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GERMANY-- ITALY: Springtime for the Dictators

GERMANY— ITALY

Benito Mussolini decided last week that it was time to tell his people about some of the things that had been happening to them. So he did. At almost the same moment the notion struck Adolf Hitler to tell his folk why they were pulling Italy's fish out of the Mediterranean. And so he did. The two speeches were noteworthy not only for the light they shed on the probable course of the war, but also for the light they shed on the personalities of Europe's two Rover Boys.

Benito ("Peace is a Catastrophe") Mussolini proceeded to explain to his Blackshirts that Italy had been at war since 1922—"from the day when we lifted the flag of our revolution . . . against the Masonic, democratic, capitalistic world." On the other side of the Brenner, in Munich's Hofbräuhaus, Adolf went him two years better, told his Brownshirts that they had been fighting the Jews and the bankers for exactly 21 years, since the Party held its first meeting. Neither bothered to mention the fact that during most of these two decades Hitler thought Mussolini was a windbag and Benito thought Adolf was a nut.

The Axis was now eternal, both agreed. Said Benito: "Italy will march with Germany, side by side, to the end." Said Adolf: "I am not a democrat and I am not a bootlicker. . . . Between our two revolutions and between the two men there is an indissoluble bond and we will decide this struggle together."

Benito had some mean things to say about the Dan Baxterish U. S. A. Sample: "Illusion and lying are the basis of American interventionism—illusion that the United States is still a democracy, when instead it is a political and financial oligarchy dominated by Jews through a personal form of dictatorship. The lie is that the Axis powers, after they finish Great Britain, want to attack America." Adolf was more restrained. "If others want to sit on sacks of gold, they may," said he. "I have the German power to work. . . . You can't build a state on a capitalistic basis any more."

Benito talked a great deal about how gloriously the lion-hearted Fascisti had departed from Libya and Greece. It was all the fault of the British for attacking too soon, said he. Besides, Italy had been fighting in Ethiopia and Spain. Besides and besides, Italy was pretty brave to fight Great Britain at all ("a matter of pride that will live through the centuries"). Adolf had less explaining to do. He was full of confidence for the future: "Where British ships will appear, and where Britain will fight us, we will fight them and destroy them. . . . I have fought with many democratic enemies, and I have always come out of the battle as conqueror. . . . The time comes again in which you can come to grips. . . . I look into the future with a fanatic faith." In fact, Adolf was feeling fine, and said so. "I thank providence that this struggle came during my lifetime, at a time when I still felt fresh and strong. And just now I feel so well, so fresh. Spring is coming." Benito, too, hailed the vernal equinox. "I say beautiful things will be seen in every one of the four cardinal points."

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