

*The War—The Balkans*

the outflanking of Yugoslavia by the occupation of Roumania and Bulgaria would serve to undermine the spirit of resistance in the Yugoslav people. The nazis expected that, almost surrounded, Yugoslavia would consider resistance hopeless and surrender without a struggle. The action of Yugoslavia in offering resistance in the face of well-nigh overwhelming odds has undoubtedly come as a surprise to Germany.

Throughout their troubled history, the Yugoslavs have given proof on a hundred battlefields of great military virtues and of a stubborn courage in the face of heavy odds. Their determination to resist this latest act of brutal aggression, to fight, and if need be to die in order to preserve their homeland and their hard-won liberties, opens a chapter, however tragic, which does the highest honour to their great traditions. A reversal of policy so sudden and complete as that witnessed in the case of the Yugoslav administration in the past few days is rare indeed, even in a generation which has become accustomed to kaleidoscopic changes. The Yugoslavs, however, to cite as examples only their immediate neighbours, had before them the fate of Hungary, of Roumania and of Bulgaria. One by one these countries in turn, having yielded to a succession of threats, first economic and then military, have found themselves in the end the victims of German aggression. Whatever form the so-called cooperation took, in practice it was discovered to mean the occupation of their territory by nazi forces, and a complete submission to nazi domination in economic, political and military spheres. All three countries ceased to be the masters of their own destinies and became the tools of German policy. This fate the Yugoslavs were determined to avoid, if at all possible, at however great a cost.

In Yugoslavia's noble resistance, nazi diplomacy suffered a signal defeat. In her attempt to subjugate the Balkan peninsula, Germany has been forced to fight. War on two fronts, the spectre which long has haunted German strategy, has become a grim reality. To what lengths the new front may extend, to what proportions the war itself may grow, time alone will disclose.

The nazi attack is directed mainly at Greece as the key to the situation in the eastern Mediterranean. Having voluntarily met the attacks of Germany's ally for five long months, after having inflicted heavy losses upon the Italian invaders and driven them from Greek soil, Greece has now to face the force of nazi Germany herself, on another and more exposed section of her extended frontiers. It is a tremendous task: in terms of

military equipment and power, one that would seem to be almost overwhelming. Greece, however, has revealed that a heroic spirit is more to be desired than all else. The Greeks have already risen to face their new enemy with indomitable courage and with the united will of the whole Greek nation.

The nazi attack on Yugoslavia and Greece is a major development. It is too early even to surmise what it may portend. We must be prepared to witness a stupendous conflict. We should realize, too, that the nazi design of conquest in the Balkans is not an end in itself. It is another attempt at outflanking positions which are obstacles in the path of world domination. Each country Germany occupies serves two purposes: the resources of the conquered people are added to her strength, and a new base is acquired for the next act of aggression. Germany is seeking the subjugation of the Balkan peninsula as a step in the outflanking of Britain's position in the Mediterranean.

In their struggle, the Yugoslavs and the Greeks will have all the support in materials and men that it is possible, in the circumstances with which they are faced, for Britain and the British commonwealth to provide. They will have, too, material aid from the United States under the terms of the lease-lend act.

The announcement from London of the presence in Greece of an expeditionary force of British, Australian and New Zealand troops makes clear that British support is already at hand. The word that British and South African forces have taken Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, gives promise also of the early release of additional British forces for employment in other theatres of war in the near east.

In the whole situation, however, nothing could be more significant than that once again the great nazi military machine has not been able to impose the nazi will by threats, fear and intimidation. That is in itself symbolic of ultimate victory. The feeling of hope and encouragement it affords should not, however, blind us to the realities of the situation. The great nazi army is still intact, and still undefeated; it outnumbers the Greek and Yugoslav armies many times over. The aid which can be sent to these two countries is necessarily restricted. Moreover, the Balkan peninsula is not the only or even the major theatre of war. Indeed the opening of the Balkan campaign may well be the prelude to a great battle for the whole Mediterranean basin. The nazis had hoped that a bloodless conquest would secure their supplies from the Balkan region and bring them a step nearer to the consolidation of the whole of continental