THE WORLD WILL HOLD ITS BREATH

1940-1

By Melissa Levine

What are we going to do tonight, Brain?
The same thing we do every night, Pinky....

...TRY AND TAKE OVER THE WORLD!
Summer of 1940
Conflict in Balkans from attempted imperialism
Why is that a problem?
Ribbentrop goes to Vienna to settle conflict between Hungary and Rumania
Hitler supporter comes to power in Rumania, “requests” help from Hitler’s troops → Hitler makes Rumania a satellite state

Russia protests, Germany completely ignores them
  - But Italy protests too…
Italy wanted influence in the Balkans, Hitler advises Ciano not to move.

Italy upset but doesn’t do anything, Germany relaxes a little (355).

Relations not affected: Tripartite pact with Germany, Italy, and Japan signed September, 1940.

A sign of things to come…
Italy and Greece

- Hitler securing control over Rumania, Mussolini flips, threatens to occupy Greece
- Italian Prestige → invaded October 28, 1940
- Why does this upset Hitler? (2 reasons)
  - Story time
  - Hitler angry with Mussolini but can’t risk alienating him
    - Too late to stop him, so Hitler offers support
- Ready for trouble – prepares troops to send to North Africa, Rumania, Greece
Russia’s Suspicions

- Russia suspicious of German agreements with Rumania and Finland – asks to be informed, Germany complies
  - Molotov not satisfied, agrees to visit Berlin
- Arrives November 12, Hitler starts a speech about cooperation, but Molotov insists on straight answers (359)
  - Hitler “taken aback”, breaks off discussion because of “possible air raid”
Hitler justifies German actions, wants to talk about division of the British empire

Hitler and Molotov take shelter from air raid—Ribbentrop: “Great time to mention the new Tripartite Pact” (361)

- Lays out spheres of influence for Axis keeping Russia out of Balkans and Mediterranean
- 2nd protocol offered to win over Turkey as an ally
- Vague promises to encourage non-aggression between Russia and Japan

Molotov unimpressed – wants influence in Europe

Ribbentrop goes back to talking about Britain
November 25, Molotov agrees to four-power pact, with more conditions:

- Immediate withdrawal of German troops from Finland
- Mutual assistance pact between Russia and Bulgaria
- Russian base on Bosphorus/Dardanelles
- Japan’s renunciation of rights to coal and oil concessions in northern Sakhalin

Hitler doesn’t even reply – why?
Hitler convinces himself that Russia is going to attack him, gives him reason to invade Russia (even though Russia actually wanted to avoid war with Hitler)
Mussolini having trouble

Hitler’s fix-it plans:
- Get Spain involved
- Get Russia and Turkey out
- Get Yugoslavia on board as ally
- Make Rumania accept German troops

Mussolini accepts: “He has really smacked my fingers.”

BUT things are going downhill fast – Italy loses position in Africa
Hitler helps Italy while continuing long-term plans:
- December 10: Orders Air Force to Southern Italy
- December 13: Orders invasion of Greece
- December 18: Directive No. 21 for Barbarossa – preparing the armed forces to fight Russia
- December 19: Hitler promises aid to Italy if Germans can determine its use, Italian workmen sent to Germany
But first: Mussolini goes to Germany (366)
Hitler told no one of his plans
  - Wanted Japan to attack Singapore to hurt Britain
Good strategy, bad diplomacy (368)
  - Overbearing, too overt, deceptive
  - Japanese essentially ended alliance with Germany
No time for public appearances

I'm not saying you're a bad friend...

I'm just saying you aren't a good one to ME....

He’s sad because he hasn’t seen Hitler in weeks
Easily crossed Hungary and Rumania
Crossed Bulgaria after defeating the Russians
Bribes Yugoslavia to accept Tripartite pact → some Yugoslav officers carry out a coup d’état
Hitler furious → postpones attack on Russia to get revenge – reveals Hitler’s character (370)
- Political and military preparations to attack: gets support from Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria, creates conflict within Yugoslavia and with neighboring countries
Operation Punishment

- Bombings begin April 6th, same day as invasion of Greece – both successful
- Effect on relationship with Italy?
  - Italian invasion eventually completed by Germany – Mussolini humiliated
  - Division of Yugoslavia – Italy given the same consideration as other German satellites
  - Same deal in Africa: Germany takes over and wins by April 12th
British quickly losing influence in Eastern Mediterranean, Germans gaining.

British resources stretched thin in Far East, possibly allowing German (at least initial) victory in Egypt.

RUSSIA!!!!!
But why, Hitler?

because I am stupid.
Hitler’s Plans for Russia

- Plan: encircle Russian troops near the Russian frontier, get help from allies at the last minute
- Pitches Russian invasion to generals as self-defense…but encourages harshness
  - Himmler and SS given a free hand in occupied territories, territories to be controlled by administrators appointed by Hitler and economically exploited immediately
  - Needed land to produce food – people need not be considered
    - Process accelerated by gas chambers
The Invasion (Final Preparations)

- Finished in the Balkans, June 22 set as new attack date
- Germany ordered goods from Russia until the last minute, Russians kept giving it, trying to appease
  - Meanwhile, Russia is trying to hide the problem (377)
  - Still no evidence of Russian attack on Germany
- Rumania and Finland on board with attack, Hungary informed, Turkey agrees to non-aggression with Germany, nobody tells Mussolini until the night before
The Invasion

- Over 150 divisions attack, supported by over 2,700 aircraft
- Hitler’s apparent self-fulfilling prophecy (379-380)
Which of the following phrases best describes Hitler in this chapter?

- My way or the highway
- Tunnel vision
- Weaving through traffic
- Four-car pileup