THE HOLY TERROR!

Story of a World Dictator

By H. G. WELLS

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Rud talked out the war issue to the Central Group but there was very little discussion. The Group had already shifted its headquarters to Sloten near Amsterdam, close to the new radio centre and the airport. There, in a large room like a departmental board-room, surrounded with maps and Bodisham's later diagrams, Rud expounded his fundamental plan of campaign.

He banged the table and spluttered with subversive bitterance.

"The war to end war . . . That is what we are fighting over again. Never have sane words been so mocked at, and never were saner words uttered. Some one used that phrase for the last war, and it didn't end war. Ha-ha-ha and He-he-he and also Yah! But, obviously there has to be a war to end war—and if that fails, another. And if necessary another and another. . . . .

"The last war to end war miscarried. The world wasn't prepared for the idea. The common man didn't realize his opportunity. Very well, since then we've been busy. Maybe this one won't miscarry. If it does, it will be because we in our turn weren't up to the job. This time the common man has got to get and keep control. This time we have to save the world from the old confidence tricks. We English aren't going to fight this war, simply and trustfully, under General Timberface and Colonel Blimp with the Army of the Aldershot Tattoo. The crown and the army class and the Anglican padres are not going to jump this war as they jumped our war in 1914. We've got to see to that. Nobody is going to stick up proclamations about 'My army and my subjects' in this war, without a protest from us. Let one thing be clear. It is we, the Common Men, who fight, and there are no 'my subjects.' We don't mean to cheer the cuckoo-clock at Buckingham Palace at the end of this war. No. It will be ours from first to last."

Then Rud made a speech he had had brewing in his mind for some time. And as he made it, he watched its reception by Reedly.

"In some fashion or other, this war will be won, I say. There's the rub. That's where the catch comes in. What we do not want is to see the war won in the name of liberty, at the price of liberty. Gently but firmly the common man has to take over from the diplomats and professional soldiers before the war is allowed to end. Even if it takes longer. On the other side as well it's necessary to have not simply defeat but real revolution. In 1918 the Great War was hushed up in a hurry because of the manifest imminence of revolution and Communism from the Urals to the Atlantic. The Armstice of 1918 was the suave qui peut of the old order from the dawning understanding of the common man. . . .

"Didn't you realize that? It's not documented, no. Maybe they didn't realize it. But that was the drive in their minds. Our common man now is ten times as clear-headed and made of tougher stuff. He's never recovered faith anywhere, since the Great War.

"In 1918 there was no one to say 'A Common Law for the World' Now everywhere, we say it. That's what we are for. That particularly and exactly is what we are for."

He paused. Reedly pulled his moustache. He seemed to be taking counsel with himself, a strong, silent man, but he made no comment on Rud's declaration.

"I could not state our idea more clearly," said Rud. "If I could I would."

THE WORLD MARSHAL PROTESTS

With intentions thus defined and elaborated, the Group faced the formal outbreak of the War of Ideologies. They spread their tentacles as Bodisham had planned them, and the combatant and authoritative forces in the world, seeking to use their propaganda, were gripped by its implications. The Group undertook responsibilities and achieved recognition. Insensibly it became a power in the world. It became an intermediary and then a decisive intermediary. Its informality and apparent flexibility made it more convenient and more noncommittal than the official modes of communication between the Allied Democracies.

Few people remarked the rapid gradations by which this Party from nowhere and everywhere became a world institution. A year and a half of chaotic warfare and it was quasi-official. The winding up of the war drew near.

So eighteen months to a day its decision to take part in the war, the Group met in that same room at Sloten. But now they were all wearing the plain grey uniform of New World Police, and the Dutch War Minister and a number of officers of the Consolidated Air Forces were with them. The maps upon the wall had undergone great changes.

The Common-sense Party was in practical and legal control of Holland. The Common-sense Government had an overwhelming majority there. This was true now of ten of the psuedo-democratic powers. And the Group had become the chief consolidating organ of all the allies. The shattered and exhausted militant states had realized its menace for them too late. First they had tried to make use of it under the impression that it was a pacifist influence that would weaken discipline in the Allied Armies. Then descovering that its ideas were permeating backward into their own ranks, they had attempted a futile suppression which had merely strengthened its hold on the Allies. And now the Group was discussing the campaign that would wind up the war, and it had met at the initiative of Reedly who, with an air of subordination that hardly pretended to conceal his growing insolence, had demanded "instructions" from his colleagues. The war, he said, was approaching its final decision.

He had long since abandoned his place at the middle of the table and shifted to the end, so that he faced Rud, and he was speaking now with the air of a reasonable man who exercises self-control in spite of much provocation. "I protest," he said.

He had evidently come charged with that word.

Chiffan's mind went wandering in search of a quotation. "Methinks" — how did it go — who was it — "doth protest too much . . . ."

Reedly was speaking, and Rud was regarding him with brow-knitted attention. Bodisham, at the middle of the table, said very little, but looked occasionally at Rud. Once or twice Rud and he exchanged glances. Dreed and Norvel, the men responsible for education and public information, Thirp, for the police liaison everywhere, Steenhold, Irwell, Roots and Holbank, for production, and Bellacourt, the director of air communications, were all, it appeared, treating Reedly unreasonably and unfairly. He wanted the situation cleared up and a demand and a menace in all he had to say.

His position was a peculiar one. The necessity of a unified Allied Command had been forced upon the Democratic Powers by a series of military defeats in the European area. But the bitterness of wilful mutual sabotage had made the direct subordination of the acutely nationalist national forces, to the direction of any single commander among them, impossible. The British Premier's idea of a Liaison Minister, who might develop insensibly into an Allied Commander-in-Chief, was felt to be a brilliant one. It was also the Prime Minister's idea to look to the left for this Liaison Minister. The revolutionary strikes of great sections of the munition workers and the refusal of the unified air forces, after the Authoritarians had been virtually driven from the air, to continue to take orders from source except their representative Bellacourt, had turned the Allied Governments to Reedly as the most hopeful intermediary for a restoration of their internal as well as their international solidarity. Reedly was manifestly far less "red" and revolutionary in spirit, than his associates, essentially he was a good soldier, and nevertheless he was in contact, or he professed to be in contact, with the entire Group, and he became in rapid succession Liaison Minister and then 'World Marshal" of the Allied Armies. His commission was vague and he interpreted it as conferring upon him the supreme command over all the forces of the Democratic Powers. There was little resistance to his aggressions. On the whole the allied commanders were not averse to shifting their responsibility to a man who might be set aside at the general settlement. So in a couple of years this disgruntled military expert, this detractor with a grievance,, had become an arrogant and aggressive soldier again.

CHAPTER XXXIV

REEDLY IS NOT HUMBLE

"I come here from the active front and Bellacourt is not here to meet me," said Reedly

"He is in America," said Rud, "he is dealing with the strike. And Thirp too is busy—elsewhere."

"But I need them here. Bellacourt particularly. Believe me, I cannot wind up this war without his effective cooperation. I cannot do it."

He put out his open, hairy hand on the table and clutched, as though he grasped the world.

He was now a fine, florid, soldierly figure. He had expanded physically. His elocution had improved. A certain cantankerous note was no longer audible. Thirp, who missed nothing, had pointed out to Rud that he had acquired an artificial wave in his hair. "Vanity," said Thirp, "or ambition? Some vanity of course. After all ambition is only vanity with a back-bone. That wave photographs better. It makes better personal propaganda. . . ."

Steenhold found Reedly as admirable as an eighteenth century portrait of a general. He deserved a background of battle-smoke — and a horse. A prancing horse with red nostrils. He was certainly the finest-looking captain of men the Group could have produced. He quite outshone the stockish Rogers, who had fallen entirely under his spell.

Reedly opened his big hand again and indicated points upon the chart of the world. "There," he said, "and there and there, you have the last resistances, the last possibilities of a final offensive. This Japanese-Brazilian army here, has its back to the Andes. For that region a renewal of air action is absolutely vital. With that we could force a capitulation in a month and then we could concentrate all the air power on this Levantine-Persian - Danube-Elbe complex."

"It's intricate."

"Not so intricate if I had the air."

"And then a general capitulation?" asked Rud.

"Naturally."

"Marches into Berlin and Tokio and so forth?"

"Something of the sort," said Reedly.

"Nothing of the sort."

"But yo uwant the war to end!"

"Do we?"

"Well?"

"We don't want a capitulation," said Rud. "I think we have this plain. Bodisham can give you chapter and verse for that. You see, Reedly, we won't want any excuse for an assembly of the old governments on our side. On our side. The 'democratic' governments and all that. The longer they hide in their dug-outs the better for the New World. From our point of view the war to end war can have no formal end. We've got controlled shipping, amalgamated air forces, pooled finance, consolidated news-services, a common uniform. We want to keep the common for everymore. But the day we proclaim Victory and Peace, the diplomatists and nationalists will come creeping out of their funk-holes again with their flags and claims and bills on each other and all that sort of thing. Versailles all over again."

"I agree with that," said Rodisham. "Our revolutionary organization has become a world war organization, and now it has to develop into a world peace organization."

"Even now," said Reedly, "if we fly in the face of national feeling too openly—. After all the war isn't won yet."

"To all intents and purposes it is won," said Rud.

"In order to wind it up," said Reedly, "I want to have complete, unqualified control of the munition-supply and I want to put an end to this ridiculous Air-Truce of Bellacourt's. Who ever heard of such a thing? It makes the war—ridiculous! Every day now we get a fleet of planes from Sweden going along the lines, inspecting us. Did you know that? I thought you didn't. They just fly over us and go away. Taking snapshots I suppose. To send home to their friends. It makes a commander-in-chief feel like a fool. I'm like one of those Indian princes under the old British raj who were given armies to play with and weren't allowed big guns. Then there's this strike in America—going right over the heads of the government. . . . It's fantastic. It's indecent. Here we have the men, the workmen away there, deciding what sort of shell we may have, what sort of guns, if any—and Roots here and Holbank aiding and abetting them. Practically the hold-up of air-bombs is complete. Think of that. And not a fighter left. All in cold storage in Sweden. With a war still going on. Fantastic!"

"With an enemy immobilized and not daring to put a plane in the air—even if they had the stuff to do it with," said Bodisham.

"To be frank," said Reedley, "I don't trust Bellacourt. What is he after? You don't seem to have thought about Bellacourt. Wings over the World. Air Peace? Dreams and dangerous dreams at that. Or excuses. He's hand and glove with Holbank and Roots. Beware of these men. Yes. Roots, I say it. To your face. Beware of them. If only for the sake of world security—to keep faith with our allies—we have to hold in Bellacourt. After all we are men of honor. We are soldiers first and foremost. The Allied War Offices appointed me. Me and Rogers. We can't play tricks an these governments that have trusted us."

Rud sat ostentatiously weighing every word of this.

"I think we understand Bellacourt," he said with deliberation. "Bodisham and I and the rest of us. What we don't understand is what you are after. Why do you want control of the air? Bluntly—who is it you want to bomb, Reedly?"

(To be Continued)

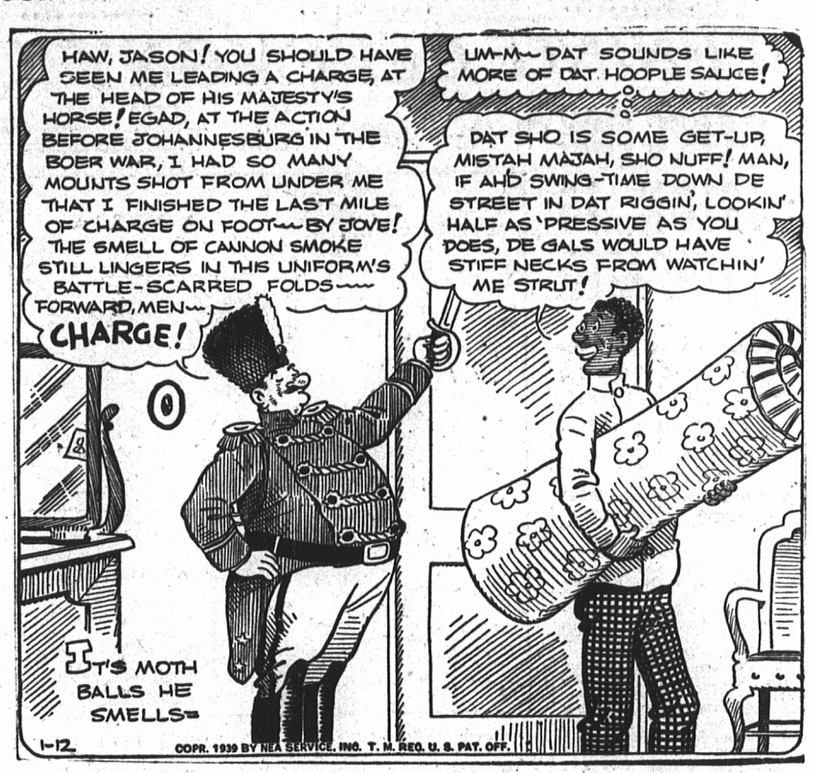
PAINTER BEGINS AT 80

LONDON —(CP)— The fame Indian poet and philosopher Sir Rabindranath Tagore is attaining fame as a painter at the age of 80. The first English exhibition of his pictures has been opened here

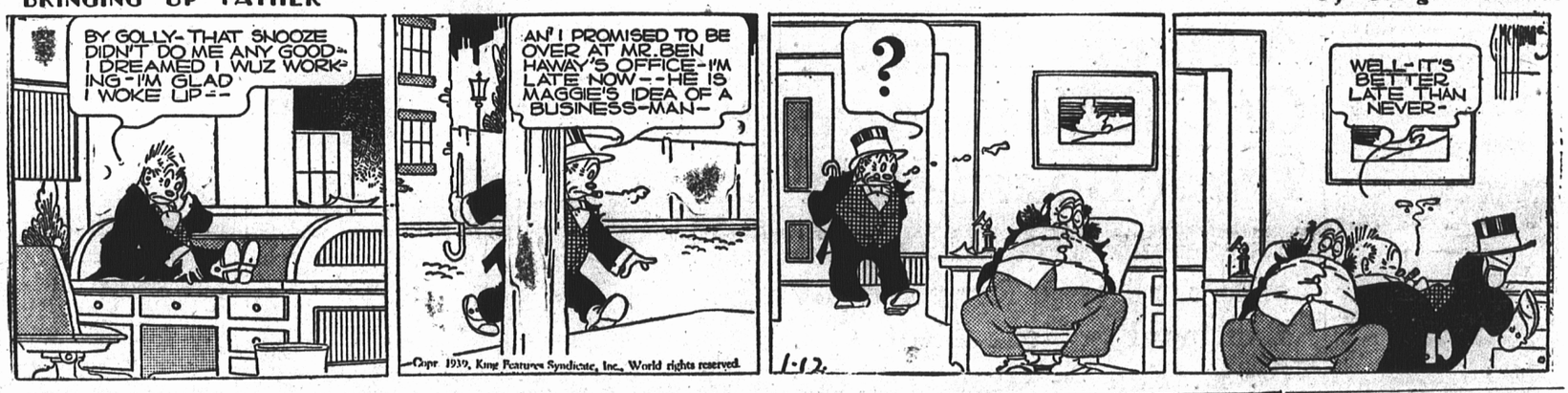
Use Minard's for burns.

OUT OUR WAY — — By J. R. Williams

OUR BOARDING HOUSE — With — Major Hoople



BRINGING UP FATHER By George McManus



Thimble Theatre, Starring POPEYE —*Now Showing—"The Baby is Teething, Popeye!"* — *Tom orrow—"Bring on That Cow!"*

By Edwina

TIPPIE and "CAP" STUBS

By Westover

TILLIE THE TOILER — ANDY GETS HIS WISH, BUT HOW!

BRINGS INSTANT EASE from PAINS, SPRAINS BRUISES, BURNS RHEUMATIC ACHES

MINARD'S GREAT CANADIAN RUBBING LINIMENT

MINARD'S KING OF PAIN LINIMENT