

*The War—International Situation*

monwealth such an ordeal. But we should, I think, also look beneath the surface of Russian resistance into the heart of the Russian peasant. From him we may learn that nothing is quite so precious as the freedom of one's own homeland. In the Russian resistance and all that it signifies, we find the surest ground for belief in the ultimate triumph of the forces of freedom.

I am not in a position to answer the question: Why did Hitler attack Russia when and as he did? I am prepared, however, to suggest three reasons. Each in itself might be a sufficient reason. All three, taken in combination, afford, I believe, the true answer.

Hitler attacked Russia, first of all, for the same reason that he invaded other neutral countries of Europe, as a stage in Germany's march toward world conquest. The conquest of Russia would, he knew, bring the whole of Europe under his control.

Secondly, Hitler believed it would prove in the end to be the quickest and surest way to gain his larger objective of destroying the British empire. In the face of British resistance and American aid to the democratic powers, he had come to see that the conflict would be much longer and harder than he had anticipated. He recognized that fresh sources of supply were an essential means to any decisive victory. He feared without them the war might end only with the exhaustion of the civil populations and the armed forces of both sides alike.

A third reason—which I am sure was as powerful as either of the others—was that Hitler himself mistrusted Russia. He had every reason to believe that Russia could never be really friendly to a Hitlerite Germany. He no doubt expected that Russia, following tactics similar to his own, and those employed by his Italian partner, would continue to wait, while he pressed his campaign elsewhere, watching for the hour at which nazi Germany might become most vulnerable. In the hour of decisive conflict with the democracies Hitler did not wish to risk an attack from behind. His fear was the long-standing German fear of a war on two fronts. Hitler's success in exploiting hostility to Russian communism in his own rise to power, and as the key to his close association with Italy and Japan, forced him to recognize that, whatever the advantage to nazi Germany and the convenience to Russia of the nazi-soviet pact, at the time it was made, there could be no enduring good-will between forces so traditionally hostile and so diametrically opposed. He had every reason to expect that, before the end, the conflict would return to the place where he himself began it. He probably never

doubted that at some stage the issue would be fought out between the Russian proletariat and the war lords of Germany.

It is clear that Hitler miscalculated the probable duration of the Russian campaign and the military strength and skill, as well as the patriotism, of the Russian people. He mistook, also, the effect of years of nazi and fascist propaganda. He may have expected a revolt behind the Russian lines; he met instead a united people prepared for any sacrifice. There is no doubt that the solidarity of opinion in Great Britain, in the dominions, in the United States, and in fact throughout all free lands, which followed the nazi attack upon Russia, was as much a surprise as it was a disappointment to Hitler and his accomplices.

It was on June 22—a Sunday morning—that Hitler launched his attack. Seldom has a situation arisen where there was more need for an immediate interpretation of its significance and implications. The remarkable fact is that, without prior consultation, the same interpretation was given, in almost identical terms, in all parts of the British commonwealth and in the United States; and that, regardless of considerations of race or religion, the view expressed was much the same. It was immediately recognized that nazi Germany had again broken the peace, and again broken her own pledged word. Germany was plainly and clearly the aggressor. It was recognized that the nazi attack on soviet Russia was not a crusade against any Red menace but a new phase of the nazi attack on all the democracies.

This interpretation was the one set forth in the statement I issued, in the name of our government, on the afternoon of the day on which Russia was attacked. I stressed the fact that Germany, and not Russia, was the threat to freedom and peace; that every force fighting Hitler was fighting, whether consciously or unconsciously, for the preservation of Christian civilization; that every power which engaged our enemy advanced our cause. I pointed out that the German attack removed all shadow of doubt concerning Hitler's purpose; that it constituted a fresh call to arms throughout the British commonwealth. I pointed out that Hitler's agreement with Russia had been broken with the same perfidious cynicism with which it had been sealed; that its making and its breaking had but one object—to eliminate danger in the east in order that there might be a concentration of force against Britain and the west. I emphasized that, therefore, it was not a time to debate differences of view or to relax effort, but rather a time for strengthened unity of opinion, and for still greater effort. That view