

international or internal political developments with a measure of success.

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We all know that by 1914, Western Civilization had entered upon a period of acute crisis. Of this epoch of stress and strain the outbreak of the First World War (1914), the Russian Revolution of 1917, the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Hitler's coup d'état in 1933, the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and, last but not least, the conquest of China by the Communists in 1949, are the highlights. Small wonder that the future of our culture has disturbed the man in the street nearly as much as the great thinker. In a number of utopian novels the future society has been painted in increasingly pessimistic hues. Indeed in contrast to the older optimistic utopia which had envisaged a brighter future for man and of which Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) is the first specimen and H. G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) one of the last, a new type of counter-utopia has emerged. Jack London's *Iron Heel*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and George Orwell's 1984, different though they may be, all warn us of the dangers and temptations of the future.

In more scholarly and learned treatises, such philosophers, historians, and sociologists as Ortega y Gasset, Burnham, Toynbee, and Sorokin acquaint us with their vision of the future. Most of their predictions are so recent and refer so much to a future that is still in the making that we are not yet in a position to verify them as we can verify the forecasts of older philosophers of history. Among the latter, the German Oswald Spengler, whose book *The Decline of the West* was written before and during the first World War, is the leading figure. His were the most original thoughts upon which Toynbee and Sorokin were extensively drawing. Hence it may be worthwhile to determine to what extent Spengler's prophecies have been borne out by the development of these last decades.

At a time when Wilsonian optimism was at its height, Spengler saw signs of decline in our Western Civilization which resembled the symptoms of disease of the later Greek and Roman society. He asserted that, like any civilization, our society was doomed to disintegration and collapse. Every civilization, he explained, goes through seasonal cycles of spring, summer, autumn and winter. It grows from childhood to adolescence, then to maturity and old age, to die at the end of its prescribed life span of a thousand years. This organismic conception of history has been strongly criticized, but in spite of some faulty assumptions, Spengler succeeded in charting correctly many later trends. His predictions of the weakening of democracy and the onset of a new age of "Caesarism", in which dictators would rule the masses with an iron hand, and