

(October 12th, 1938)

## "This Befuddled World"

By MAJOR NORMAN A. IMRIE

Associate Editor, "Columbus Despatch"

MAJOR IMRIE:—Mr. President and gentlemen of the Canadian Club, I suppose every political campaign in almost every country breeds its own crop of stories. There was an interesting experience that came out of the 1928 campaign in the U.S. that has always intrigued me. It had nothing to do with Smith or Hoover but it had actually to do with a Senator whose tongue had no superior for a certain type of eloquence and who would, when he wanted to, be vindictive, and usually he did, could take the head off a political opponent probably faster than anybody. He was presiding over a Democratic convention when he discovered to his astonishment that the chaplain had failed to come and he had nobody to pronounce the benediction. Anybody who knows American politics knows that if there is any gathering of men under the blue sun of Heaven that requires Divine guidance is a Democratic convention. There was nobody to do it. And just then he caught sight of the face of an old enemy, William Allen White, a Kansas Republican, there for the purpose of reporting. And he got an inspiration. He said, "My friends, the chaplain failed to show up, there is nobody here to pronounce the Benediction; I am going to ask my old friend White if he would ask God's blessing." White slumped down deeper into his chair; then he got up slowly and said, "Mr. Senator, I wish you would excuse me; I would rather not open this Democratic meeting with prayer because to tell you the honest truth I don't want God to know I am here."

I am very glad to have anybody know that I am in this famous club in Toronto. I do not feel strange. I was brought up in London on oatmeal. My father was one of those old time preachers who believed in some of the

good old doctrines of the Bible. So I feel quite at home, especially with Presbyterians. You know, I think it was Sam Jones once said the only difference between a Methodist and a Presbyterian is that a Methodist has religion and is afraid he is going to lose it; a Presbyterian knows he cannot lose it; he is afraid he hasn't got it.

There was a Scotchman who did not love his mother-in-law and this weighed heavily on the mind of his wife who was lying at death's door, so she called him to her bedside and said, "I am very ill and I am going to die and there is just one thing will you promise me before I slip away." His hard old heart was softened and he said, "I will promise you; what is it?" She said, "When I die have a grand funeral, and I want you to promise for the sake of the bairns that you will ride in the front carriage with mother." Finally he said, "Well I give my word and I am no mon to back on my word, but ye certainly have spoiled the day for me."

Well you haven't spoiled the day for me by inviting me, and I hope I do not spoil it for you by boring you. I got a great kick out of meeting some friends I have not seen for 20 years, from the days of overseas service. It not only gave me great pleasure but it brought back to me a lesson that sooner or later we all bump off. If we carry anything with us over the great divide it is the memory of the friendships and the good times we have had as we have gone along.

I had a grand time in Ottawa yesterday before the Canadian Club of Ottawa, and as a sort of reward for a little contribution I made I was given a visit with Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor-General of Canada. He is a delightful and gifted gentleman; he understands Britain; he understands Canada; he understands the United States. As such he is a unique asset to comity and understanding between the Empire, the Dominions and the Republic.

Now this talk of mine is not a political talk. And it is not going to be economic in any scientific sense, just a discussion by a newspaperman, making observations after travelling through something like 9 different countries in Europe about 10 months ago. I came back from Europe with some things etched indelibly on my mind. Leadership. A conception of leadership comes to us from the philosopher

—"He who knows and knows not that he knows is a fool, shun him. He who knows not but knows that he knows not is ignorant, teach him. He who knows but knows not that he knows is asleep, wake him. He who knows and knows that he knows is a leader, follow him. The trouble these days is so many folk think they know and don't, and lead us. There is something about the climate of California that develops screwiness. In California we have technocracy, we have Dr. Johnston—two hundred bucks a month for everybody after 65 then you spend it. Whoopee! Grandpa, life begins at 65.

Looking back on the 20 years since the war, all I have to say is that if it was to make the world safe for democracy that we butchered 10 to 12 millions; if it was to make the world safe for democracy that we maimed and blinded many millions more, with hundreds of thousands lying in hospitals for 20 years, if it was to make the world safe for democracy that we broke millions of hearts, then that world war was the most ghastly and costly failure of history. We thought we made Russia safe for democracy. We got rid of the Romanoffs, the proudest dynasty of Europe—and I can think of no more tragic happening than the helpless children, confronted by be-whiskered Bolsheviks and given two minutes to pray, and their bodies thrown into quicklime. We thought we had made 60 million Germans safe for democracy; we sent the Kaiser scampering up to Holland. We had a German Republic and a representative Reichstag. God rid us of the Hapsburgs in Austria; the Sultan in Turkey and some other autocrats in the Balkans, and we thought we had made Europe safe for democracy. The whole picture faded and was replaced by the era of the bullies, the era of despots and dictators. How a minority becoming a majority hates a minority. Russia is one country that must get rid of her minorities and in getting rid of them it is getting rid of its intelligentsia. One hundred and seventy million Russians are being put in a straight jacket form of government so severe that no man may stand in Russia and criticize the government. If I were to say this in Moscow, within an hour I would be stood up against a wall and my brains scattered over the country. I asked a man who had lived in the U.S. how he

lived under this kind of government and he said he didn't think it would last very long in the U.S. Of course he had not lived in the U.S. since 1933. You would never guess my politics.

The Italian people are different from the British and the Americans and the Anglo Saxon people. They are an ambitious people, more excitable, impatient of discipline. They have not had the benefit of years of experience and the tradition of self government that you have. Right after the war, agitators came from Russia and tried to turn our set up over. We were face to face with national demoralization. We had half a dozen different parties but no party that could speak with the authority of the Italian people. And they were face to face with ruin, and in that situation along came this fellow from Milano, Mussolini, with 15,000 Black Shirts. He strode into the chamber and demanded that he be made Premier. And the King gave him a commission. And they were saved from ruin. It was told, "Until we get something better we are fairly satisfied with what we have got."

A word about Germany. I don't think anybody can deny that intellectually the Germans are equipped as well as any nation in the world. The contribution that German intellect has made to every form of art and science is beyond calculation and yet you have in Germany a spectacle that is pretty hard to imagine. I was in Munich about a year ago and there was a persecution of Catholics going on almost unbelievable—trials of nuns and priests and the trials given all the publicity that an inspired press can do. They were trying to take hold of the church in Bavaria and what must have excited the bitterest resentment was attempting to take away from the Catholic church the education of their youth. That was going on when Hitler got his start. If I could miraculously transport you to Munich I could show you 16 coffins containing the bodies of 16 fellows killed in the beer house putsch, that first attempt to grab power in Germany. I visited every beerhouse in Munich I was so anxious to see the right one; when I got the right one I could hardly see it. More than 1,000 preachers are in concentration camps or have been. The most outstanding one, Neimmoeller, is in camp today. Why? Just because he would

not keep his mouth shut. But God help the poor Jews. They are in a worse position than any minority I know. It is a curious thing to me. The estimated population of this whirling globe is 2 billion people, 2,000,000,000 of whom the estimated Jewish population is 17 million and yet the curious thing is that they exercise out of proportion to their population a tremendous influence on almost every form of human enterprise and human activity. Away back in 1933 when the mark was nose diving from about 4 to a dollar to about a billion, somehow or other the Jews had the ability to switch commodities into currency and when the bottom was reached, the Jews had most of it in Germany. That roused resentment and the Jews that have not fled or been kicked out of Germany have been rounded up into ghettos. You don't have to be anti-Jewish in Germany, but you can't be anything else, and the newspapers are a big influence in this direction. More than 1,000 newspapers have been rubbed out in Germany since Hitler got back. A Dean of a school of journalism in the University of Munich tried to tell me the difference between the American and German newspaper, that here we were the organized bosses of capitalism in the business of making money. Our principal endeavour is the dissemination of news while they are more interested in making the German newspapers the vehicle for the expression of public opinion in Germany. A newspaper is interested in presenting the news of the day to foster industry and commerce, to reflect and instruct public opinion and that function that has given to the press the proud title of "Fourth Estate," to furnish that check on government for which no state however great has found a satisfactory substitute. I said, "We cannot help but think your news is censored and restricted, we do not believe your claim to being a vehicle to express German public opinion. We think the only opinion that is expressed is that which is handed down. And so far as checking on the government, your newspapers might just as well not exist." I said, "When I return I can write out an editorial that may take the form of a stinging criticism of an appointment and if it passes my big boss and is printed, Roosevelt cannot come and throw me into jail for writing it—at least not yet. What is more he cannot close us up. You sit down and write an editorial

against Hitler and what happens your paper?" "Well," he said, "It probably would be closed up." Which gives you a picture of the strangle hold that is put on the free press of Germany. And the almost fantastic idolization of Hitler! I sat in the great Olympic stadium where the Olympic games are played with 130,000 Germans all through the afternoon and twilight. It was a program put on by delegations of Germans representing minorities in countries beyond the borders of the Reich. And when that was finished, Dr. Goebells, Minister of Propaganda, stood up and spoke to them for an hour in a speech that brought forth laughter and cheers. I did not understand what it was until I got it translated. It was done in Germany and I found out it was first a vicious attack on the Catholic Church and second was an attempt to send these folk back to their countries to propagandize for the day when all Germans would be united under the Swastika. And 130,000 Germans stood up and with extended hand hailed Hitler. There were 131,000 hands extended because I sort of felt it would hardly be part of prudence to be the only man in that crowd not to extend the hand. Several Germans said to me, "You don't like us, you Americans and British; you stripped us of our ships and colonies, took the Saar, put on us an indemnity that ground us into the very dirt, and we had a dozen political parties but nobody who could speak for the Germans. We were face to face with the same kind of disintegration that Italy was. Then along comes this man from Munich and he said to give him 4 years and he would tear up the Versailles treaty, and he would get our ships and colonies back and he would restore national respect. We gave him a mandate. We didn't know we were giving him as much, didn't know we were giving liberty of speech, worship and assembly. We sold our birthright for a mess of pottage. But don't forget we got our mess of pottage. Some day we hope we will get the rest back but until we do we are satisfied with what we have got."

It has been written of Democracy, "We stand for the right of law based on the consent of the governed and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind." That is the kind they have in Holland, in the Scandinavian countries, in Great Britain. And I will say that nobody can go to

Britain without carrying away the profoundest respect for the solidity and the dignity of their institutions and their methods. The British went through a Gethsemane of depression almost as heartbreaking as the Germans but they said, "We will survive without renouncing the privileges for which our forefathers rotted in dungeons and died on the block; we would sooner go on shorter rations than cringe at the table of a master. I can remember when Ramsay Macdonald died on shipboard a year ago, and my mind went back to 1927. I had an hour's interview with him. The British were going through their depression, but in the U.S. we were on the up and up. Our ordeal came in 1929. I was one of millions that looked with a kind of supercilious eye on the British cabinet for paying that dole to workmen, but Macdonald said, "You go back and tell your neighbors we are not paying this dole because we think it is a good thing for the morale but we conscripted these fellows, put rifles in their hands, put bayonets and bullets in their hands and forced them to go and fight. We said we will take care of your wives and children and when you come back we will find you jobs. Hundreds of thousands came back, but no jobs, no purchasing power. How long do you think red blooded British workmen or red blooded Americans will stand around and listen to their children whimpering for bread and watch their women folk shiver in the chill of a British winter. We don't like paying the dole." I never dreamed we in the U.S. would be paying the dole. But we are doing it on exactly the same scale. My hat is off to a people that can survive an ordeal like that of Britain's, and come through with their privileges and liberties intact.

I had fifteen minutes with Neville Chamberlain. I said, "Are we justified in pessimism about the future of Europe and its democracy as we know it on the way out." He said, "I don't think you need to feel too pessimistic; there is a lot of inflammable material lying around but I think with the exercise of diplomatic skill and patience we will postpone—he did not say avert—a European collision." The greatest rampart for the protection of the peace of Europe is the strength of the British rearmament program. That rearmament program has gone ahead with speed that is

surprising. We are strong today and when you are strong everybody wants to be your friend."

I listened to his voice again with its emotion in dramatic contrast to that shrieking hysteria we heard the day before in Nurnemberg. We in America felt he said, "This far and no further. Let us call your bluff but before we do let us be sure we have the men, money and guns." Whether you agree with that or not, there was a sigh of the profoundest relief went up in America, that the world was being dragged back from the awful abyss of war.

Does America still subscribe to the doctrines of that grand statesman Wilson? I think there is no question about it. America subscribes to that great doctrine. And standing here in this great City of Toronto I say as I tried to say before many another audience, we in the U.S., Canada, and Australia, ought never to forget that we owe a great debt to those hard boiled old barons at Runneymede who at the point of the sword made the English dictator sign the Magna Charta and laid the policy of British freedom. William and Mary who signed the Bill of Rights, and the fathers who wrote the constitution of the U.S. and the fathers who wrote the B.N.A. built up that great policy of freedom. And then came the war lords of Europe who made that murderous assault and after four years of mud and blood there was resumed that triumphant march of the English speaking people. That is our heritage.

I cannot close without a final statement—this was made by Dr. Macdonald, one time editor of The Globe in this city. It was made before an American audience at a time when there was a lot of loose talk about how the American flag would fly up to Hudsons Bay. He said, "The American Republic and the Dominion of Canada will continue to live side by side under different flags, loyal to different governments, but the English speaking are one people, with one language with a thousand years of historic background. One in their inbred love of freedom, one in wealth of literature, one in the genius of their law, one in the foundation of their faith, one in the eternal purpose of the God of nations, what God has joined together, let not man in his petty politics put asunder. That injunction we will do well to obey.