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# “This is Berlin”

William L. Shirer

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## About the Book

Before Britain and Germany went to war in 1939, Ed Murrow of CBS sent his star reporter William Shirer to report from Berlin on what was really happening in Hitler's Germany. And there Shirer stayed until December 1940, reporting on the war from within the Reich, battling against the censors and revealing to American and British audiences how Hitler, the SS, and his armed forces were conducting the war, and what it meant to live in a Nazi state. All through the campaigns leading to the fall of France, Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain, Shirer provided a unique and dramatic by-line on history as it happened, and now his writings have been gathered together for the first time into a vivid, compelling and urgent narrative, one of the great first-hand documents of the Second World War.

## About the Author

William L. Shirer ranks as one of the greatest of all American foreign correspondents. He lived and worked in Paris, Berlin, Vienna and Rome, but it was above all as correspondent in Germany for the *Chicago Tribune* and later for the *Columbia Broadcasting System* in the late thirties that his reputation was established. He subsequently wrote *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, which is hailed as a classic, and after the war he was awarded the Legion d'Honneur. In the post-war years he wrote in a variety of fields, and in his seventies he learned Russian, publishing a biography of Tolstoy at the age of 89. He died in 1994.

ALSO BY WILLIAM L. SHIRER

NON-FICTION

*Berlin Diary*  
*End of a Berlin Diary*  
*Midcentury Journey*  
*The Challenge of Scandinavia*  
*The Collapse of the Third Republic*  
*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*  
*Love and Hatred: The Stormy*  
*The Sinking of the Bismarck*  
*Gandhi: A Memoir*  
*Marriage of Leo and Sonya Tolstoy*  
*20th Century Journey (Autobiography, Vol. 1)*  
*The Nightmare Years (Autobiograph, Vol. 2)*  
*A Native's Return (Autobiography, Vol. 3)*

FICTION

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*Stranger Come Home*  
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# “This is Berlin”

A Narrative History: 1938-40

William L. Shirer



arrow books

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# INTRODUCTION

*John Keegan*

William L. Shirer was, when he died in 1993, two months short of his ninetieth birthday, one of the most famous journalists in the world. His best known achievement was his monumental book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1959), one of the most successful works of contemporary history published in this century, though his fame had already been made by his *Berlin Diary*. Both were based on the years he spent as a *Chicago Tribune* and later Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) reporter in the German capital before Hitler's seizure of power and during the first seven years of the Nazi era.

Shirer, the individual, remarkable figure though he was, ought properly be seen, however, in the context of the generation to which he belonged, that generation of self-confident, fact-seeking, radical Americans who left the young United States to bring their fellow-countrymen the truth, as they perceived it, of events in the Old World and in the rest of the globe which belonged to or depended upon it. Theodore White was such an American, so was Virginia Cowles, so was Ed Murrow, whose relationship with Shirer was to be a decisive influence on his life. They established, long before Tom Wolfe coined the phrase, the New Journalism. John Reed had been a precursor. Reed, author of *Ten Days that Shook the World*, was, however, too partisan to be counted among the true band of American pioneers, while Hemingway was too solipsistic. He confused the reportage of great events with personal adventure and

resolved that dilemma only in novel form. White, Cowles, Murrow and Shirer showed themselves to be true New Journalists in their impartiality, their eschewal of self-dramatization, their whole-hearted resistance to censorship, their suspicion of news management, their determination to see for themselves and their passion for the truth.

It is significant that Shirer, like Hemingway, was a Chicagoan, and of almost the same generation. The capital of the Middle West was, in the years before the Great War in which both men grew up, a fountainhead of American energy and independence, detached from the Europeanism of the East Coast and proud to represent the free-thinking, undeferential spirit of the great republic's heartland. That heartland thought the Old World and much of what it stood for - the persistence of a hierarchy of classes, the ethos of imperialism, the code of conformity, the repression of individual enterprise - a society ripe for exposure.

Spain, during the Spanish Civil War, was the theater in which the New Journalists first practiced their mission - though Theodore White was already at work in corrupt old China, and Virginia Cowles in the shaky Versailles states of Central and Southern Europe. It was the rise of Nazism, however, which gave the American missionaries their great chance. Shirer was foremost among them. He had already, before Hitler's appointment as Reichschancellor in 1933, cut his European teeth, working for the *Chicago Tribune* and other newspapers in several European countries and acquiring fluency in French and German.

Germany was to be the key to his success as a journalist. In 1937, once again out of a job, a familiar interruption in the careers of expatriate American journalists in the Depression years, he met Ed Murrow, an established CBS newsman, in Berlin. Murrow, later to become the authentic voice of America from blitzed London, got him hired on the spot. When Murrow returned to Britain, Shirer became the principal CBS European correspondent, based first in Vienna,

then in Berlin. In 1938 he began the series of broadcasts, most of them introduced by a crisp "This is Berlin", which was to make him famous across America.

Berlin, in 1938, was a city which the Nazis had brought wholly under their control; its government was Nazified, as was that of the German Reich, and so was its journalism. The Enlightenment (Propaganda) Ministry directed by Dr. Joseph Goebbels dictated the content of all German newspapers and broadcasts and laid a heavy hand on the output of the foreign press also. In September 1939, when war with Poland broke out, and almost immediately with France and Britain as well, Shirer's broadcasts became subject to strict Nazi censorship. He felt the strongest obligation to tell such truth as the censorship system allowed him to report. He managed to evade its interference to some extent by establishing friendly relations with some of the censors, who at first were "reasonable" and "friendly". Later, as the war became more serious, he resorted to what he called "careful writing" and the use of American colloquialisms to evade the censor's blue pencil. By September 1940, when the Germans had already lost the Battle of Britain, and so the chance to invade Britain across the English Channel, he recognized that his ability to circumvent censorship had gone. In December, when the Battle of Britain had finished, the German invasion fleet had been dispersed and Berlin was under regular, though ineffective, attack by Bomber Command, an attack he was not permitted to witness or effectively report, he decided that his journalistic role no longer had value and he decided to return to the United States. "The Gestapo accuses me of working for the American intelligence service," he told his superiors. It was the fitting authentication of his integrity during his Berlin years.

What had he reported? The impression these transcripts of his Berlin broadcasts most clearly conveys is of his immersion in contemporary German life. The Germany he

knew in 1939 was not enthused by the prospect of war. The memory of defeat in 1918, and of the hardships of the Allied blockade that preceded and followed it, until the forced signature of the Versailles Treaty, were too strong for ordinary Germans to take any pleasure in a return to hostilities with France and Britain. Hence his repeated descriptions of the impact of an imposed war economy on the Berliner: ration cards, even for meals in restaurants, and clothes rationing so severe that the purchase of stockings or socks meant forgoing warm outerwear. Shirer congratulates himself that he had bought a new winter overcoat just before the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939. War brought blackout also, but British bombing raids, even when they started in the autumn of 1940, did little damage. Alarms drove Berliners to cellars by night but the morning showed at most the odd crater or isolated burnt-out building. War, on the home front, was an affair of newspaper headlines, not of hardship or danger.

The German press and radio, both wholly controlled by the Propaganda Ministry, conveyed a highly sanitized version of events to the German public. There was much execration of the British, less of the French, and Winston Churchill, the *Lugenlord* (Lord of Lies) was regularly vilified even before he had become Prime Minister. In the joint broadcast he made with his mentor, Ed Murrow, in Amsterdam on January 18, 1940, Shirer told of a German people oppressed by the fear of another 1918. "Every day it's hammered into them that they have only two alternatives: either to win the war, in which case they will have a bright future, or to lose the war, in which case, their present leaders assure them, there will be such a peace as will make Versailles look like an ideal instrument of justice and fair dealing." Versailles remained to all Germans shorthand for a settlement of the world that left Germany not only defeated but impoverished, diminished and humiliated. Hitler had risen to power on his

promises to reverse the Versailles Treaty. No German could face a repetition, let alone something worse.

Shirer was able to breathe freely only on his rare escapes from Germany to neutral territory, Holland until May 10, 1940, otherwise to Switzerland. Even then he had to be circumspect in his reporting, which was heard in Berlin, lest his press credentials were withdrawn. When he returned to Berlin the cloud of censorship and controlled news descended again, engulfing and muffling him throughout one of the most dramatic summers of modern history. By the winter he had had enough. He had already sent his wife and daughter home. In December, 1940, he told the head of CBS news that his "usefulness in Germany is over". Almost all other independent American correspondents in Germany had been expelled and, though his own relations with German officialdom remained "correct", and with the German radio and army even "friendly", it was the Gestapo that was the real power and, as mentioned above, it had accused him of "working for the American intelligence service". Europe, he said, "is completely dominated by Germany," and "it is no longer possible to do even faintly objective broadcasts." Accordingly, he had decided to leave and stay away. "There is no continent of Europe to go back to for my kind of reporting."

Americans of Shirer's sort would return, and would revive the directness and integrity of his "kind of reporting", but they would come with the Allied armies of liberation. Between 1941 and 1944, the style of "This is Berlin" would disappear from the airwaves of occupied Europe, leaving Americans with no listening-post inside Hitler's empire. Europeans themselves, starved of anything but the untruths served to them by Goebbels' Enlightenment Ministry, would risk imprisonment for a few mouthfuls of truth illegally picked up from the lifeline of the BBC. "*This is Berlin*" will remind its readers, complacent as they may have become in a multi-media world, of how stifling it is to live under a

controlled press and how essential to life and happiness is the output of free speech.

# PREFACE

*Inga Shirer Dean*

MY FATHER WAS always astonished by his life. That he had come from placid small-town Iowa to Kabul, Ur, Babylon, Delhi, Paris, Vienna, Berlin during two of the most turbulent decades in modern history, never ceased to amaze him. Nor did the quirks of fate that had brought him there. He told us stories of traveling through the mountain passes of Afghanistan, of marching beside Gandhi in India, of watching the frightening theater of the Nuremberg rallies, of the thick dark night of a Berlin wartime blackout and the whine of falling bombs, of mountains and rivers and paintings and cafés. The stories sailed like kites above the landscape of the midwestern childhood that always seemed so much a part of him, despite all he had seen and learned in a lifetime away.

“I was born in the horse and buggy age,” he would frequently point out, happily reciting lists of inventions and conveniences of daily life we children took for granted. And it was true that the America of his childhood had only just passed into a new century and was still largely agrarian, gas-lit, and horse-drawn. He was born months before the birth of the hemophiliac son of the Tsar, more than a decade before revolution brought Communism to Russia, and lived to see the Soviet empire dissolve. On the mantelpiece in his house in the Berkshire Hills where he spent the last twenty-five years of his life, there was a piece of the Berlin Wall a friend had brought him.

My grandfather, a U.S. attorney in Chicago with a growing reputation as a trial lawyer and national political prospects, died in 1913 when my father was nine. My grandmother had little choice but to sell the Chicago house and return to a circumscribed small-town life with her parents in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As children, my sister and I would roll our eyes as my father started yet another story about delivering newspapers at dawn and selling eggs to help with family finances. But behind these stories was a profound sadness at the early loss of a father he revered, a loss that had banished his family from a world that seemed, in the quiet of a prairie night, exciting, promising, and distant.

My father was a great believer in luck. "Being in the right place at the right time," he told us often, was what made a great journalistic career. That was part of it for him: in 1925 he had gone to Europe with a college friend and, immediately smitten by Paris, tried to find a newspaper job. Though he had worked for a Cedar Rapids daily since high school, he realized his small-town background seemed pallid next to the more urbane Ivy Leaguers who were flocking to Paris in the twenties. After a summer of vigorous sightseeing nothing had materialized from either of the Paris newspapers to which he had applied. Packed and ready to bid Paris farewell, he found a note from the *Chicago Tribune* under his door offering him a job. It was a job on the copy desk and paid \$15 a week, even then and even in Paris hardly a living wage. He accepted immediately. And so the course of his life was altered forever and for the next twenty years he found "the right place."

Nine years later, fluent now in German and French and with a working knowledge of Spanish and Italian, he had reported from Austria, Italy, France, Germany, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Afghanistan, India and the Middle East. He had married a Viennese photographer and in 1933 they pooled their money to spend a sabbatical year in Spain where he worked on a novel about India, and with my



mother got to know his neighbor Andres Segovia, read, swam, hiked and entertained visiting friends. In 1934, with their funds dwindling, my parents returned to Paris where my father took a job on the copy desk of the Paris *Herald*, a great come-down for the young foreign correspondent, but it was the best he could do. He watched the developments in Berlin, writing in his diary at the end of June, 1934, "Wish I could get a post in Berlin. It's a story I'd like to cover." Less than two months later his old friend Arno Dosch-Fleurot offered him a job in Berlin with Universal Service, one of Hearst's two wire services. He eagerly accepted and moved to the German capital where he would chronicle the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.

Three years later he lost his job again. For the third time in five years he had been fired, and it would not be the last. This time it was because Hearst decided to fold Universal Service which was losing money. My father's relief at being offered a job on the other Hearst wire service, INS, was short-lived. Before the month was out, on an August night while he was working on a dispatch at the office, he received a wire on the ticker that gave him two weeks' notice. In another of those moments of "luck" that so marked his career, a telegram from Edward R. Murrow arrived at the same time. My father had not taken notice of it, had with his typical unflappable if occasionally disheartened calm, finished his dispatch and gone for a walk, "a little depressed" as he noted in his diary that night. Returning to his office he noticed the wire:

WILL YOU HAVE DINNER WITH ME AT THE ADLON FRIDAY NIGHT? MURROW, COLUMBIA BROADCASTING.

With his wife Tess expecting a baby, jobless, feeling like a failure and old at thirty-three, he probably regarded Murrow's invitation to dinner more hopefully than he would later admit, though radio was a medium he had paid little attention to and Murrow's name was only vaguely familiar.

The rapport between the two men was instantaneous. They had both left small-town America and felt immediately at home in the capitals of Europe. They shared the same liberal politics, the same moral perspective. That evening was the beginning of the closest friendship my father ever had, one born of respect, affection and trust, nurtured by the intensity of the work and the times.

Ed Murrow, my father would discover later, had to fight to get him hired. Murrow, who at the time had no newspaper experience, wanted a reporter knowledgeable about Europe, fluent in its languages, with contacts and sources. Yet there was the question of the voice. Unlike Murrow's deep voice and elegant phrasing, my father's intonation was flat, his timbre reedy. Murrow must have also heard it and known he would probably have to go to bat to get this reporter hired. The test, in a small and dusty room in the Post and Telegraph office in Berlin was a comedy of errors. The CBS Berlin representative who would introduce him on the air, had to race back to a café where she had dined to retrieve her script and only returned moments before the broadcast. My father could not reach the microphone and, advised to point his head upward, his voice strangled into a squeak. Seconds before air time he pushed some packing boxes under the mike, had the engineer help him up and then sat, with legs dangling, knowing that his job depended not so much on what he said, but how he sounded saying it.

New York was not impressed. But he was saved by Murrow's insistence. His job would be to arrange broadcasts and to recruit other reporters to speak on the air. In fact neither Murrow nor my father was expected to speak on the air and it was not until the Nazis marched into Austria the following February that either man was allowed to broadcast.

In 1938 radio was considered a vehicle for entertainment and light news. A few years earlier *Editor and Publisher* had asserted that radio "can only skim the news . . . with some

news bulletins and a few routine reports such as a smattering of stock quotations, grain and produce reports, weather, sporting results and . . . key-hole gossip reporting.” Radio news had begun in 1920 but as the decade closed commentators like H.V. Kaltenborn and Lowell Thomas were exceptions to the rule of radio providing little more than headline news.

Still, while Europe headed to war, with Hitler increasingly governing the course of events, the balance of programming remained entertainment of varying quality, often in quest of cultural “understanding” as in its presentation of Bulgarian children’s choirs and tulip festivals in Holland. In 1930 news broadcasting from Europe started with coverage of the Five-Power conference in London but because of the time difference and the edict against recording, the broadcasts went on the air at hours most Americans were asleep. Yet, radio’s ability to effect a distinctive sort of news, projecting a sense of intimacy and immediacy that was not possible on the printed page, was becoming apparent.

The potential of radio had not escaped the Nazis. Propaganda chief Josef Goebbels already understood the power of radio to persuade, inform and misinform. Shortly after Hitler came to power in 1933, Goebbels and his new Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda built a bureaucracy that controlled every aspect of broadcasting from transmitters to personnel. “What press has been in the 19th century, radio will be for the 20th,” he announced. Inexpensive radios were made available to Germans, loudspeakers broadcast on streets and into restaurants and cafés. By the time Germany went to war, there were often zealous wardens in place to see to it that everyone stopped to listen to broadcasts, the most important introduced by portentous music, announcers and periods of silence. No waiter could serve, nor diner eat during those bulletins.

Murrow's vision of the future of broadcast journalism and the excitement that lay ahead for these two young Americans who had so quickly formed a bond, must have been remarkably inspiring. My father, who never had much taste for popular culture, seemed excessively eager about doing his job. He wrote Murrow in December with a proposal for a program on Tyrolean zither music and dances:

one of those kind where they slap themselves all over, you know, and make a lot of noise . . . This really ought to have 30 minutes instead of 15, if you could get the time.

He was still awkward, feeling his way. When he was putting together one of Columbia's beloved children's choir broadcasts he wrote Ed:

do you keep the kids in the studio during the broadcast all the time? . . . They wouldn't gum things up, would they, crowd around the mike, and talk all at once?

Somewhat wiser, Murrow replied: "re kids: the difficulty will be to get ONE to talk!"

They could laugh at the business. "Please contact vaudeville agencies ascertain whether any parrot available willing talk microphonely," Murrow cabled my father in December 1937. Did the parrot have to be English-speaking? my father queried. "German parrot okay," Murrow replied.

Separating entertainment and news would come later. A long cable from my father to CBS in December 1938, nine months after Hitler marched into Austria describes a possible Christmas toy broadcast from Lausanne which "features exhibition toy boxes and musical toys".

Though radio historians credit the Anschluss broadcasts in March of 1938 as being the turning point for radio news, days before the brewing Austrian crisis climaxed in the Nazi takeover of the country, with the birth of his first child imminent, my father was called to Bulgaria to broadcast yet

another children's choir. My birth, which occurred during his absence, turned out to be very difficult, leaving my mother dangerously ill for weeks.

During the critical month of March my father was rushing back and forth to the hospital to visit my mother whose health was not improving, gathering the story which was moving chaotically fast, and trying to get on the radio to broadcast. Austria was the most demanding story of my father's career. As Hitler's troops marched into Vienna and took over Austrian radio, he was unable to get on the air. NBC, which had signed special contracts with most state-owned radio systems in Europe had, as usual, better luck.

My father anxiously tried to get hold of Ed, who was in Warsaw, but repeated attempts failed. Finally Ed's call from Poland came through. "Fly to London, why don't you?" said Murrow. "You can get there by tomorrow evening and give the first uncensored eyewitness account." Ed would come to Vienna to maintain Columbia's coverage there. My father managed to get a plane to Berlin, then to London.

From New York the next day Columbia's news director Paul White ordered a "European roundup". The Roundup, which is now the pattern for television news broadcasting, with segments relayed from different spots where news is breaking, was fairly new to radio. It had been tried before but not with news, and even with months to make the arrangements there were frequent breakdowns in transmission and timing. This time there were only eight hours to get it organized. It did not help that this was Sunday afternoon and many of the people Columbia wanted for the program were out of town. But, my father wrote in his diary that night, "the more I thought about it, the simpler it became." He and Ed knew American newspaper correspondents in every capital as well as the directors and chief engineers of various European broadcasting facilities. Murrow would arrange the Berlin and Vienna end, explaining

to my father how the entire job could be done technically. Where there were no short-wave transmitters available, phone lines would have to be used. Rome was a problem, but the correspondent could dictate his story to New York. Cues from New York to start speaking sometimes could not be heard and so the reporter would just have to start and finish at exactly the times appointed. Cables on times, permissions, frequencies went back and forth.

It worked, with no cues missed, no technical glitches. In that “half hour radio came into its own as a full-fledged news medium,” writes Alexander Kendrick in his book *Prime Time*. His sentiments were shared. The British magazine *Cavalcade* lauded the “spot relays from European capitals plus expert commentaries by students of foreign affairs” that kept America informed. “Fortunate are those Britons who have receivers which bring in the Columbia broadcasts.”

Mixed with the excitement of the new venture and developing friendship was the reality of living in Nazi Germany. My father wrote in his diary at the time he joined Murrow that the Nazis and their war preparations

hang over all our lives, like a dark, brooding cloud that never clears. Often we have tried to segregate ourselves from it all. We have found three refuges: ourselves, our books . . . our friends . . . the lakes and woods around Berlin.

When my parents agreed my mother should move to Switzerland in 1938 shortly after my birth, he missed her. For the next two and a half years my mother ran the CBS office in Geneva, from where she could communicate with New York by telephone and cable without fear of Nazi eavesdropping, and relay messages to and from my father in Berlin. He looked forward to the brief sojourns in Switzerland with us, escaping the increasing darkness of Germany.

He disliked Nazi Berlin as much as he loved Paris. Though he lived in comfort at the Adlon Hotel, the telephones were bugged, the rooms surreptitiously searched and the staff were generally believed to be Gestapo informers. There was evidence everywhere of increasingly virulent anti-semitism: in the smashed windows of Kristall Nacht, the signs in parks forbidding Jews to sit on the benches, the crude cartoons in the papers. Howard K. Smith, who was also in Berlin at the time, has written of the “hermetically sealed atmosphere, the awful fit of depression each of us fell into with periodic regularity,” which came to be known in the press community as the Berlin Blues.

For a radio reporter there were special frustrations. There were the crucial broadcasts that never got through. Weather and sun spots could interfere, lines could go down or be unavailable, unfriendly countries could block transmissions, but in Germany and the countries it conquered, censorship was the radio reporter’s primary concern. In its bureaucratic set-up, the Germans decreed that broadcasts had to be submitted to the Propaganda Ministry, Foreign Office and High Command, in contrast to the print journalists whose cables were not censored, though the ever-present threat of banishment or worse was in itself a form of censorship. My father, broadcasting in late evening because of the time difference, would bring his script in about an hour before air time. The three censors would sit around a table and read the broadcasts carefully. My father’s frustrations with the censors rankled all his life. Once when I told him rather blithely that one of the censors, an ardent Nazi when my father knew him in Berlin, had surfaced at Harvard where I was a student at the time, he did not find it at all amusing. Instead he was outraged and exploded in anger, something I rarely saw him do and never forgot.

In trying to get past the censors he would often employ idiomatic English since most Germans spoke England’s version of the language, as well as a dry, ironic humor and a

certain ingenuous tone. Trying to show that British Prime Minister Chamberlain was backing Hitler against Czechoslovakia he said:

one thing is certain: Mr. Chamberlain will certainly get a warm welcome at Godesberg. In fact I get the impression in Berlin tonight that Mr. Chamberlain is a pretty popular figure around here.

Describing a newsreel that had been privately shown to correspondents after the invasion of Poland his last two sentences were:

I mention a second thing in that newsreel that interested me. It was a series of shots showing Polish Jews with long beards and long black coats working on the road gangs in Poland.

Those techniques sometimes failed because one of the censors frequently at that table had lived in the States a long time. It was best to give them something to cut, he would tell us, and hope they would let other things go by.

In the increasing isolation of the German capital, as his words went off into the darkness, he often was not sure if people would understand. The frequent calls, letters and cables he and Murrow had exchanged before Germany went to war with England, were no longer possible. Censorship grew more rigorous: sometimes most of his broadcast was censored. Words such as "alleged", "claimed", "asserted" could not be used in conjunction with any official statement as they cast doubt on its veracity. The word "Nazi" was forbidden because censors were aware that it sounded like "nasty." National Socialist was the correct term. By late 1939 he was having an edgy exchange of cables with CBS news director Paul White in New York, that outlined my father's feelings about not going on the air with an eviscerated script. After what must have been a reprimand from White, my father cabled, in the abbreviated language of the telegram:



WHITE: APPRECIATE YOUR EMBARRASSMENT BUT EYE CANNOT GO ON WHEN UNALLOWED SAY ANYTHING AFTER FIGHTING CENSOR ALL EVENING PREVIOUS TWO SCRIPTS. DECLINED GO ON ANY MORE. WITH CENSORSHIP STRICT AND OFFICIAL NEWS OBVIOUSLY HIDING ALL UNPLEASANTNESSES THINK WE OVERPLAYING BERLIN. SHIRER.

and again:

WHITE: DONT UNDERSTAND YOUR ATTITUDE SINCE FAILURE TALK DUE FACT CUTS MADE BY CENSOR RENDERED SCRIPT UNINTELLIGIBLE IMPOSSIBLE ME GIVE ONLY OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA ITEM. PLEASE CABLE TESS TEXT ANY MESSAGE RECEIVED YESTERDAY EXHERE OTHER THAN FROM ME. SUSPECT FUNNY BUSINESS. SHIRER.

In December 1940, my father left Berlin. He had a serious case of the Berlin Blues and for some time had been feeling that his days were numbered in Germany. He always told us that he feared he would be accused of being a spy and end up in jail. Several reporters suffered that fate, including United Press reporter Richard C. Hottelet who was jailed on trumped-up charges. Howard K. Smith remembered that it took “devotion and sheer luck to stay in the country and refuse to play the Nazi game”.

My mother and I had left Geneva in October, and after a rather harrowing trip through occupied France en route to Lisbon, were living in New York, so the relief and retreat she had offered in Switzerland were gone. My father missed the close contact with Murrow. They got together once more in Europe: a week in Portugal, where Ed came to see my father off. He would write in his diary as his boat steamed out of Lisbon on Dec. 13, 1940:

all day both of us depressed at leaving, for we have worked together very closely, Ed and I, during the last three turbulent years over here and a bond grew that was very real, a kind you make only a few times in your life, and somehow, absurdly no doubt, sentimentally perhaps, we had a presentiment that the fortunes of war, maybe just a little bomb, would make this reunion the last.

Though it was not to be their last meeting, the relationship soon faltered and, shortly after the war, ruptured bitterly. It was then that my father was fired by CBS, and he blamed Murrow who had become a CBS vice president. It was a

rupture that Ed tried to heal shortly before his death in 1964 by inviting my parents to his farm in Pawling, New York. It had been a painful break for both families: my mother and Janet Murrow were also very fond of each other and she was my sister's godmother. My father would always say that we can never know another person completely, and sometimes we know them quite incompletely, and his refusal to accept Ed's olive branch baffles me to this day. Though the afternoon was pleasant on the surface as they chatted about old times and old friends, when Ed took my reluctant father off for a ride around the property in his jeep, sweating from the pain of his cancer, my father determinedly kept the conversation light. Ed, whom he had loved, now so clearly near death, was plainly trying to discuss what had happened and heal the breach between them. My father with his disingenuous chatter would not let him. When I asked him about it again not long before his death two months short of his ninetieth birthday, his face tensed with grim determination. He was not going to let Ed bring it up, he said. Even though he was dying? I asked. That's right he said firmly, ending the conversation.

My father spent his last twenty-five years in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. Perhaps it was a return to the simpler life of a small town that he had known as a boy, but he never saw it that way. He had come to find country life better for a writer, and after his career in radio ended in the fifties, he had started spending more and more time at our farm in northwestern Connecticut. He found New York distracting, too many friends to lunch and dine with, too much theater and music to tempt him away from his desk. He often said, and I think came to believe, that being fired from CBS was a blessing. It gave him a chance for an entirely different second act, of which there were supposed to be none in America.

In the last three decades of his long life he became the writer he had always wanted to be. Not, as he had once hoped, of great works of the imagination on the scale of his beloved French and Russian nineteenth century-novelists, but as an historian of the events he had witnessed, deepening his knowledge with years of research in archives and libraries. Outwardly, in his later years, he seemed the amiable, populist midwesterner of his heritage, walking around the small New England village where he made his home, sporting a red woolen gnome hat and old blue parka during the long winters, or jeans and straw hat while working in his large vegetable garden on summer afternoons.

But in his twenties and thirties he had been far from this tranquil village. He was learning about the immensity of the human spirit from Mahatma Gandhi and of the enormous evil that could destroy it from Adolf Hitler. He saw the great country of Beethoven, Luther, Goethe and Schiller, of his own paternal forebears, lose its soul and conscience. He learned, as he frequently said, how thin and brittle the veneer of civilization can be. What had happened, and why, was the question he asked over and over and spent the rest of his life trying to answer.

Inga Shirer Dean  
Lenox, Massachusetts  
December, 1998

## PROLOGUE

### **Shirer CBS London March 12, 1938**

*[THIS REPORT ON the Anschluss was Shirer's first major news broadcast. It was made from London, the newly-installed Nazis having refused him access to the Vienna radio station. A few days earlier he had been in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, arranging for a broadcast by a chorus of coal-miners' children for Columbia's School of the Air. On his return to Vienna, he found that Chancellor Schuschnigg had defied Hitler by suddenly ordering a plebiscite that asked: "Are you for an independent, social, Christian, German, united Austria?"]*

Well, it all happened very quickly in Vienna last night. I have just arrived by air from Vienna, after an all-day flight by way of Prague, Dresden, Berlin and Amsterdam. The regular planes to London from Vienna were very crowded; I couldn't get a seat.

When I returned to Vienna yesterday from Yugoslavia, I found a fair lot of tension. Some called it election fever. As you know, Dr. Schuschnigg, the Austrian chancellor, had suddenly called a plebiscite for Sunday. Hitler and the Nazis had been demanding one for years - and there it was. But this time it was evident that the Nazis did not like it. "Why?" I asked them; and they said that in the form it was, and in the way it was suddenly sprung, it was unfair. They agreed with everyone else in Vienna that Dr. Schuschnigg would probably win it.

As I made my way yesterday morning from the station to my home, I found the Vienna streets littered with millions of electioneering leaflets, calling on the populace to vote for Schuschnigg and Austrian independence. Men were throwing them out of trucks, wagons, carts, knapsacks and airplanes. When I reached home I noticed a radio van parked at a nearby corner. Its loudspeaker was blaring away selections from Dr. Schuschnigg's latest speeches, and urging listeners to vote for him. Right behind the van was a bus full of police. That struck a friend I was with as a bit funny. He wondered if the government was getting a bit uncertain about things.

Neither of us knew of Hitler's ultimatum. That was about 10 a.m. yesterday. Along before noon I walked down towards the center of town. Here and there small groups of high school boys were loitering about shouting "Heil Hitler!" and raising their arms in salute. And there were a lot of policemen about, politely keeping the youngsters circulating.

I went into a café and there met two friends. We encountered some Austrian newspapermen who reported that the Nazis had just broken the windows of the monarchists' offices, and that the monarchists, a legion working for the return of Otto of Hapsburg, were a bit frightened. But no one in the café seemed unduly nervous. We still had the impression, I must admit, that the plebiscite would be held peacefully. We heard the radio announce the call-out of army reserves to keep order. We know now that that was Dr. Schuschnigg's first answer to Hitler's ultimatum; but at that time we thought it would help insure a peaceful election.

At noon I left the café and strolled down the street to the Opera, the center of town. There I found a couple of hundred socialists gathered. They were raising their hands in a clenched-fist salute. And answering them with a fascist salute was a crowd of about the same number of Nazis

standing in front of the German tourist bureau across the street. In this bureau hung a full-length picture of Hitler.

Nothing much happened at the Opera then, so the police dispersed both groups. I went from there to the former imperial palace, and noted that the courtyard was full of trucks loaded with workers. Their cars were decorated with Schuschnigg posters. And they were shouting against the Nazis and for the government. I then made a quick tour of the workers' district - nothing exciting. I mention these things because a few hours later, you remember, Dr. Schuschnigg in his dramatic farewell message over the radio declared that the news brought from Germany concerning what had been caused by the workers, the shedding of blood, etc., were lies from A to Z, as he put it.

I'm here reporting what I saw, not giving my personal opinions. I saw no disorders in Vienna provoked by the workers. But when I arrived in Berlin this noon I found that the newspapers were appearing in flaming headlines about violent red disorders - as they put it - in Vienna. And I have here before me the front page of Chancellor Hitler's own newspaper, the focus of attention this morning. Its banner headline reads: GERMAN-AUSTRIA SAVED FROM CHAOS.

People here in London keep asking me who were the Nazis from Berlin who superintended last night's remarkable turn of events. Well, there were conflicting reports in both Vienna and Berlin; but early this morning we were officially informed in Vienna that Rudolph Hess, Hitler's deputy and right-hand man, had arrived during the evening and gone straight to the Chancellery.

Austria's resistance to Nazi socialism actually collapsed at 6.15 p.m. yesterday, March 11, when it was announced on the radio that the plebiscite had been indefinitely postponed.

In the streets you could feel the consternation among the workers. Many had been armed and placed around the