia and Germany and Italy has accounted for Albania.

One of the remaining small states, Greece, is defending its independence against heavy odds; the others are either pretty completely within the orbit of the fascist powers, like Spain and Hungary and Rumania, or are dragging out a precarious existence very much on sufferance, as is the case with Switzerland and Sweden and Yugoslavia. Three hungry and insatiable empires have risen on the ruins of the many little States which sprang up in Europe after the first World War.

And between these three empires, with all their rivalries and jealousies, there is a formidable large common denominator of ideology and political practice. Soon after Hitler came into power in Germany it was an anecdote in Moscow that officials of the Soviet Embassy in the German capital began to whisper to each other:

"Now we feel more at home."

Consciously or unconsciously Hitler and Mussolini have taken over the whole basic technique of governing which was introduced in Russia by Lenin and perfected



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by Stalin, the technique that can be summed up in the phrase: unlimited propaganda plus unlimited terrorism. And with the passing of time the differences between communism and fascism as practical systems of government have become steadily more attenuated.

Communism under Stalin has become increasingly nationalistic and has drifted farther and farther away from the original ideal of Lenin; that the highest State official should not live better materially than a skilled worker. And Hitler's "national socialism," which conquered Germany with a nationalist rather

than a socialist appeal, has developed markedly leveling tendencies in recent years and has reduced the capitalist to a shadow of his former power and privileges.

Mr. Fodor, one of the most scholarly and best informed of European correspondents, undertakes the task, both difficult and fascinating, of interpreting the wave of revolution which has swept away so much in Europe and which is now exciting uneasy repercussions in America. He has really put into one comparatively small volume the material for two separate books.

The first chapters describe the big German push into Belgium and France, of which the author was an eyewitness. The latter part of the book is a study of the historical backgrounds and special characteristics of the three major post-war revolutions.

Mr. Fodor is perhaps inclined to overwork the explanation, easy to offer but difficult to verify, of "treachery" in connection with the French collapse.

Mr. Fodor is on much surer ground when he attributes the German victory to the fact that Nazi Germany succeeded in establishing the superiority of the machine over the man. If the decisive weapon of the first World War was the machine-gun, which greatly increased the strength of the defense, the decisive land weapons of the present war are the tank and the airplane, which have again tipped the balance in favor of offensive warfare.

Hitler's military leaders possessed the imagination and foresight to realize what the war of the future would be. The French General Staff remained rooted in a fatal obsession with the outdated lessons of the war of the past. Here, in a nutshell, is the explanation of the French collapse, although many other causes, diplomatic, political and moral, must also be reckoned as contributory. Among these one may note the gradual but steady decline of France's relative strength because of its stationary birthrate, the greater adaptability of German industry to mass production methods and the absence of any eastern front to absorb part of the German forces and to diminish the shock of the German offensive in the West.

Mr. Fodor sees communism, fascism and national socialism as part of a single revolutionary process. He emphasizes the fruitful idea that war generates revolution (Lenin and Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini all owed their chance of power to the World

War), while revolutionary regimes, restlessly aggressive by their very nature, soon generate new wars. Here is an infernal cycle which has already claimed European civilization as its victim. Neither Mr. Fodor nor any one else has suggested any very sure means of breaking this cycle.

Mr. Fodor is convinced, and quite correctly so, that the economic order which may be called capitalist or individualist, and which alone has proved compatible with political democracy and civil liberties, offers the masses more opportunity and better living conditions than its communist and fascist competitors. Yet the latter have moved from one victory to another; democracy is on the defensive, fighting a last-stand, life-and-death struggle in England. And war by its very nature is profoundly antipathetic to *laissez-faire* capitalism and its natural accompaniment, political liberalism. Even in the event of a British victory Mr. Fodor foresees many socialist changes in British economic life, such as nationalization of railroads and mines, control of foreign exchange and drastic social leveling because the upper and middle classes will be greatly impoverished by the war. He anticipates the grimmest of iron ages for the whole world if England falls and warns America of the danger of a German attack through Canada or through South America.

In discussing the totalitarian revolutions Mr. Fodor is more at home with Germany and Italy than with Russia. He gives some valuable material on the link between the ideas of the French syndicalist Sorel and Mussolini's fascism and also on the Austrian origins of Hitler's national socialism. One of the most interesting features of the book is the sketch of Soviet-German relations, a subject that is certain to remain close to the foreground of public attention for the duration of the present war. He describes Hitler's two alternative plans of expansion, one to the east, against the Soviet Union, propounded by Rosenberg, the other to the west, counting on the neutralization of Russia and supported by von Ribbentrop. It was this second plan that prevailed: the decision of the British and French Governments to support Poland really left the German dictator no alternative except to come to the understanding with Russia, which Stalin, to the surprised dismay of his naive admirers in foreign countries, was quick to accept.

Mr. Fodor has produced a valuable and stimulating book, both as a record of the German military victory in the west and as a series of informed and sometimes brilliant reflections on the spirit of restless, aggressive revolution that is now abroad and that has imparted to our modern age such a violent, hectic, precarious and unstable character.

William Henry Chamberlin, newspaper correspondent for many years in Russia and the Far East, is the author of "Russia's Iron Age."