

# The Secret of Nazi Triumphs

*THEY WANTED WAR.* By Otto D. Tolischus. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1940. 340 pp., with index. \$3.

Reviewed by VERA MICHELES DEAN

AS Nazi Germany, with systematic efficiency, sweeps from one victory to another in Europe, people on other continents feverishly seek to discover the secret of Nazi triumphs, in the hope of discovering a formula for counteracting the German drive. Few students of contemporary affairs are as well qualified to answer these questions as Otto Tolischus, for many years *New York*



Otto D. Tolischus

*Times* correspondent in Berlin, who received the Pulitzer prize for distinguished foreign correspondence in 1940 and, after being ejected from Germany, now carries on his work from Stockholm. Mr. Tolischus's exceptionally well-informed, balanced, and lucid articles and dispatches had already proved of inestimable value to the American public. Now some of these articles and dispatches, selected with the assistance of Robert Van Gelder of the *New York Times*, are brought together in a book which should command an even wider and, as a result of recent events, a more understanding audience.

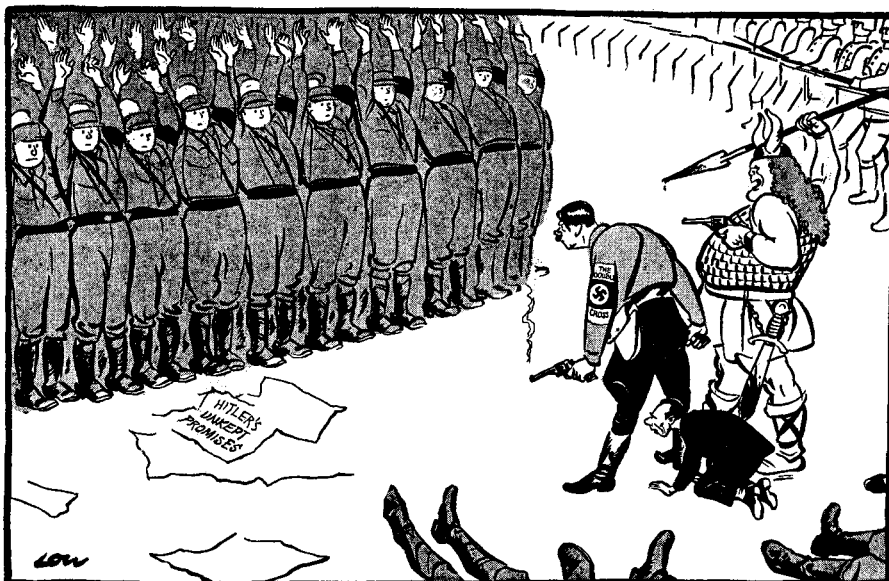
Mr. Tolischus has never made the mistake of oversimplifying the problems created by Germany's resurgence under the leadership of Hitler, or of accepting the easy explanation that Germany "is ruled by a gang with guns." He is convinced that the present crisis in Europe is dominated by a spirit deeply rooted in German history—a spirit symbolized, in his opinion, by Richard Wagner, and the pitiless world of the *Nibelungen* which he brought back to life in his operas.

Wagner, he believes, became "a synthesis of the German intellectual turmoil that began to separate the German from the rest of the Occident early in the nineteenth century—a turmoil that was first a protest against the French Revolution, then a patriotic uprising against Napoleon, then a revolt against the German pygmy states and their reactionary policies, in which Wagner personally took a hand, and then a revulsion against the whole nineteenth century with its great industrial revolution and the social evils that followed in its wake." Out of the myths of German antiquity, essentially alien to Western civilization, developed "an exaltation of Germanism as the remedy for the world's ills" which constitutes today the driving force of Nazism.

Mr. Tolischus rightly sees that Nazi victories are due not solely to the superiority of the German industrial machine, or to government by terror, or to propaganda unexcelled in history, or to the work of "fifth columns." They are due, first and foremost, to the fact that Hitler has inculcated in Germans throughout the world the belief that it is their destiny to become the master race, wherever they may be found, and to harness other national groups and economic systems to the task of creating a powerful, united, and impregnable German empire. For this task no sacrifices are regarded as too great, no methods are regarded as too brutal. The end justifies the means; and since, from the Nazi point of view, there is no morality other than that created by the triumph of the German master race, neither end nor means can be condemned as immoral, even if they involve utmost cruelty

toward individuals and groups who do not happen to fit into the German pattern. According to Mr. Tolischus, the World War, in which brutality was exalted on the ground that it would ultimately achieve noble ends, made an indelible impression on Hitler; and "the morality of war became the guiding morality of his life."

Unlike some optimistic Americans who believe that, once Hitler has consolidated his power on the European continent, he will settle down to enjoy the fruits of conquest, and will not menace the New World, Mr. Tolischus believes that Nazism "must, like a bicycle, keep on moving or fall." The war now fought in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, is not an old-fashioned war between national states. It is "a life-and-death struggle between two cultures, two ways of living and dying, two moral concepts, and two systems of social, political and economic organization." The outcome of this struggle, as Mr. Tolischus succinctly puts it, "must not only demolish the present balance of power in the world but determine the future shape of the world." Those who, like Mr. Lindbergh, believe that the war in Europe was due to a conflict between rich nations that were growing richer and poor nations that were growing poorer, overlook the fact that the United States is even richer than France or the British Empire, and that such National Socialist slogans as the fight of "blood against gold" and of "socialism" against "decadent democracy and plutocracy" are just as applicable to the United States as to the Allies. Nor does Mr. Lindbergh (whose sincerity is beyond doubt) apparently realize that any peace the United States might offer to negotiate with Germany would have to be based on total acceptance of the revolutionary world order now urged not only by the Reich, but also by



From a "Cartoon History of Our Time," by David Low (Simon & Schuster)

Italy, Russia, and Japan—a world order which involves the destruction of that Western civilization Mr. Lindbergh hopes to preserve by coming to terms with a victorious Germany.

At the same time, Mr. Tolischus's book supports Lindbergh's contention that Germany was far better prepared, both from a military and an economic point of view, than the Allies had wanted to admit. Failure to recognize the strength of the German totalitarian machine was in large part responsible for the amazing complacency displayed by Allied statesmen and strategists not only before September, 1939, but even when the war was already in full swing and Nazi military power had been demonstrated in the Polish campaign. Mr. Tolischus points out that "when all is said that can be said about the German achievement, the fact which history will record as the main element in German success is the political passivity and rigidity of the democracies." This timely book suggests two conclusions to the American reader: first, "that the only dam against power is more power"—a thesis with which presumably Lindbergh, who advocates national defense, would agree; but, second, that armaments alone are not enough, and that the United States will, in a sense, have to outrevolutionize the Nazi revolution by renovating the concept and practices of democracy and making it so strong from within that it will prove invulnerable to propaganda assaults from without.

*Vera Micheles Dean is Research Director of the Foreign Policy Association.*

## An Agrarian Utopia

*ROSSCOMMON. By Charles Allen Smart. New York: Random House. 1940. 201 pp. \$2.*

Reviewed by FLETCHER PRATT

NEWSPAPER editorials have made most of us aware that some sort of farm problem exists, and Congressional enactments that some sort of treatments are being tried. To ignorant city-dwellers the proposals, whether of individual editorial wisdom, or the collective intelligence of Congress, don't seem to make sense—what in the world is the use of paying men not to raise crops, so the crops they do raise will be worth more? In manufacturing economy better results are achieved by selling larger quantities of the product at a lower unit price. And the agrarian solutions have exhibited a strikingly unanimous failure to ease the ache.

Perhaps the error has been one of diagnosis. At least that is the implied suggestion of this earnest novel by an exceptionally articulate farmer. Not that most farmers fail in the quantity of their articulation—as Mr. Smart recognizes, they make plenty of noise, mostly of the windmill variety, about such subjects as the banks, the lack of educational opportunity, and the intransigence of the obstinate soil. These are not, he suggests, the real troubles. Basically, it seems to be that the culture of cities has moved on. The farmer is left behind, chained to

his twelve-hour day and limited cultural opportunities, without even the security and independence he once received in exchange for his acceptance of isolation.

No solution is proposed here, although this book is, under the guise of fiction, the picture of an agrarian utopia, where the wants are met. But it is, as the book itself says, an unworkable utopia, which has grown to such reality in the mind of one farmer that he has let his place slip to ruin and forced sale while he dreams about it. It is a strictly local utopia, a community a third the size of Oneida, requiring the special consonance of the special characters presented—a group of high intelligence, all lacking the spirit of contest, who find earth-life fun, and have no sex problems.

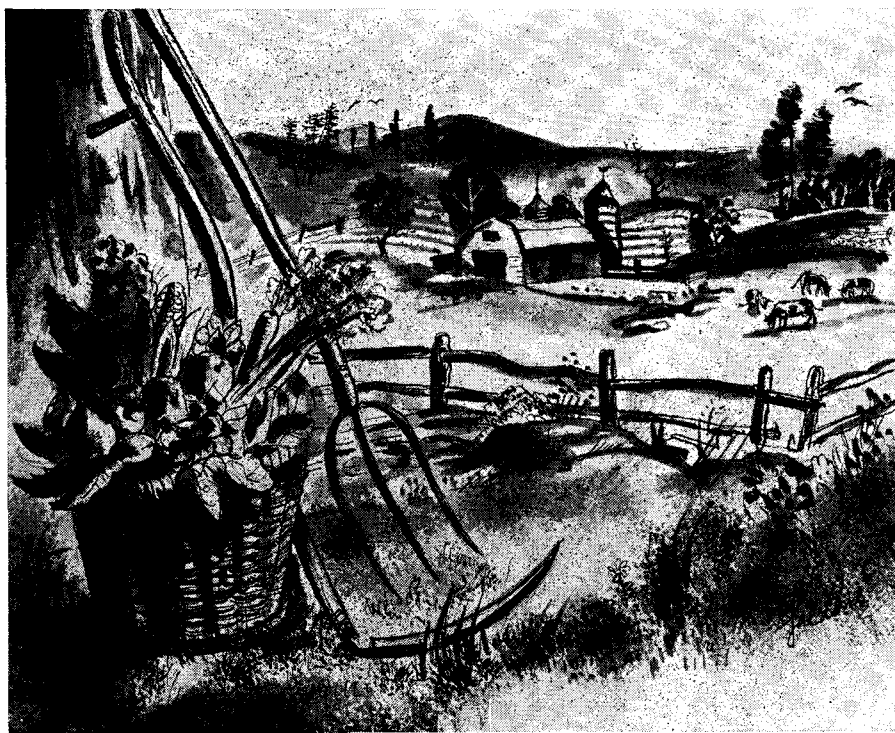
*Fletcher Pratt has made a special study of the Utopian novel.*

## On the Lunatic Fringe

*LOOK WHO'S TALKING. By S. J. Perelman. New York: Random House. 1940. 249 pp. \$2.*

THIS volume contains twenty-four short pieces, reprinted from the *New Yorker*, the *New Masses*, and Broun's *Nutmeg*. Readers of these periodicals will, no doubt, already have bruited abroad the extraordinary merits of S. J. Perelman. To those who are still unacquainted with him one has to say that he has nothing in common with P. G. Wodehouse except this—that he and Mr. Wodehouse are the two contemporary writers whose work absolutely defies analysis.

One can speak of him only in generalizations, as, for example: he writes a kind of satirical *belles lettres*; his prose rarely, if ever, appears to desert the lunatic fringe of literature; if you stay with him for a little, you will realize that he has a devastating intelligence and remarkably clear idea of what is going on in the world. These inadequate and obscure statements are intended to convey the notion that this observer thinks very highly indeed of S. J. Perelman, whose "Look Who's Talking" enshrines at least half a dozen of the funniest and most searching short pieces in modern American prose; and another dozen and a half that are almost as good. The universal monarchy of wit was never very crowded; they will find no difficulty at all in making room for him there.



Jacket design for "Rosscommon"