

War-time Diary, George Orwell

War-time Diary

May 28 to December 29, 1940

28.5.40: This is the first day on which newspaper posters are definitely discontinued ... Half of the front page of the early Star¹ devoted to news of the Belgian surrender, the other half to news to the effect that the Belgians are holding out and the King is with them. This is presumably due to paper shortage. Nevertheless of the early Star's eight pages, six are devoted to racing.

For days past there has been no real news and little possibility of inferring what is really happening. The seeming possibilities were: i. That the French were really about to counterattack from the south. ii. That they hoped to do so but that the German bombers were making it impossible to concentrate an army. iii. That the forces in the north were confident of being able to hold on and it was thought better not to counterattack till the German attack had spent itself, or iv. that the position in the north was in reality hopeless and the forces there could only fight their way south, capitulate, be destroyed entirely or escape by sea, probably losing very heavily in the process. Now only the fourth alternative seems possible. The French communiqués speak of stabilising the line along the Somme and Aisne, as though the forces cut off in the north did not exist. Horrible though it is, I hope the B.E.F.² is cut to pieces sooner than capitulate.

People talk a little more of the war, but very little. As always hitherto, it is impossible to overhear any comments on it in pubs, etc. Last night, E.³ and I went to the pub to hear the 9 o'clock news. The barmaid was not going to have turned it on if we had not asked her, and to all appearances nobody listened.

29.5.40: One has to gather any major news nowadays by means of hints and allusions. The chief sensation last night was that the 9 o'clock news was preceded by a cheer-up talk (quite good) by Duff-Cooper,⁴ to sugar the pill, and that Churchill said in his speech that he would report again on the situation some time at the beginning of next week, and that the House must prepare itself for "dark and heavy tidings." This presumably means that they are going to attempt a withdrawal, but whether the "dark tidings" means enormous casualties, a surrender of part of the B.E.F., or what, nobody knows. Heard the news between acts at a more or less highbrow play at the Torch Theatre. The audience listened a good deal more attentively than would have been the case in a pub.

E. says the people in the Censorship Department where she works lump all "red" papers together and look on the Tribune⁵ as being in exactly the same class as the Daily Worker.⁶ Recently when the Daily Worker and Action⁷ were prohibited from export, one of her fellow-workers asked her, "Do you know this paper, the Daily Worker and Action?"

Current rumours: That Beaverbrook⁸ since his appointment has got 2,000 extra aeroplanes into the air by cutting through bottle-necks. That the air raids, possibly on London, are due to begin in 2 days' time. That Hitler's plan for invading England is to use thousands of speed-boats which can ride over the minefields. That there is a terrible shortage of rifles (this from several sources). That the morale of the ordinary

German infantry of the line is pitifully low. That at the time of the Norway business the War office were so ill-informed as not even to know that the Norwegian nights are short, and imagined that troops which had to disembark in broad daylight would have the cover of darkness.

30.5.40: The B.E.F. are falling back on Dunkirk. Impossible not only to guess how many may get away, but how many are there. Last night a talk on the radio by a colonel who had come back from Belgium, which unfortunately I did not hear, but which from E.'s account of it contained interpolations put in by the broadcaster himself to let the public know the army had been let down (a) by the French (not counterattacking), and (b) by the military authorities at home, by equipping them badly. No word anywhere in the press of recriminations against the French, and Duff-Cooper's broadcast of two nights ago especially warned against this ... Today's map looks as if the French contingent in Belgium are sacrificing themselves to let the B.E.F. get away.

Borkenau⁹ says England is now definitely in the first stage of revolution. Commenting on this, Connolly¹⁰ related that recently a ship was coming away from northern France with refugees on board and a few ordinary passengers. The refugees were mostly children who were in a terrible state after having been machine-gunned etc., etc. Among the passengers was Lady—, ¹¹ who tried to push herself to the head of the queue to get on the boat, and when ordered back said indignantly, "Do you know who I am?" The steward answered, "I don't care who you are, you bloody bitch. You can take your turn in the queue." Interesting if true.

Still no evidences of any interest in the war. Yet the by-elections, responses to appeals for men, etc., show what people's feelings are. It is seemingly quite impossible for them to grasp that they are in danger, although there is good reason to think that the invasion of England may be attempted within a few days, and all the papers are saying this. They will grasp nothing until the bombs are dropping. Connolly says they will then panic, but I don't think so.

31.5.40: Last night to see Denis Ogden's play *The Peaceful Inn*. The most fearful tripe. The interesting point was that though the play was cast in 1940, it contained no reference direct or indirect to the war.

Struck by the fewness of the men who even now have been called up. As a rule, looking round the street, it is impossible to see a uniform ... Barbed wire entanglements are being put up at many strategic points, eg. beside the Charles I statue in Trafalgar Square ... Have heard on so many sides of the shortage of rifles that I believe it must be true.

1.6.40: Last night to Waterloo and Victoria to see whether I could get any news of [Eric].¹² Quite impossible, of course. The men who have been repatriated have orders not to speak to civilians and are in any case removed from the railway stations as promptly as possible. Actually I saw very few British soldiers, ie. from the B.E.F., but great numbers of Belgian or French refugees, a few Belgian or French soldiers, and some sailors, including a few naval men. The refugees seemed mostly middling people of the shopkeeper-clerk type, and were in quite good trim, with a certain amount of personal belongings. One family had a parrot in a huge cage. One refugee woman was crying, or nearly so, but most seemed only bewildered by the crowds and the general strangeness. A considerable crowd was watching at Victoria and had to be held back by the police to let the refugees and others get to the street. The refugees were greeted

in silence but all sailors of any description enthusiastically cheered. A naval officer in a uniform that had been in the water and parts of a soldier's equipment hurried towards a bus, smiling and touching his tin hat to either side as the women shouted at him and clapped him on the shoulder.

Saw a company of Marines marching through the station to entrain for Chatham. Was amazed by their splendid physique and bearing, the tremendous stamp of boots and the superb carriage of the officers, all taking me back to 1914, when all soldiers seemed like giants to me.

This morning's papers claim variously four-fifths and three-quarters of the B.E.F. already removed. Photos, probably selected or faked, show the men in good trim with their equipment fairly intact.

2.6.40: Impossible to tell how many men of the B.E.F. have really been repatriated, but statements appearing in various papers suggest that it is about 150,000 and that the number that originally advanced into Belgium was about 300,000. No indication as to how many French troops were with them. There are hints in several papers that it may be intended to hang onto Dunkirk instead of evacuating it completely. This would seem quite impossible without tying down a great number of aeroplanes to that one spot. But if 150,000 have really been removed, it will presumably be possible to remove large numbers more. Italy's entry into the war is now predicted at any time after June 4th, presumably with some kind of peace offer to give it a pretext.....General expectation that some attempt will now be made to invade England, if only as a diversion while Germany and Italy endeavour to polish off France... The possibility of a landing in Ireland is evidently believed in by many people including de Valera.¹³ This idea has barely been mentioned until the last few days, although it was an obvious one from the start.

The usual Sunday crowds drifting to and fro, perambulators, cycling clubs, people exercising dogs, knots of young men loitering at street corners, with not an indication in any face or in anything that one can overhear that these people grasp that they are likely to be invaded within a few weeks, though today all the Sunday papers are telling them so. The response to renewed appeals for evacuation of children from London has been very poor. Evidently the reasoning is, "The air raids didn't happen last time, so they won't happen this time." Yet these people will behave bravely enough when the time comes, if only they are told what to do.

Rough analysis of advertisements in today's issue of the People:14—Paper consists of 12 pages—84 columns. Of this, just about $26\frac{1}{2}$ columns (over $\frac{1}{4}$) is advertisements. These are divided up as follows:

Food and drink: $5\frac{3}{4}$ columns.

Patent medicines: 9 and a third.

Tobacco: 1.

Gambling 2 and a third.

Clothes: $1\frac{1}{2}$.

Miscellaneous: $6\frac{3}{4}$.

Of 9 food and drink adverts., 6 are for unnecessary luxuries. Of 29 adverts. for medicines, 19 are for things which are either fraudulent (baldness cured etc.), more or less deleterious (Kruschen Salts, Bile Beans etc.), or of the blackmail type ("Your child's stomach needs magnesia"). Benefit of doubt has been allowed in the case of a few medicines. Of 14 miscellaneous adverts., 4 are for soap, 1 for cosmetics, 1 for a holiday resort and 2 are government advertisements, including a

large one for national savings. Only 3 adverts. in all classes are cashing in on the war.

3.6.40: From a letter from Lady Oxford¹⁵ to the Daily Telegraph, on the subject of war economies:

"Since most London houses are deserted there is little entertaining ... in any case, most people have to part with their cooks and live in hotels."

Apparently nothing will ever teach these people that the other 99% of the population exist.

6.6.40: Both Borkenau and I considered that Hitler was likely to make his next attack on France, not England, and as it turns out we were right. Borkenau considers that the Dunkirk business has proved once for all that aeroplanes cannot defeat warships if the latter have planes of their own. The figures given out were 6 destroyers and about 25 boats of other kinds lost in the evacuation of nearly 350,000 men. The number of men evacuated is presumably truthful, and even if one doubled the number of ships lost¹⁶ it would not be a great loss for such a large undertaking, considering that the circumstances were about as favourable to the aeroplanes as they could well be.

Borkenau thinks Hitler's plan is to knock out France and demand the French fleet as part of the peace terms. After that the invasion of England with sea-borne troops might be feasible.

Huge advert. on the side of a bus: "FIRST AID IN WARTIME. FOR HEALTH, STRENGTH AND FORTITUDE. WRIGLEY'S CHEWING GUM."

7.6.40: Although newspaper posters are now suppressed,¹⁷ one fairly frequently sees the paper-sellers displaying a poster. It appears that old ones are resuscitated and used, and ones with captions like "R.A.F. raids on Germany" or "Enormous German losses" can be used at almost all times.

8.6.40: In the middle of a fearful battle in which, I suppose, thousands of men are being killed every day, one has the impression that there is no news. The evening papers are the same as the morning ones, the morning ones are the same as those of the night before, and the radio repeats what is in the papers. As to truthfulness of news, however, there is probably more suppression than downright lying. Borkenau considers that the effect of the radio has been to make war comparatively truthful, and that the only large-scale lying hitherto has been the German claims of British ships sunk. These have certainly been fantastic. Recently one of the evening papers which had made a note of the German announcements pointed out that in about 10 days the Germans claimed to have sunk 25 capital ships, ie. 10 more than we ever possessed.

Stephen Spender said to me recently, "Don't you feel that any time during the past ten years you have been able to foretell events better than, say, the Cabinet?" I had to agree to this. Partly it is a question of not being blinded by class interests etc., eg. anyone not financially interested could see at a glance the strategic danger to England of letting Germany and Italy dominate Spain, whereas many rightwingers, even professional soldiers, simply could not grasp this most obvious fact. But where I feel that people like us understand the situation better than so-called experts is not in any power to foretell specific events, but in the power to grasp what kind of world we are living in. At any rate I

have known since about 1931 (Spender says he has known since 1929) that the future must be catastrophic. I could not say exactly what wars and revolutions would happen, but they never surprised me when they came. Since 1934 I have known war between England and Germany was coming, and since 1936 I have known it with complete certainty. I could feel it in my belly, and the chatter of the pacifists on the one hand, and the Popular Front people who pretended to fear that Britain was preparing for war against Russia on the other, never deceived me. Similarly such horrors as the Russian purges never surprised me, because I had always felt that—not exactly that, but something like that—was implicit in Bolshevik rule. I could feel it in their literature.

....Who would have believed seven years ago that Winston Churchill had any kind of political future before him? A year ago Cripps¹⁸ was the naughty boy of the Labour Party, who expelled him and refused even to hear his defence. On the other hand, from the Conservative point of view he was a dangerous Red. Now he is ambassador in Moscow, the Beaverbrook press having led the cry for his appointment. Impossible to say yet whether he is the right man. If the Russians are disposed to come round to our side, he probably is, but if they are still hostile, it would have been better to send a man who does not admire the Russian régime.

10.6.40: Have just heard, though it is not in the papers, that Italy has declared war.... The allied troops are withdrawing from Norway, the reason given being that they can be used elsewhere and Narvik after its capture was rendered useless to the Germans. But in fact Narvik will not be necessary to them till the winter, it wouldn't have been much use anyway when Norway had ceased to be neutral, and I shouldn't have thought the allies had enough troops in Norway to make much difference. The real reason is probably so as not to have to waste warships.

This afternoon I remembered very vividly that incident with the taxi-driver in Paris in 1936, and was going to have written something about it in this diary. But now I feel so saddened that I can't write it. Everything is disintegrating. It makes me writhe to be writing book-reviews etc. at such a time, and even angers me that such time-wasting should still be permitted. The interview at the War Office on Saturday may come to something, if I am clever at faking my way past the doctor. If once in the army, I know by the analogy of the Spanish war that I shall cease to care about public events. At present I feel as I felt in 1936 when the Fascists were closing in on Madrid, only far worse. But I will write about the taxi driver some time.¹⁹

12.6.40: E. and I last night walked through Soho to see whether the damage to Italian shops etc. was as reported. It seemed to have been exaggerated in the newspapers, but we did see, I think, 3 shops which had had their windows smashed. The majority had hurriedly labelled themselves "British." Gennari's, the Italian grocer's, was plastered all over with printed placards saying "This establishment is entirely British." The Spaghetti House, a shop specialising in Italian foodstuffs, had renamed itself "British Food Shop." Another shop proclaimed itself Swiss, and even a French restaurant had labelled itself British. The interesting thing is that all these placards must evidently have been printed beforehand and kept in readiness.

....Disgusting though these attacks on harmless Italian shopkeepers are, they are an interesting phenomenon, because English people, ie. people of a kind who would be likely to loot shops, don't as a rule take a spontaneous interest in foreign politics. I don't think there was

anything of this kind during the Abyssinian war, and the Spanish war simply did not touch the mass of the people. Nor was there any popular move against the Germans resident in England until the last month or two. The low-down cold-blooded meanness of Mussolini's declaration of war at that moment must have made an impression even on people who as rule barely read the newspapers.

13.6.40: Yesterday to a group conference of the L.D.V.,²⁰ held in the Committee Room at Lord's.... Last time I was at Lord's must have been at the Eton-Harrow match in 1921. At that time I should have felt that to go into the Pavilion, not being a member of the M.C.C.,²¹ was on a par with pissing on the altar, and years later would have had some vague idea that it was a legal offence for which you could be prosecuted.

I notice that one of the posters recruiting for the Pioneers, of a foot treading on a swastika with the legend "Step on it," is cribbed from a Government poster of the Spanish war, ie. cribbed as to the idea. Of course it is vulgarised and made comic, but its appearance at any rate shows that the Government are beginning to be willing to learn. The Communist candidate in the Bow²² by-election got about 500 votes. This is a new depth-record, though the Blackshirts have often got less (in one case about 150). The more remarkable because Bow was Lansbury's seat²³ and might be expected to contain a lot of pacifists. The whole poll was very low, however.

14.6.40: The Germans are definitely in Paris, one day ahead of schedule. It can be taken as a certainty that Hitler will go to Versailles. Why don't they mine it and blow it up while he is there? Spanish troops have occupied Tangier, obviously with a view to letting the Italians use it as a base. To conquer Spanish Morocco from French Morocco would probably be easy at this date, and to do so, ditto the other Spanish colonies, and set up Negrin²⁴ or someone of his kind as an alternative government, would be a severe blow at Franco. But even the present British government would never think of doing such a thing. One has almost lost the power of imagining that the Allied governments can ever take the initiative.

Always, as I walk through the Underground stations, sickened by the advertisements, the silly staring faces and strident colours, the general frantic struggle to induce people to waste labour and material by consuming useless luxuries or harmful drugs. How much rubbish this war will sweep away, if only we can hang on throughout the summer. War is simply a reversal of civilised life, its motto is "Evil be thou my good,"²⁵ and so much of the good of modern life is actually evil that it is questionable whether on balance war does harm.

15.6.40: It has just occurred to me to wonder whether the fall of Paris means the end of the Albatross Library, as I suppose it does. ²⁶ If so, I am £30 to the bad. It seems incredible that people still attach any importance to long-term contracts, stocks and shares, insurance policies etc. in such times as these. The sensible thing to do now would be to borrow money right and left and buy solid goods. A short while back E. made enquiries about the hirepurchase terms for sewing machines and found they had agreements stretching over two and a half years.

P.W.²⁷ related that Unity Mitford,²⁸ besides having tried to shoot herself while in Germany, is going to have a baby. Whereupon a little man

with a creased face, whose name I forget, exclaimed, "The Fuehrer wouldn't do such a thing!"

16.6.40: This morning's papers make it reasonably clear that at any rate until after the presidential election, the U.S.A. will not do anything, ie. will not declare war, which in fact is what matters. For if the U.S.A. is not actually in the war there will never be sufficient control of either business or labour to speed up production of armaments. In the last war this was the case even when the U.S.A. was a belligerent.

It is impossible even yet to decide what to do in the case of German conquest of England. The one thing I will not do is to clear out, at any rate not further than Ireland, supposing that to be feasible. If the fleet is intact and it appears that the war is to be continued from America and the Dominions, then one must remain alive if possible, if necessary in the concentration camp. If the U.S.A. is going to submit to conquest as well, there is nothing for it but to die fighting, but one must above all die fighting and have the satisfaction of killing somebody else first.

Talking yesterday to M.,²⁹ one of the Jewish members of my L.D.V. section, I said that if and when the present crisis passed there would be a revolt in the Conservative party against Churchill and an attempt to force wages down again, etc. He said that in that case there would be revolution, "or at least he hoped so." M. is a manufacturer and I imagine fairly well off.

17.6.40: The French have surrendered. This could be foreseen from last night's broadcast and in fact should have been foreseeable when they failed to defend Paris, the one place where it might have been possible to stop the German tanks. Strategically all turns on the French fleet, of which there is no news yet....

Considerable excitement today over the French surrender, and people everywhere to be heard discussing it. Usual line, "Thank God we've got a navy." A Scottish private, with medals of the last war, partly drunk, making a patriotic speech in a carriage in the Underground, which the other passengers seemed rather to like. Such a rush on evening papers that I had to make four attempts before getting one.

Nowadays, when I write a review, I sit down at the typewriter and type it straight out. Till recently, indeed till six months ago, I never did this and would have said that I could not do it. Virtually all that I wrote was written at least twice, and my books as a whole three times—individual passages as many as five or ten times. It is not really that I have gained in facility, merely that I have ceased to care, so long as the work will pass inspection and bring in a little money. It is a deterioration directly due to the war.

Considerable throng at Canada House, where I went to make enquiries, as G.30 contemplates sending her child to Canada. Apart from mothers, they are not allowing anyone between 16 and 60 to leave, evidently fearing a panic rush.

20.6.40: Went to the office of the [New Statesman]³¹ to see what line they are taking about home defence. C.,³² who is now in reality the big noise there, was rather against the "arm the people" line and said that its dangers outweighed its possible advantages. If a German invading

force finds civilians armed it may commit such barbarities as will cow the people altogether and make everyone anxious to surrender. He said it was dangerous to count on ordinary people being courageous and instanced the case of some riot in Glasgow when a tank was driven round the town and everyone fled in the most cowardly way. The circumstances were different, however, because the people in that case were unarmed and, as always in internal strife, conscious of fighting with ropes round their necks.... C. said that he thought Churchill, though a good man up to a point, was incapable of doing the necessary thing and turning this into a revolutionary war, and for that reason shielded Chamberlain and Co. and hesitated to bring the whole nation into the struggle.

I don't of course think Churchill sees it in quite the same colours as we do, but I don't think he would jib at any step (eg. equalisation of incomes, independence for India) which he thought necessary for winning the war. Of course it's possible that today's secret session may achieve enough to get Chamberlain and Co. out for good. I asked C. what hope he thought there was of this, and he said none at all. But I remember that the day the British began to evacuate Namsos³³ I asked Bevan and Strauss,³⁴ who had just come from the House, what hope there was of this business unseating Chamberlain, and they also said none at all. Yet a week or so later the new government was formed.³⁵

The belief in direct treachery in the higher command is now widespread, enough so to be dangerous.... Personally I believe that such conscious treachery as exists is only in the pro-Fascist element of the aristocracy and perhaps in the Army command. Of course the unconscious sabotage and stupidity which have got us into this situation, eg. the idiotic handling of Italy and Spain, is a different matter. R. H.³⁶ says that private soldiers back from Dunkirk whom he has spoken to all complain of the conduct of their officers, saying that the latter cleared off in cars and left them in the soup, etc., etc. This sort of thing is always said after a defeat and may or may not be true. One could verify it by studying the lists of casualties, if and when they are published in full. But it is not altogether bad that that sort of thing should be said, provided it doesn't lead to sudden panic, because of the absolute need for getting the whole thing onto a new class basis. In the new armies middle-class people are bound to predominate as officers, they did so even, for instance, in the Spanish militias, but it is a question of unblinking. Ditto with the L.D.V. Under the stress of emergency we shall unblimp if we have time, but time is all. 37

A thought that occurred to me yesterday: how is it that England, with one of the smallest armies in the world, has so many retired colonels? I notice that all the "left" intellectuals I meet believe that Hitler if he gets here will take the trouble to shoot people like ourselves and will have very extensive lists of undesirables. C.³⁸ says there is a move on foot to get our police records (no doubt we all have them) at Scotland Yard destroyed. Some hope! The police are the very people who would go over to Hitler once they were certain he had won. Well, if only we can hold out for a few months, in a year's time we shall see red militia billeted in the Ritz,³⁹ and it would not particularly surprise me to see Churchill or Lloyd George at the head of them.

Thinking always of my island in the Hebrides, which I suppose I shall never possess nor even see. Compton Mackenzie says even now most of the islands are uninhabited (there are 500 of them, only 10 per cent inhabited at normal times), and most have water and a little cultivable land, and goats will live on them. According to R.H., a woman who rented an island in the Hebrides in order to avoid air raids was the first air

raid casualty of the war, the R.A.F. dropping a bomb there by mistake. Good if true.

The first air raid of any consequence on Great Britain the night before last. Fourteen killed, seven German aeroplanes claimed shot down. The papers have photos of three wrecked German planes, so possibly the claim is true.

21.6.40: No real news. I see from yesterday's paper that Chiappe⁴⁰ has been elected president of the Paris Municipal Council, presumably under German pressure. So much for the claim that Hitler is the friend of the working classes, enemy of plutocracy, etc.

Yesterday the first drill of our platoon of the L.D.V. They were really admirable, only 3 or 4 in the whole lot (about 60 men) who were not old soldiers. Some officers who were there and had, I think, come to scoff were quite impressed.

22.6.40: No real news yet of the German terms to France. They are said to be "so complicated" as to need long discussion. I suppose one may assume that what is really happening is that the Germans on the one side and Pétain⁴¹ and Co. on the other are trying to hammer out a formula that will induce the French commanders in the colonies and the navy to surrender. Hitler has in reality no power over these except through the French government.... I think we have all been rather hasty in assuming that Hitler will now invade England, indeed it has been so generally expected that one might almost infer from this that he wouldn't do it..... If I were him I should march across Spain, seize Gibraltar and then clean up North Africa and Egypt. If the British have a fluid force of say $\frac{1}{4}$ million men, the proper course would be to transfer it to French Morocco, then suddenly seize Spanish Morocco and hoist the Republican flag. The other Spanish colonies could be mopped up without much trouble. Alas, no hope of any such thing happening.

The Communists are apparently swinging back to an anti-Nazis position. This morning picked up a leaflet denouncing the "betrayal" of France by Pétain and Co., although till a week or two ago these people were almost openly pro-German.

24.6.40: The German armistice terms are much as expected.... What is interesting about the whole thing is the extent to which the traditional pattern of loyalties and honour is breaking down. Pétain, ironically enough, is the originator (at Verdun) of the phrase "ils ne passeront pas," so long an anti-Fascist slogan. Twenty years ago any Frenchman who would have signed such an armistice would have had to be either an extreme leftwinger or an extreme pacifist, and even then there would have been misgivings. Now the people who are virtually changing sides in the middle of the war are the professional patriots. To Pétain, Laval,⁴² Flandin⁴³ and Co. the whole war must have seemed like a lunatic internecine struggle at the moment when your real enemy is waiting to slough you..... It is therefore practically certain that high up influences in England are preparing for a similar sell-out, and while eg.— is at—there is no certainty that they won't succeed even without the invasion of England. The one good thing about the whole business is that the bottom is being knocked out of Hitler's pretence of being the poor man's friend. The people actually willing to do a deal with him are bankers, generals, bishops, kings, big industrialists, etc., etc..... Hitler is the leader of a tremendous counterattack of the

capitalist class, which is forming itself into a vast corporation, losing its privileges to some extent in doing so, but still retaining its power over the working class. When it comes to resisting such an attack as this, anyone who is of the capitalist class must be treacherous or halftreacherous, and will swallow the most fearful indignities rather than put up a real fight.... Whichever way one looks, whether it is at the wider strategic aspects or the most petty details of local defence, one sees that any real struggle means revolution. Churchill evidently can't see or won't accept this, so he will have to go. But whether he goes in time to save England from conquest depends on how quickly the people at large can grasp the essentials. What I fear is that they will never move until it is too late.

Strategically, all turns upon hanging on until the winter.... By that time, with huge armies of occupation everywhere, food almost certainly running short and the difficulty of forcing the conquered populations to work, Hitler must be in an awkward position. It will be interesting to see whether he rehabilitates the suppressed French Communist party and tries to use it against the working class in northern France as he has used Pétain against the Blimp class.

If the invasion happens and fails, all is well, and we shall have a definitely leftwing government and a conscious movement against the governing class. I think, though, people are in error in imagining that Russia would be more friendly towards us if we had a revolutionary government. After Spain, I cannot help feeling that Russia, i.e. Stalin, must be hostile to any country that is genuinely undergoing revolution. They would be moving in opposite directions. A revolution starts off with wide diffusion of the ideas of liberty, equality, etc. Then comes the growth of an oligarchy which is as much interested in holding onto its privileges as any other governing class. Such an oligarchy must necessarily be hostile to revolutions elsewhere, which inevitably re-awaken the ideas of liberty and equality. This morning's News-Chronicle announces that saluting of superior ranks has been re-instituted in the Red Army.

A revolutionary army would start by abolishing saluting, and this tiny point is symptomatic of the whole situation. Not that saluting and such things are not probably necessary. Orders to the L.D.V. that all revolvers are to be handed over to the police, as they are needed for the army. Clinging to useless weapons like revolvers, when the Germans have submachine guns, is typical of the British army, but I believe the real reason for the order is to prevent weapons getting into "the wrong" hands.

Both E. and G.44 insistent that I should go to Canada if the worst comes to the worst, in order to stay alive and keep up propaganda. I will go if I have some function, e.g., if the government were transferred to Canada and I had some kind of job, but not as a refugee, nor as an expatriate journalist squealing from a safe distance. There are too many of these exiled "anti-fascists" already. Better to die if necessary, and maybe even as propaganda one's death might achieve more than going abroad and living more or less unwanted on other people's charity. Not that I want to die; I have so much to live for, in spite of poor health and having no children.

Another government leaflet this morning, on treatment of air-raid casualties. The leaflets are getting much better in tone and language, and the broadcasts are also better, especially Duff-Cooper's, which in fact are ideal for anyone down to the £j-a-week level. But there is still

nothing in really demotic speech, nothing that will move the poorer working class or even be quite certainly intelligible. Most educated people simply don't realise how little impression abstract words make on the average man. When Acland was sending round his asinine "Manifesto of Plain Men" (written by himself and signed on the dotted line by "plain men" whom he selected) he told me he had the first draft vetted by the Mass Observers, who tried it on working men, and found that the most fantastic misunderstandings arose.....The first sign that things are really happening in England will be the disappearance of that horrible plummy voice from the radio. Watching in public bars, I have noticed that working men only pay attention to the broadcasts when some bit of demotic speech creeps in. E. however claims, with some truth I think, that uneducated people are often moved by a speech in solemn language which they don't actually understand but feel to be impressive. E.g. Mrs. A. 45 is impressed by Churchill's speeches, though not understanding them word for word.

25.6.40: Last night an air raid warning about 1 a.m. It was a false alarm as regards London, but evidently there was a real raid somewhere. We got up and dressed, but did not go to the shelter. This is what everyone did, i.e. got up and then simply stood about talking, which seems very foolish. But it seems natural to get up when one hears the siren, and then in the absence of gunfire or other excitement one is ashamed to go to the shelter.

I saw in one of yesterday's papers that gas masks are being issued in America, though people have to pay for them. Gas masks are probably useless to the civilian population in England and almost certainly so in America. The issue of them is simply a symbol of national solidarity, the first step towards wearing a uniform.....As soon as war started the carrying or not carrying of a gas mask assumed social and political implications. In the first few days people like myself who refused to carry one were stared at and it was generally assumed that the non-carriers were "left." Then the habit wore off, and the assumption was that a person who carried a gas mask was of the ultra-cautious type, the suburban rate-payer type. With the bad news the habit has revived and I should think 20 per cent now carry them. But you are still a little stared at if you carry one without being in uniform. Until the big raids have happened and it is grasped that the Germans don't, in fact, use gas, the extent to which masks are carried will probably be a pretty good index of the impression the war news is making on the public.

Went this afternoon to the recruiting office to put my name down for the Home Service Battalions. Have to go again on Friday to be medically examined, but as it is for men from 30 to 50 I suppose the standards are low. The man who took my name, etc., was the usual imbecile, an old soldier with medals of the last war, who could barely write. In writing capital letters he more than once actually wrote them upside down.

27.6.40: It appears that the night before last, during the air-raid alarm, many people all over London were woken by the All Clear signal, took that for the warning and went to the shelters and stayed there till morning, waiting for the All Clear. This after ten months of war and God knows how many explanations of the air-raid precautions.

The fact that the government hasn't this time had to do a recruiting campaign has had a deadening effect on propaganda.... A striking thing is the absence of any propaganda posters of a general kind, dealing with the

struggle against Fascism, etc. If only someone would show the M.O.I.⁴⁶ the posters used in the Spanish war, even the Franco ones for that matter. But how can these people possibly rouse the nation against Fascism when they themselves are subjectively pro-Fascist and were buttering up Mussolini till almost the moment when Italy entered the war? Butler,⁴⁷ answering questions about the Spanish occupation of Tangier, says H.M. Government has "accepted the word" of the Spanish government that the Spaniards are only doing so in order to preserve Tangier's neutrality—this after Falangist demonstrations in Madrid to celebrate the "conquest" of Tangier....This morning's papers publish a "denial" that Hoare⁴⁸ in Madrid is asking questions about an armistice. In other words he is doing so. Only question—can we get rid of these people in the next few weeks, before it is too late?

The unconscious treacherousness of the British ruling class in what is in effect a class war is too obvious to be worth mentioning. The difficult question is how much deliberate treachery exists.....L.M.,⁴⁹ who knows or at least has met all these people, says that with individual exceptions like Churchill the entire British aristocracy is utterly corrupt and lacking in the most ordinary patriotism, caring in fact for nothing except preserving their own standards of life. He says that they are also intensely class-conscious and recognise clearly the community of their interests with those of rich people elsewhere. The idea that Mussolini might fall has always been a nightmare to them, he says. Up to date L.M.'s predictions about the war, made the day it began, have been very correct. He said nothing would happen all the winter, Italy would be treated with great respect and then suddenly come in against us, and the German aim would be to force on England a puppet government through which Hitler could rule Britain without the mass of the public grasping what was happening.....The only point where L.M. proved wrong is that like myself he assumed Russia would continue to collaborate with Germany, which now looks as if it may not happen. But then the Russians probably did not expect France to collapse so suddenly. If they can bring it off, Pétain and Co. are working towards the same kind of doublecross against Russia as Russia previously worked against England.

It was interesting that at the time of the Russo-German pact nearly everyone assumed that the pact was all to Russia's advantage and that Stalin had in some way "stopped" Hitler, though one had only to look at the map in order to see that this was not so.....In western Europe Communism and left extremism generally are now almost entirely a form of masturbation. People who are in fact without power over events console themselves by pretending that they are in some way controlling events. From the Communist point of view, nothing matters so long as they can persuade themselves that Russia is on top. It now seems doubtful whether the Russians gained much more from the pact than a breathing-space, though they did this much better than we did at Munich. Perhaps England and the U.S.S.R. will be forced into alliance after all, an interesting instance of real interests overriding the most hearty ideological hatred. The New Leader⁵⁰ is now talking about the "betrayal" by Pétain and Co. and the "workers' struggle" against Hitler. Presumably they would be in favour of a "workers' resistance" if Hitler invaded England. And what will the workers fight with? With weapons. Yet the I.L.P. clamour simultaneously for sabotage in the arms factories. These people live almost entirely in a masturbation fantasy, conditioned by the fact that nothing they say or do will ever influence events, not even the turning-out of a single shell.

28.6.40: Horribly depressed by the way things are turning out. Went this morning for my medical board and was turned down, my grade being C., in which they aren't at present taking any men in any corps.....What is appalling is the unimaginativeness of a system which can find no use for a man who is below the average level of fitness but at least is not an invalid. An army needs an immense amount of clerical work, most of which is done by people who are perfectly healthy and only half-literate.... One could forgive the government for failing to employ the intelligentsia, who on the whole are politically unreliable, if they were making any attempt to mobilise the man-power of the nation and change people over from the luxury trades to productive work. This simply isn't happening, as one can see by looking down any street.

The Russians entered Bessarabia to-day. Practically no interest aroused, and the few remarks I could overhear were mildly approving or at least not hostile. Cf. the intense popular anger over the invasion of Finland. I don't think the difference is due to a perception that Finland and Rumania are different propositions. It is probably because of our own desperate straits and the notion that this move may embarrass Hitler—as I believe it must, though evidently sanctioned by him.

29.6.40: The British government has recognised de Gaulle,⁵¹ but apparently in some equivocal manner, i.e. it has not stated that it will not recognise the Pétain government. One very hopeful thing is that the press is on our side and retains its independence.....But contained in this is the difficulty that the "freedom" of the press really means that it depends on vested interests and largely (through its advertisements) on the luxury trades. Newspapers which would resist direct treachery can't take a strong line about cutting down luxuries when they live by advertising chocolates and silk stockings.

30.6.40: This afternoon a parade in Regent's Park of the L.D.V. of the whole "zone," i.e. 12 platoons of theoretically about 60 men each (actually a little under strength at present). Predominantly old soldiers and, allowing for the dreadful appearance that men drilling in mufti always present, not a bad lot. Perhaps 25 per cent are working class. If that percentage exists in the Regent's Park area, it must be much higher in some others. What I do not yet know is whether there has been any tendency to avoid raising L.D.V. contingents in very poor districts where the whole direction would have to be in working-class hands. At present the whole organisation is in an anomalous and confused state which has many different possibilities. Already people are spontaneously forming local defence squads and handgrenades are probably being manufactured by amateurs. The higher-ups are no doubt thoroughly frightened by these tendencies.... The general inspecting the parade was the usual senile imbecile, actually decrepit, and made one of the most uninspiring speeches I ever heard. The men, however, very ready to be inspired. Loud cheering at the news that rifles have arrived at last.

Yesterday the news of Balbo's⁵² death was on the posters as C.⁵³ and the M.'s⁵⁴ and I walked down the street. C. and I thoroughly pleased, C. relating how Balbo and his friends had taken the chief of the Senussi up in an aeroplane and thrown him out, and even the M.'s (all but pure pacifists) were not ill-pleased, I think. E. also delighted. Later in the evening (I spent the night at Crooms Hill⁵⁵) we found a mouse which had slipped down into the sink and could not get up the sides. We went to great pains to make a sort of staircase of boxes of soap flakes, etc., by

which it could climb out, but by this time it was so terrified that it fled under the lead strip at the edge of the sink and would not move, even when we left it alone for half an hour or so. In the end E. gently took it out with her fingers and let it go. This sort of thing does not matter.....but when I remember how the Thetis56 disaster upset me, actually to the point of interfering with my appetite, I do think it a dreadful effect of war that one is actually pleased to hear of an enemy submarine going to the bottom.

1.7.40: Newspapers now reduced to 6 pages, i.e., 3 sheets. Print reduced in size. Rough analysis of today's News-Chronicle: 6 pages = 48 columns. Of these (excluding small adverts. besides headlines on front page) 15 columns or nearly one third are adverts. About 1½ columns of this are taken up in notices of situations vacant, etc., but the greater part of the ads are for more or less useless consumption goods. The financial columns also overlap with the advertisements, some of the reports of directors' meetings, etc., probably being paid for by the companies themselves.

To-day's Express consists of 6 pages = 42 columns, of which 12 are taken up in advertisements.

Rumours in all to-day's papers that Balbo was actually bumped off by his own side, as in the case of General von Fritsch.⁵⁷ Nowadays when any eminent person is killed in battle this suggestion inevitably arises. Cases in the Spanish war were Durutti and General Mola.⁵⁸ The rumour about Balbo is based on a statement by the R.A.F. that they know nothing about the air-fight in which Balbo is alleged to have been killed. If this is a lie, as it well may be, it is one of the first really good strokes the British propaganda has brought off.

3.7.40: Everywhere a feeling of something near despair among thinking people because of the failure of the government to act and the continuance of dead minds and pro-Fascists in positions of command. Growing recognition that the only thing that would certainly right the situation is an unsuccessful invasion; and coupled with this a growing fear that Hitler won't after all attempt the invasion but will go for Africa and the Near East.

5.7.40: The almost complete lack of British casualties in the action against the French warships at Oran⁵⁹ makes it pretty clear that the French seamen must have refused to serve the guns, or at any rate did so without much enthusiasm.... In spite of the to-do in the papers about "French fleet out of action," etc., etc., it appears from the list of ships actually given that about half the French navy is not accounted for, and no doubt more than half the submarines. But how many have actually fallen into German or Italian hands, and how many are still on the oceans, there is nothing in the papers to show.....The frightful outburst of fury by the German radio (if rightly reported, actually calling on the English people to hang Churchill in Trafalgar Square) shows how right it was to make this move.

10.7.40: They have disabled the French battleship Richelieu, which was in Dakar harbour.⁶⁰ But no move to seize any of the French West African ports, which no doubt are not strongly held..... According to Vernon Bartlett,⁶¹ the Germans are going to make a peace offer along the lines I foresaw earlier, i.e. England to keep out of Europe but retain the

Empire, and the Churchill government to go out and be replaced by one acceptable to Hitler. The presumption is that a faction anxious to agree to this exists in England, and no doubt a shadow cabinet has been formed. It seems almost incredible that anyone should imagine that the mass of the people would tolerate such an arrangement, unless they had been fought to a standstill first.....The Duke of Windsor⁶² has been shipped off as Governor of the Bahamas, virtually a sentence of exile.....The book Gollancz has brought out, *Guilty Men*, the usual "indictment" of the Munich crowd, is selling like hot cakes. According to *Time*, the American Communists are working hand in glove with the local Nazis to prevent American arms getting to England. One can't be sure how much local freedom of action the various Communists have. Till very recently it appeared that they had none. Of late however they have sometimes pursued contradictory policies in different countries. It is possible that they are allowed to abandon the "line" when strict clinging to it would mean extinction.

16.7.40: No real news for some days, except the British government's semi-surrender to Japan, i.e. the agreement to stop sending war supplies along the Burma road for a stated period. This however is not so definite that it could not be revoked by a subsequent government. F. 63 thinks it is the British government's last effort (i.e. the last effort of those with investments in Hong Kong, etc.) to appease Japan, after which they will be driven into definitely supporting China. It may be so. But what a way to do things—never to perform a decent action until you are kicked into it and the rest of the world has ceased to believe that your motives can possibly be honest.

W.64 says that the London "left" intelligentsia are now completely defeatist, look on the situation as hopeless and all but wish for surrender. How easy it ought to have been to foresee, under their Popular Front bawlings, that they would collapse when the real show began.

22.7.40: No real news for days past. The principal event of the moment is the pan-American conference, now just beginning, and the Russian absorption of the Baltic states, which must be directed against Germany. Cripps's wife and daughters are going to Moscow, so evidently he expects a long stay there. Spain is said to be importing oil in large quantities, obviously for German use, and we are not stopping it. Much hooey in the *News-Chronicle* this morning about Franco desiring to keep out of war, trying to counter German influence, etc., etc.....It will be just as I said. Franco will play up his pretence of being pro-British, this will be used as a reason for handling Spain gently and allowing imports in any quantity, and ultimately Franco will come in on the German side.

25.7.40: No news, really.....Various people who have sent their children to Canada are already regretting it.⁶⁵.....Casualties, i.e. fatal ones, from air-raids for last month were given out as about 340. If true, this is substantially less than the number of road deaths in the same period.... The L.D.V, now said to be 1,300,000 strong, is stopping recruiting and is to be renamed the Home Guard. There are rumours also that those acting as N.C.O's are to be replaced by men from the regular army. This seems to indicate either that the authorities are beginning to take the L.D.V. seriously as a fighting force, or that they are afraid of it.

There are now rumours that Lloyd George⁶⁶ is the potential Pétain of England.....The Italian press makes the same claim and says that L.G.'s silence proves it true. It is of course fairly easy to imagine L.G. playing this part out of sheer spite and jealousy because he has not been given a job, but much less easy to imagine him collaborating with the Tory clique who would in fact be in favour of such a course.

Constantly, as I walk down the street, I find myself looking up at the windows to see which of them would make good machine-gun nests. D.⁶⁷ says it is the same with him.⁶⁸

28.7.40: This evening I saw a heron flying over Baker Street. But this is not so improbable as the thing I saw a week or two ago, i.e., a kestrel killing a sparrow in the middle of Lord's cricket ground. I suppose it is possible that the war, i.e. the diminution of traffic, tends to increase bird life in inner London.

The little man whose name I always forget used to know Joyce,⁶⁹ of the split-off Fascist party, commonly credited with being Lord Haw-Haw. He says that Joyce hated Mosley⁷⁰ passionately and talked about him in the most unprintable language. Mosley being Hitler's chief supporter in England, it is interesting that he should employ Joyce and not one of Mosley's men. This bears out what Borkenau said, that Hitler does not want a too-strong Fascist party to exist in England. Evidently the motive is always to split, and even to split the splitters. The German press is attacking the Pétain government, with what motive is not absolutely certain, and so also are elements of the French press under German control. Doriot⁷¹ is of course to the fore here. It was a shock to me when the Sunday Times also stated that the Germans in Paris are making use of Bergery.⁷² But I accept this with caution, knowing how these small dissident Left parties are habitually lied about by the Right and the official Left alike.

8.8.40: The Italian attack on Egypt, or rather on British Somaliland, has begun. No real news yet, but the papers hint that Somaliland can't be held with the troops we have there. The important point is Perim, loss of which would practically close the Red Sea.

H. G. Wells knows Churchill well and says that he is a good man, not mercenary and not even a careerist. He has always lived "like a Russian commissar," "requisitions" his motor cars, etc., but cares nothing about money. But [H. G. Wells] says Churchill has a certain power of shutting his eyes to facts and has the weakness of never wanting to let down a personal friend, which accounts for the non-sacking of various people. [Wells] has already made a considerable row about the persecution of refugees. He considers that the centre of all the sabotage is the War Office. He believes that the jailing of anti-Fascist refugees is a perfectly conscious piece of sabotage based on the knowledge that some of these people are in touch with underground movements in Europe and might at some moment be able to bring about a "Bolshevik" revolution, which from the point of view of the governing class is much worse than defeat. He says that Lord Swinton⁷³ is the man most to blame. I asked him did he think it was a conscious action on Lord [Swinton]'s part, this being always the hardest thing to decide. He said he believed Lord [Swinton] knows perfectly well what he is doing.

To-night to a lecture with lantern slides by an officer who had been in the Dunkirk campaign. Very bad lecture. He said the Belgians fought well

and it was not true that they surrendered without warning (actually they gave three days' warning), but spoke badly of the French. He had one photograph of a regiment of Zouaves in full flight after looting houses, one man being dead drunk on the pavement.

9.8.40: The money situation is becoming completely unbearable.....Wrote a long letter to the Income Tax people pointing out that the war had practically put an end to my livelihood while at the same time the government refused to give me any kind of job. The fact which is really relevant to a writer's position, the impossibility of writing books with this nightmare going on, would have no weight officially.... Towards the government I feel no scruples and would dodge paying the tax if I could. Yet I would give my life for England readily enough, if I thought it necessary. No one is patriotic about taxes.

No real news for days past. Only air battles, in which, if the reports are true, the British always score heavily. I wish I could talk to some R.A.F. officer and get some kind of idea whether these reports are truthful.⁷⁴

16.8.40: Things are evidently going badly in Somaliland, which is the flanking operation in the attack on Egypt. Enormous air battles over the Channel, with, if the reports are anywhere near the truth, stupendous German losses. E.g. about 145 were reported shot down yesterday.....The people in Inner London could do with one real raid to teach them how to behave. At present everyone's behaviour is foolish in the extreme, everything except transport being held up but no precautions taken. For the first 15 seconds there is great alarm, blowing of whistles and shouts to children to go indoors, then people begin to congregate on the streets and gaze expectantly at the sky. In the daytime people are apparently ashamed to go into the shelters till they hear the bombs.

On Tuesday and Wednesday had two glorious days at Wallington. No newspapers and no mention of the war. They were cutting the oats and we took Marx⁷⁵ out both days to help course the rabbits, at which Marx showed unexpected speed. The whole thing took me straight back to my childhood, perhaps the last bit of that kind of life that I shall ever have.

19.8.40: A feature of the air raids is the extreme credulity of almost everyone about damage done to distant places. George M.⁷⁶ arrived recently from Newcastle, which is generally believed here to have been seriously smashed about, and told us that the damage there was nothing to signify. On the other hand he arrived expecting to find London knocked to pieces and his first question on arrival was "whether we had had a very bad time." It is easy to see how people as far away as America can believe that London is in flames, England starving, etc., etc. And at the same time all this raises the presumption that our own raids on western Germany are much less damaging than is reported.

20.8.40: The papers are putting as good a face as possible upon the withdrawal from Somaliland, which is nevertheless a serious defeat, the first loss of British territory for centuries ... It's a pity that the papers (at any rate the News-Chronicle, the only one I have seen to-day) are so resolute in treating the news as good. This might have been made

the start of another agitation which would have got some more of the duds out of the government.

Complaints among the Home Guards, now that air raids are getting commoner, because sentries have no tin hats. Explanation from Gen. Macnamara, who tells us that the regular army is still short of 300,000 tin hats—this after nearly a year of war.

22.8.40: The Beaverbrook press, compared with the headlines I saw on other papers, seems to be playing down the suggestion that Trotsky's murder was carried out by the G.P.U.⁷⁷ In fact today's Evening Standard, with several separate items about Trotsky, didn't mention this suggestion. No doubt they still have their eye on Russia and want to placate the Russians at all costs, in spite of Low's cartoons.⁷⁸ But under this there may lie a much subtler manoeuvre. The men responsible for the Standard's present pro-Russian policy are no doubt shrewd enough to know that a Popular Front "line" is not really the way to secure a Russian alliance. But they also know that the mass of leftish opinion in England still takes it for granted that a full anti-fascist policy is the way to line up Russia on our side. To crack up Russia is therefore a way of pushing public opinion leftward. It is curious that I always attribute these devious motives to other people, being anything but cunning myself and finding it hard to use indirect methods even when I see the need for them.

To-day in Portman Square saw a four-wheeler cab, in quite good trim, with a good horse and a cabman quite of the pre-1914 type.

23.8.40: This morning an air-raid warning about 3 a.m. Got up, looked at the time, then felt unable to do anything and promptly went to sleep again. They are talking of rearranging the alarm system, and they will have to do so if they are to prevent every alarm from costing thousands of pounds in wasted time, lost sleep, etc. The fact that at present the alarm sounds all over a wide area when the German planes are only operating in one part of it, means not only that people are unnecessarily woken up or taken away from work, but that an impression is spread that an air-raid alarm will always be false, which is obviously dangerous.

Have got my Home Guard uniform, after 2½ months.

Last night to a lecture by General—, ⁷⁹ who is in command of about a quarter of a million men. He said he had been 41 years in the army. Was through the Flanders campaign, and no doubt limogé⁸⁰ for incompetence. Dilating on the Home Guard being a static defensive force, he said contemptuously and in a rather marked way that he saw no use in our practising taking cover, "crawling about on our stomachs," etc., etc., evidently as a hit at the Osterley Park training school. Our job, he said, was to die at our posts. Was also great on bayonet practice, and hinted that regular army ranks, saluting, etc., were to be introduced shortly.....These wretched old blimps, so obviously silly and senile, and so degenerate in everything except physical courage, are merely pathetic in themselves, and one would feel rather sorry for them if they were not hanging round our necks like millstones.

The attitude of the rank and file at these would-be pep-talks—so anxious to be enthusiastic, so ready to cheer and laugh at the jokes, and yet all the time half feeling that there is something wrong—always strikes me as pathetic. The time has almost arrived when one will only have to jump up on the platform and tell them how they are being wasted and how the war is being lost, and by whom, for them to rise up and shovel the blimps

into the dustbin. When I watch them listening to one of these asinine talks, I always remember that passage in Samuel Butler's Notebook about a young calf he once saw eating dung.⁸¹ It could not quite make up its mind whether it liked the stuff or not, and all it needed was some experienced cow to give it a prod with her horn, after which it would have remembered for life that dung is not good to eat.

It occurred to me yesterday, how will the Russian state get on without Trotsky? Or the Communists elsewhere? Probably they will be forced to invent a substitute.

26.8.40: (Greenwich). The raid which occurred on the 24th was the first real raid on London so far as I am concerned, i.e. the first in which I could hear the bombs. We were watching at the front door when the East India docks were hit. No mention of the docks being hit in Sunday's papers, so evidently they do conceal it when important objectives are hit.....It was a loudish bang but not alarming and gave no impression of making the earth tremble, so evidently these are not very large bombs that they are dropping. I remember the two big bombs that dropped near Huesca when I was in the hospital at Monflorite. The first, quite 4 kilometres away, made a terrific roar that shook the houses and sent us all fleeing out of our beds in alarm. Perhaps that was a 2000 lb. bomb⁸² and the ones at present being dropped are 500 lb. ones.

They will have to do something very soon about localising alarms. At present millions of people are kept awake or kept away from work every time an aeroplane appears over any part of London.

29.8.40: Air-raid alarms during the last 3 nights have totalled about 16-18 hours for the three nights.....It is perfectly clear that these night raids are intended chiefly as a nuisance, and as long as it is taken for granted that at the sound of the siren everyone must dive for the shelter, Hitler only needs to send his planes over half-a-dozen at a time to hold up work and rob people of sleep to an indefinite extent. However, this idea is already wearing off.... For the first time in 20 years I have overheard bus conductors losing their tempers and being rude to passengers. E.g. the other night, a voice out of the darkness: "'Oo's conducting this bus, lady, me or you?" It took me straight back to the end of the last war.

.....E. and I have paid the minimum of attention to raids and I was honestly under the impression that they did not worry me at all except because of the disorganisation, etc., that they cause. This morning, however, putting in a couple of hours' sleep as I always do when returning from guard duty, I had a very disagreeable dream of a bomb dropping near me and frightening me out of my wits. Cf. the dream I used to have towards the end of our time in Spain, of being on a grass bank with no cover and mortar shells dropping round me.

31.8.40: Air-raid warnings, of which there are now half a dozen or thereabouts every 24 hours, becoming a great bore. Opinion spreading rapidly that one ought simply to disregard the raids except when they are known to be big-scale ones and in one's own area. Of the people strolling in Regent's Park, I should say at least half pay no attention to a raid-warning.....Last night just as we were going to bed, a pretty heavy explosion. Later in the night woken up by a tremendous crash, said to be caused by a bomb in Maida Vale.⁸³ E. and I merely remarked on the loudness and fell asleep again. Falling asleep, with a vague impression

of anti-aircraft guns firing, found myself mentally back in the Spanish war, on one of those nights when you had good straw to sleep on, dry feet, several hours rest ahead of you, and the sound of distant gunfire, which acts as a soporific provided it is distant.

1.9.40: Recently bought a forage cap.....It seems that forage caps over size 7 are a great rarity. Evidently they expect all soldiers to have small heads. This tallies with the remark made by some higher-up to R.R.84 in Paris when he tried to join the army—"Good God, you don't suppose we want intelligent men in the front line, do you?" All the Home Guard uniforms are made with 20-inch necks.....Shops everywhere are beginning to cash in on the Home Guard, khaki shirts, etc., being displayed at fantastic prices with notices "suitable for the Home Guard." Just as in Barcelona, in the early days when it was fashionable to be in the militia.

3.9.40: Yesterday talking with Mrs. C.,85 who had recently come back from Cardiff. Raids there have been almost continuous, and finally it was decided that work in the docks must continue, raids or no raids. Almost immediately afterwards a German plane managed to drop a bomb straight into the hold of a ship, and according to Mrs. C. the remains of seven men working there "had to be brought up in pails." Immediately there was a dock strike, after which they had to go back to the practice of taking cover.

This is the sort of thing that does not get into the papers. It is now stated on all sides that the casualties in the most recent raids, e.g. at Ramsgate, have been officially minimised, which greatly incenses the locals, who do not like to read about "negligible damage" when 100 people have been killed, etc., etc. Shall be interested to see the figures for casualties for this month, i.e. August. I should say that up to about 2000 a month they would tell the truth, but would cover it up for figures over that.⁸⁶

Michael⁸⁷ estimates that in his clothing factory, evidently a small individually-owned affair, time lost in air-raids cost £50 last week.

7.9.40: Air-raid alarms now frequent enough, and lasting long enough, for people habitually to forget whether the alarm is on at the moment, or whether the All Clear has sounded. Noise of bombs and gunfire, except when very close (which probably means within two miles) now accepted as a normal background to sleep or conversation. I have still not heard a bomb go off with the sort of bang that makes you feel you are personally involved.

In Churchill's speech, number killed in air-raids during August given as 1075. Even if truthful, probably a large understatement as it includes only civilian casualties.....The secretiveness officially practised about raids is extraordinary. To-day's papers report that a bomb fell in a square "in central London." Impossible to find out which square it was, though thousands of people must know.

10.9.40: Can't write much of the insanities of the last few days. It is not so much that the bombing is worrying in itself as that the disorganisation of traffic, frequent difficulty of telephoning, shutting of shops whenever there is a raid on, etc., etc., combined with the necessity of getting on with one's ordinary work, wear one out and turn

life into a constant scramble to catch up lost time. Herewith a few notes on bombs, etc.:—

I have seen no bomb crater deeper than about 12 feet. One opposite the house at Greenwich was only (interrupted by air raid: continued 11.9.40) about the size of those made in Spain by 15 c.m. shells. In general the noises are formidable but not absolutely shattering like those of the huge bombs I saw dropped at Huesca.⁸⁸ Putting "screaming" bombs aside, I have frequently heard the whistle of a bomb—to hear which one must I assume be within at most a mile of it—and then a not overwhelmingly loud explosion. On the whole I conclude that they are using small bombs. Those which did most of the damage in the Old Kent Road⁸⁹ had a curiously limited effect.

Often a small house would be reduced to a pile of bricks and the house next door to it barely chipped. Ditto with the incendiary bombs, which will sometimes burn the inner part of a house completely out while leaving the front almost intact.

The delayed-action bombs are a great nuisance, but they appear to be successful in locating most of them and getting all the neighbouring people out until the bomb shall have exploded. All over South London, little groups of disconsolate-looking people wandering about with suitcases and bundles, either people who have been rendered homeless or, in more cases, who have been turned out by the authorities because of an unexploded bomb.

Notable bits of damage so far: Tremendous fires in the docks on 7 and 8.9.40, Cheapside on 9.9.40. Bank of England just chipped (bomb crater about 15 feet from wall). Naval college at Greenwich also chipped. Much damage in Holborn. Bomb in Marylebone goods yard.⁹⁰ Cinema at Madame Tussauds⁹¹ destroyed. Several other large fires, many gas mains and electric cables burst, much diversion of road traffic, London Bridge and Westminster Bridge being out of use for several days, and enough damage to railway lines to slow down rail traffic for a day or two. Power station somewhere in South London hit, stopping trams for about half a day. Said to be very heavy damage in Woolwich,⁹² and, to judge by the column of flame and smoke, one or more of the big oil drums in the estuary of the Thames was hit on 7.9.40. Deliveries of milk and letters delayed to some extent, newspapers mostly coming out a few hours late, all theatres (except the Criterion,⁹³ which is underground) closed at 10.9.40, and I think all cinemas as well.

Most of last night in the public shelter, having been driven there by recurrent whistle and crash of bombs not very far away at intervals of about a quarter of an hour. Frightful discomfort owing to overcrowding, though the place was well-appointed, with electric light and fans. People, mostly elderly working class, grousing bitterly about the hardness of the seats and the longness of the night, but no defeatist talk.....People are now to be seen every night about dusk queuing up at the doors of the Shelters with their bedding. Those who come in first grab places on the floor and probably pass a reasonably good night. Day raids apart, the raiding hours are pretty regularly 8 p.m. to 4.30 a.m., i.e. dusk to just before dawn.

I should think 3 months of continuous raids at the same intensity as the last 4 nights would break down everyone's morale. But it is doubtful whether anyone could keep up the attack on such a scale for 3 months, especially when he is suffering much the same himself.

12.9.40: As soon as the air-raids began seriously it was noticeable that people were much readier than before to talk to strangers in the street.....This morning met a youth of about 20, in dirty overalls, perhaps a garage hand. Very embittered and defeatist about the war, and horrified by the destruction he had seen in South London. He said that Churchill had visited the bombed area near the Elephant⁹⁴ and at a spot where 20 out of 22 houses had been destroyed, remarked that it was "not so bad." The youth: "I'd have wrung his bloody neck if he'd said it to me." He was pessimistic about the war, considered Hitler was sure to win and would reduce London to much the same state as Warsaw.

He spoke bitterly about the people rendered homeless in South London and eagerly took up my point when I said the empty houses in the West End should be requisitioned for them. He considered that all wars were fought for the profit of the rich, but agreed with me that this one would probably end in revolution. With all this he was not unpatriotic. Part of his grouch was that he had tried to join the Air Force 4 times in the last 6 months, and always been put off.

To-night and last night they have been trying the new device of keeping up a continuous A.A. barrage, apparently firing blind or merely by sound, though I suppose there is some kind of sound-detector which estimates the height at which they must make the shells burst.....The noise is tremendous and almost continuous, but I don't mind it, feeling it to be on my side. Spent last night at S's place⁹⁵ with a battery firing in the square at short intervals throughout the night.

Slept through it easily enough, no bombs being audible in that place. The havoc in the East End and South London is terrible, by all accounts.....Churchill's speech last night referred very seriously to danger of imminent invasion. If invasion is actually attempted and this is not a feint, the idea is presumably either to knock out our air bases along the South Coast, after which the ground defences can be well bombed, at the same time causing all possible confusion in London and its southward communications, or to draw as much as possible of our defensive forces south before delivering the attack on Scotland or possibly Ireland.

Meanwhile our platoon of Home Guards, after 3½ months, have about 1 rifle for 6 men, no other weapons except incendiary bombs, and perhaps 1 uniform for 4 men. After all, they have stood out against letting the rifles be taken home by individual men.⁹⁶ They are all parked in one place, where a bomb may destroy the whole lot of them any night.

14.9.40: On the first night of the barrage,⁹⁷ which was the heaviest, they are said to have fired 500,000 shells, i.e. at an average cost of £5 per shell, £2½ millions worth. But well worth it, for the effect on morale.

15.9.40: This morning, for the first time, saw an aeroplane shot down. It fell slowly out of the clouds, nose foremost, just like a snipe that has been shot high overhead. Terrific jubilation among the people watching, punctuated every now and then by the question, "Are you sure it's a German?" So puzzling are the directions given, and so many the types of aeroplane, that no one even knows which are German planes and which are our own. My only test is that if a bomber is seen over London it must be a German, whereas a fighter is likelier to be ours.

17.9.40: Heavy bombing in this area last night till about 11 p.m.....I was talking in the hallway of this house to two young men and a girl who was with them. Psychological attitude of all 3 was interesting. They were quite openly and unashamedly frightened, talking about how their knees were knocking together, etc., and yet at the same time excited and interested, dodging out of doors between bombs to see what was happening and pick up shrapnel splinters. Afterwards in Mrs. C's little reinforced room downstairs, with Mrs. C. and her daughter, the maid, and three young girls who are also lodgers here. All the women, except the maid, screaming in unison, clasping each other and hiding their faces, every time a bomb went past, but betweenwhiles quite happy and normal, with animated conversation proceeding. The dog subdued and obviously frightened, knowing something to be wrong. Marx is also like this during raids, i.e. subdued and uneasy. Some dogs, however, go wild and savage during a raid and have had to be shot. They allege here, and E. says the same thing about Greenwich, that all the dogs in the park now bolt for home when they hear the siren.

Yesterday when having my hair cut in the City, asked the barber if he carried on during raids. He said he did. And even if he was shaving someone? I said. Oh, yes, he carried on just the same. And one day a bomb will drop near enough to make him jump, and he will slice half somebody's face off.

Later, accosted by a man, I should think some kind of commercial traveller, with a bad type of face, while I was waiting for a bus. He began a rambling talk about how he was getting himself and his wife out of London, how his nerves were giving way and he suffered from stomach trouble, etc., etc. I don't know how much of this kind of thing there is.....There has of course been a big exodus from the East End, and every night what amount to mass migrations to places where there is sufficient shelter accommodation. The practice of taking a 2d ticket and spending the night in one of the deep Tube stations, e.g. Piccadilly, is growing.....Everyone I have talked to agrees that the empty furnished houses in the West End should be used for the homeless; but I suppose the rich swine still have enough pull to prevent this from happening. The other day 50 people from the East End, headed by some of the Borough Councillors, marched into the Savoy and demanded to use the air-raid shelter. The management didn't succeed in ejecting them till the raid was over, when they went voluntarily. When you see how the wealthy are still behaving, in what is manifestly developing into a revolutionary war, you think of St. Petersburg in 1916.

(Evening). Almost impossible to write in this infernal racket. (Electric lights have just gone off. Luckily I have some candles.) So many streets in (lights on again) the quarter roped off because of unexploded bombs, that to get home from Baker Street, say 300 yards, is like trying to find your way to the heart of a maze.

21.9.40: Have been unable for some days to buy another volume to continue this diary because of the three or four stationers' shops in the immediate neighbourhood, all but one are cordoned off because of unexploded bombs.

Regular features of the time: neatly swept-up piles of glass, litter of stone and splinters of flint, smell of escaping gas, knots of sightseers waiting at the cordons.

Yesterday, at the entry to a street near here, a little crowd waiting with an A. R. P. 98 man in a black tin hat among them. A devastating roar, with a huge cloud of dust, etc. The man with the black hat comes running towards the A. R. P. headquarters, where another with a white hat is emerging, munching at a mouthful of bread and butter.

The man with the black hat: "Dorset Square, sir."

The man with the white hat: "O.K." (Makes a tick in his note-book.)

Nondescript people wandering about, having been evacuated from their houses because of delayed-action bombs. Yesterday two girls stopping me in the street, very elegant in appearance except that their faces were filthily dirty: "Please, sir, can you tell us where we are?"

Withal, huge areas of London almost normal, and everyone quite happy in the daytime, never seeming to think about the coming night, like animals which are unable to foresee the future so long as they have a bit of food and a place in the sun.

24.9.40: Oxford Street yesterday, from Oxford Circus up to the Marble Arch, completely empty of traffic, and only a few pedestrians, with the late afternoon sun shining straight down the empty roadway and glittering on innumerable fragments of broken glass. Outside John Lewis's, 99 a pile of plaster dress models, very pink and realistic, looking so like a pile of corpses that one could have mistaken them for that at a little distance. Just the same sight in Barcelona, only there it was plaster saints from desecrated churches.

Much discussion as to whether you would hear a bomb (i.e. its whistle) which was coming straight at you. All turns upon whether the bomb travels faster than sound.....One thing I have worked out, I think satisfactorily, is that the further away from you a bomb falls, the longer the whistle you will hear. The short whizz is therefore the sound that should make you dive for cover. I think this is really the principle one goes on in dodging a shell, but there one seems to know by a kind of instinct.

The aeroplanes come back and come back, every few minutes. It is just like in an eastern country, when you keep thinking you have killed the last mosquito inside your net, and every time, as soon as you have turned the light out, another starts droning.

27.9.40: The News-Chronicle to-day is markedly defeatist, as well it may be after yesterday's news about Dakar.¹⁰⁰ But I have a feeling that the News-Chronicle is bound to become defeatist anyway and will be promptly to the fore when plausible peace terms come forward. These people have no definable policy and no sense of responsibility, nothing except a traditional dislike of the British ruling class, based ultimately on the Nonconformist conscience. They are only noise-makers, like the New Statesman, etc. All these people can be counted on to collapse when the conditions of war become intolerable.

Many bombs last night, though I think none dropped within half a mile of this house. The commotion made by the mere passage of the bomb through the air is astonishing. The whole house shakes, enough to rattle objects on the table. Of course they are dropping very large bombs now. The unexploded one in Regent's Park is said to be "the size of a pillar box." Almost every night the lights go out at least once, not suddenly flicking off as when a connection is broken, but gradually fading out, and usually coming on again in about five minutes. Why it is that the lights dip when a bomb passes close by, nobody seems to know.

15.10.40: Writing this at Wallington, having been more or less ill for about a fortnight with a poisoned arm. Not much news—i.e. only events of worldwide importance; nothing that has much affected me personally.

There are now 11 evacuee children in Wallington (12 arrived, but one ran away and had to be sent home). They come from the East End. One little girl, from Stepney, said that her grandfather had been bombed out seven times. They seem nice children and to be settling down quite well. Nevertheless there are the usual complaints against them in some quarters. E.g. of the little boy who is with Mrs.—101, aged seven: "He's a dirty little devil, he is. He wets his bed and dirties his breeches. I'd rub his nose in it if I had charge of him, the dirty, little devil."

Some murmurings about the number of Jews in Baldock. —102 declares that Jews greatly predominate among the people sheltering in the Tubes. Must try and verify this.

Potato crop very good this year, in spite of the dry weather, which is just as well.

19.10.40: The unspeakable depression of lighting the fires every morning with papers of a year ago, and getting glimpses of optimistic headlines as they go up in smoke.

21.10.40: With reference to the advertisements in the Tube stations, "Be a Man" etc. (asking able-bodied men not to shelter there but to leave the space for women and children), D.103 says the joke going round London is that it was a mistake to print these notices in English.

Priestley,104 whose Sunday night broadcasts were by implication Socialist propaganda, has been shoved off the air, evidently at the instance of the Conservative party.....It looks rather as though the Margesson105 crew are now about to stage a comeback.

25.10.40: The other night examined the crowds sheltering in Chancery Lane, Oxford Circus and Baker Street stations. Not all Jews, but, I think, a higher proportion of Jews than one would normally see in a crowd of this size. What is bad about Jews is that they are not only conspicuous, but go out of their way to make themselves so. A fearful Jewish woman, a regular comicpaper cartoon of a Jewess, fought her way off the train at Oxford Circus, landing blows on anyone who stood in her way. It took me back to old days on the Paris Métro. Surprised to find that D., who is distinctly Left in his views, is inclined to share the current feeling against the Jews.

He says that the Jews in business circles are turning pro-Hitler, or preparing to do so. This sounds almost incredible, but according to D. they will always admire anyone who kicks them. What I do feel is that any Jew, i.e. European Jew, would prefer Hitler's kind of social system to ours, if it were not that he happens to persecute them. Ditto with almost any Central European, e.g. the refugees. They make use of England as a sanctuary, but they cannot help feeling the profoundest contempt for it. You can see this in their eyes, even when they don't say it outright. The fact is that the insular outlook and the continental outlook are completely incompatible.

According to F.,¹⁰⁶ it is quite true that foreigners are more frightened than English people during the raids. It is not their war, and therefore they have nothing to sustain them. I think this might also account for the fact—I am virtually sure it is a fact, though one mustn't mention it—that working-class people are more frightened than middle-class. The same feeling of despair over impending events in France, Africa, Syria, Spain—the sense of foreseeing what must happen and being powerless to prevent it, and feeling with absolute certainty that a British government cannot act in such a way as to get its blow in first. Air raids much milder the last few days.

16.11.40: I never thought I should live to grow blasé about the sound of gunfire, but so I have.

23.11.40: The day before yesterday lunching with H. P., editor of —.¹⁰⁷ H. P. rather pessimistic about the war. Thinks there is no answer to the New Order,¹⁰⁸ i.e. this government is incapable of framing any answer, and people here and in America could easily be brought to accept it. I queried whether people would not for certain see any peace offer along these lines as a trap. H. P.: "Hell's bells, I could dress it up so that they'd think it was the greatest victory in the history of the world. I could make them eat it." That is true, of course. All depends on the form in which it is put to people. So long as our own newspapers don't do the dirty they will be quite indifferent to appeals from Europe. H. P., however, is certain that — ¹⁰⁹ and Co. are working for a sell-out. It appears that though — ¹¹⁰ is not submitted for censorship, all papers are now warned not to publish interpretations of the government's policy towards Spain. A few weeks back Duff-Cooper had the press correspondents up and assured them "on his word of honour" that "things were going very well indeed in Spain." The most one can say is that Duff-Cooper's word of honour is worth more than Hoare's.

H. P. says that when France collapsed there was a Cabinet meeting to decide whether to continue the war or whether to seek terms. The vote was actually 50-50 except for one casting vote, and according to H. P. this was Chamberlain's. If true, I wonder whether this will ever be made public. It was poor old Chamberlain's last public act, as one might say, poor old man.

Characteristic war-time sound, in winter: the musical tinkle of raindrops on your tin hat.

28.11.40: Lunching yesterday with C.,¹¹¹ editor of France.... To my surprise he was in good spirits and had no grievances. I would have expected a French refugee to be grumbling endlessly about the food, etc. However, C. knows England well and has lived here before.

He says there is much more resistance both in occupied and unoccupied France than people here realise. The press is playing it down, no doubt because of our continued relations with Vichy. He says that at the time of the French collapse no European looked on it as conceivable that England would go on fighting, and generally speaking Americans did not either. He is evidently somewhat of an Anglophile and considers the monarchy a great advantage to England. According to him it has been a main factor in preventing the establishment of Fascism here. He considers that the abdication of Edward VIII was brought about because of Mrs. S.'s ¹¹² known Fascist connections....It is a fact that, on the whole, anti-

Fascist opinion in England was pro-Edward, but C. is evidently repeating what was current on the continent.

C. was head of the press department during Laval's government.¹¹³ Laval said to him in 1935 that England was now "only an appearance" and Italy was a really strong country, so that France must break with England and go in with Italy. On returning from signing the Franco-Russian pact he said that Stalin was the most powerful man in Europe. On the whole Laval's prophecies seem to have been falsified, clever though he is.

Completely conflicting accounts, from eye witnesses, about the damage to Coventry.¹¹⁴ It seems impossible to learn the truth about bombing at a distance. When we have a quiet night here, I find that many people are faintly uneasy, because feeling certain that they are getting it badly in the industrial towns. What every one feels at the back of his mind is that we are now hardened to it and the morale elsewhere is less reliable.

1.12.40: That bastard Chiappelli¹⁵ is cold meat. Everyone delighted, as when Balbo¹⁶ died. This war is at any rate killing off a few Fascists.

8.12.40: Broadcasting the night before last.....Met there a Pole who has only recently escaped from Poland by some underground route he would not disclose..... He said that in the siege of Warsaw 95 per cent of the houses were damaged and about 25 per cent demolished. All services, electricity, water, etc., broke down, and towards the end people had no defence whatever against the aeroplanes and, what was worse, the artillery. He described people rushing out to cut bits off a horse killed by shell-fire, then being driven back by fresh shells, then rushing out again. When Warsaw was completely cut off the people were upheld by the belief that the English were coming to help them, rumours all the while of an English army in Danzig, etc. etc....

The story going round about a week back was that the report in the papers to the effect that the Italian commander in Albania had shot himself was due to a misprint.

During the bad period of the bombing, when everyone was semi-insane, not so much from the bombing itself as from broken sleep, interrupted telephone calls, the difficulty of communications, etc., etc., I found that scraps of nonsense poetry were constantly coming into my mind. They never got beyond a line or two and the tendency stopped when the bombing slacked off, but examples were:-

An old Rumanian peasant
Who lived at Mornington Crescent
and
And the key doesn't fit and the bell doesn't ring,
But we all stand up for God save the King
and
When the Borough Surveyor has gone to roost
On his rod, his pole or his perch.

29.12.40: From a newspaper account of a raid (not ironical): "Bombs were falling like manna."