

When the Next War Comes in Europe...

WHAT NEXT IN EUROPE? By Sir Arthur Willert. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1936. \$3.

Reviewed by FRANK H. SIMONDS

SIR ARTHUR WILLERT was a first rate journalist who some years ago made a misstep. Having long been Washington correspondent of the *Times* of London he one day consented to take over the press department of the British Foreign Office. After that, seeing him around at various international conferences, one was always tempted to repeat the words of Clemenceau when he saw Paderewski for the first time as a prime minister and not as a pianist. "What a comedown!" exclaimed "the Tiger."

Like the great Pole, however, Sir Arthur has repented in time. He has by resignation escaped "from the bondage of official life . . . a little irksome to one whose earlier training has been in the freer and more objective school of international journalism." Having for more than a decade viewed public events from the inside, he has succumbed to a hunger for perspectives and distances and, accordingly, as Paderewski reverted to his piano, Willert has gone back to his typewriter.

What he has now provided for us is the result of a leisurely and tranquil visit to many, if not most, of the active volcanoes of Europe, from the Polish Corridor to the Mediterranean shore. Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, reborn but not yet reassured Poland, all are visited, considered, and that most active of all continental volcanoes, namely Geneva, inspected at the precise moment when it was throwing off lava-like streams of sanctions, threatening ruin to nearby Italy.

Sir Arthur is frankly a Leaguer. The failure of Geneva in the Manchurian Affair caused him great grief, the prospect of a new failure in the Ethiopian incident led him to the conviction that with another failure the back of the League would be broken and then stark force would reign over the continent. Later he felt more hopeful that the League would not fail and leave a frightened Europe "with no Geneva to serve its nations as a mixture of club and court house."

That phrase—"club and court house"—supplies a key to the tone and temper of our author. You are not to expect any violence in his phrase, any passion in his criticism. He sees excesses, German and otherwise, with the clarity and keenness you would expect of a journalist, with the regret and cool disapprobation of a gentleman, but, above all, with the detachment of an Englishman. Nevertheless, when an Italian tells him that within a brief time the Bolsheviks will stable their

horses in the new League of Nations building, he makes a note of it.

Lunching in Paris last summer, Sir Arthur's hostess told him she had already sent her silver to Brittany to be safe when the war started again. Of course she believed that war imminent and her state of mind furnished him with a chapter on why war is feared. He criticizes the failure of his own country to give the French assurances at once prompt and adequate. He believes that Great Britain will have now to go "all out for the collective system" which is for him "the sheriff's posse of Europe."

Across the frontier in Germany, he found things worse than in France. Pausing a moment in Zurich, before he entered the Reich, Sir Arthur was told by a German Swiss—"We see people (in Germany) with changed faces, doing strange and terrible things and thinking strange and terrible thoughts. And many of the friends we have grown up with are among them." In Belgium, too, on another margin of Germany, in fact in the city of Louvain of sinister memory, he was told that the possibility of another war was always in the mind of the inhabitants.

Then, the moment he crossed the frontier, Willert fell into the hands of a public servant as courteous as any Britisher and having feared to become the victim of espionage he was actually embarrassed by official solicitude for his comfort. Knowing his pre-war Germany, he was on the watch for "signs of the rough intolerance of the authoritarian state." He was long in finding them, although at once he was struck by an atmosphere of sadness and of silence. Laughing and singing were lacking.

In one of the big industrial towns of the west a German friend told Sir Arthur:

"You want to know of what materials this new edifice of our is constructed. Well, I think that if I said that the bricks of which it is being built are made of patriotism and hope but the mortar which holds it together is fear, I should not be very wrong." Saying goodbye to a Jewish friend whom he visited en route to Berlin, Willert wished him good luck—"I need it," was the grim reply.

Goebbels's response to the assertion that

Jews were, after all, human beings, claims our author's notice—"Yes, he is one," Goebbels thundered, "but what sort of one? To be a human being is in itself nothing. A flea is also an animal, but that does not make it by any means a pleasant animal." "Does Germany want to fight?" Sir Arthur asks and undertakes to answer this question in one of the most interesting chapters of his book. His verdict is perhaps best summarized in the following statement made to him by an Englishman resident in Germany: "Europe had

better take care how its treats the new Germany. She is combining the crusading fervor of the French Revolution with the mass production efficiency of an American factory. If Europe does not look out, she will go through her like a knife through cheese."

Sir Arthur has much to say, on the strength of personal observation, about the prospective conflict between Slav and Teuton. He found in Berlin that the German

military experts took the new Bolshevik army seriously. He found the Russo-German situation profoundly disturbing, distrust equally dominant in Berlin and Moscow and the general situation, despite a temporary lull, such that "there is always a chance of some locally engendered spark causing the over-charged atmosphere to explode." He was not reassured, when he came to Vienna and examined the problems of Central Europe. In the light of the Ethiopian affair, he foresaw the possibility of a better understanding between Mussolini and Hitler, despite their unhappy meeting in Venice in 1934.

If Italy should retire from the Danubian area, leaving a free field for Germany, might not the Soviet Union move in? Does not German fear of Russia already disclose itself in renewed efforts of Hitler to consolidate his situation along the Danube? These are questions which trouble a former official of the Foreign Office. It is, moreover, distinctly worth while to follow him through all his peregrinations. The value of this book lies primarily in the detachment of its author. He is a wholly reasonable and civilized human being trying to resolve a mad word into a measure of rationality.

What is to be done to make Europe feel



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SIR ARTHUR WILLERT

safe? That is the question Sir Arthur asks himself at the end. Unlike many Englishmen he does not believe there is the slightest chance of America becoming "a member of the sheriff's posse of Europe" which assembles in Geneva. The single chance, as he sees it, is "that Great Britain should pull her weight in the Collective System." He is aware, painfully aware, that Continental Europeans do not trust British fidelity to the League.

Writing before the Hoare-Laval compromise, Sir Arthur felt that Britain had changed her policy. Perhaps he would still hold to this view, despite that performance or, more exactly, because of what happened after it. Anyhow, he doesn't believe "splendid isolation" is now a possible course for his country. He believes that to live England must have trade and trade with Europe.

"The democratic countries have still time for a supreme effort to put things right and to devise some tolerable community life with their dictatorial neighbors, based upon the development of what is good in the Peace Settlement and upon the alteration of what is bad in it." That is the final word, not too reassuring in the light of what has gone before. Perhaps Sir Arthur should have called his book not innocence but sophistication abroad. As a study of contemporary Continental Europe it is interesting rather than important, but as an analysis of the composed English mind confronted by an Old World on the threshold of convulsion it is of real value. To be sure, it does not show either excitement or alarm, but the underlying note of uneasiness is significant, is, perhaps, illustrative of the great change, which many have alleged has recently taken place in the British point of view toward the problem of world peace and the role of Britain in the solution of that problem.

... Can America Stay Out?

CAN WE BE NEUTRAL? By Allen W. Dulles and Hamilton Fish Armstrong. New York: Harper & Bros. 1936. \$1.50.

Reviewed by SIR ARTHUR WILLERT

A MASTERLY little book. It reviews concisely and objectively the history of American neutrality and goes on to an illuminating discussion of American policy in the event of another war. To an Englishman it is particularly interesting.

The United States, like Great Britain, is anxious about the state of the world and especially about the state of Europe. Like Great Britain, the United States wants to avoid war. But there the parallel ends. To the visitor, at any rate, the United States seems to be today in much the same state of mind as that of Great Britain at the opening of the Disarmament Conference and during the climax of the Manchurian crisis at the beginning of 1932.

In 1932 and for some time afterwards Great Britain was practising a policy of semi-isolation even from Europe. She shrank from supporting the League of Nations over Manchuria and then contributed to the failure of the Disarmament Conference by her unwillingness to come effectively into the security system of Europe. Her frontier, as Mr. Baldwin proclaimed as late as 1934, was on the Rhine; and her fear, or rather the fear of her government, that she might become entangled in the war-breeding politics of Europe made her hesitate to guarantee the integrity of Austria or the peace of Eastern Europe.

Three events have since given reason to wonder whether Great Britain is not

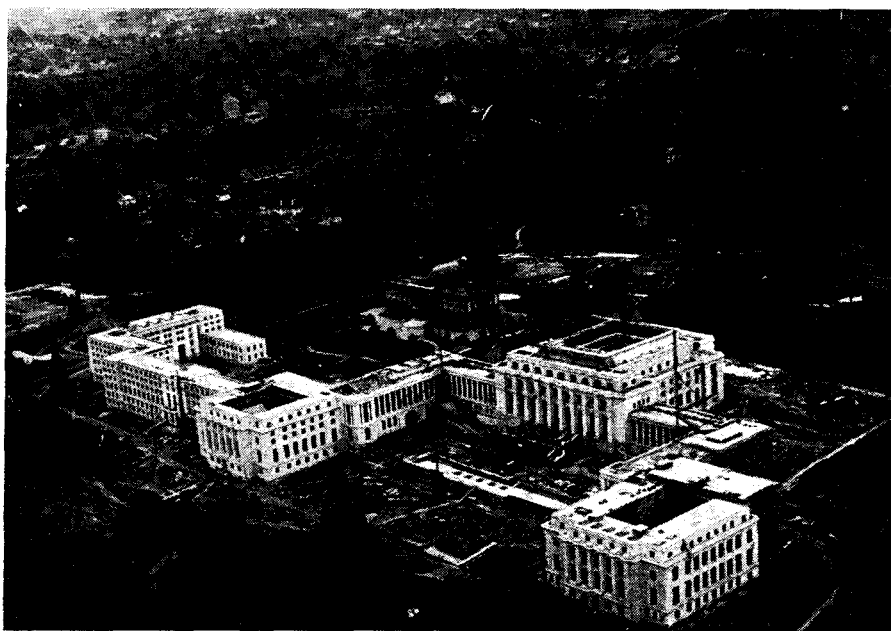
now shifting her frontiers forward from the Rhine to wherever peace may be threatened in Europe. The three events are the Peace Ballot of last spring, a vast straw vote conducted by Lord Cecil and other supporters of the League of Nations which sensationally showed that British public opinion was less averse from responsibilities under the League than the Government, and especially its Foreign Minister Sir John Simon, had seemed to imagine; the disappearance of Sir John Simon from the Foreign Office when the Government was reconstructed a few weeks later; and finally the replacement of his successor, Sir Samuel Hoare, by Mr. Eden when, a short time ago, Sir Samuel Hoare was so emphatically convicted of a lack of understanding of the true implications of League of Nations principles.

British public opinion has, in fact, out of an apparent desire to see British policy play a more effective role in the protection of peace, dismissed two foreign Ministers and appointed a third in the past six months; and the circumstances attending this remarkable display of dynamic democracy are such as to make it permissible to think that the national mind is moving towards a realization of the fact that, if England is to avoid her inevitable share in the disaster of another European war, the best thing for her to do is to try to prevent war rather than to try to keep out of it.

American policy, both official and popular, to judge from what the authors of "Can We Be Neutral?" have to say and also from the neutrality measures now before Congress, is in favor of the policy which England seems to be abandoning, and desires to establish a method of isolation, or rather insulation, more successful than those which she employed in regard to previous great European wars. Mr. Dulles and Mr. Hamilton Fish Armstrong seem to doubt whether it is either feasible or advisable to attempt this. "The duty," they say, "to help prevent wars is not primarily one which the United States owes to other nations. It is a duty which we owe to ourselves and which our Government owes to its people. Self-interest should determine our course of action. Let it be enlightened self-interest."

It is not for a foreigner, however sympathetic, to offer opinions on American policy. But this perhaps may be said—the issue would appear to be whether in these days, when the different parts of the world are so sensitively and closely interconnected, the difference between the breadth of oceans and of narrow waters is really what geography books depict it to be.

Sir Arthur Willert, author of "What Next in Europe?" is associated with the British Ministry of Information.



THE NEW LEAGUE OF NATIONS BUILDING
Photograph by courtesy of Foreign Affairs.