

A STUDY OF HISTORY

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Doloris

Sopitam recreant volnera viva animam.

Anon.

ABRIDGEMENT
OF VOLUMES I-VI

BY

D. C. SOMERVELL

*Issued under the auspices of the
Royal Institute of International Affairs*

GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

1946

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HISTORY

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PLAN OF THE BOOK

(The present volume is an abridgement of Parts I-V)

- I INTRODUCTION
- II THE GENESES OF CIVILIZATIONS
- III THE GROWTHS OF CIVILIZATIONS
- IV THE BREAKDOWNS OF CIVILIZATIONS
- V THE DISINTEGRATIONS OF CIVILIZATIONS
- VI UNIVERSAL STATES
- VII UNIVERSAL CHURCHES
- VIII HEROIC AGES
- IX CONTACTS BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS IN SPACE
- X CONTACTS BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS IN TIME
- XI RHYTHMS IN THE HISTORIES OF CIVILIZATIONS
- XII THE PROSPECTS OF THE WESTERN CIVILIZATION
- XIII THE INSPIRATIONS OF HISTORIANS

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

MR. D. C. SOMERVELL explains in his own following prefatory note how he came to make this abridgement of the first six volumes of my book. Before I knew anything about it, a number of inquiries had been reaching me, particularly from the United States, as to whether there was any likelihood of an abridgement of these volumes being published pending the time—now inevitably postponed far beyond all original expectations owing to the war—when I should be able to publish the rest of the work. I had been feeling the force of this demand, but had not seen how to meet it (being, as I was, very fully occupied with war-work) until the problem was solved in a most happy way by a letter from Mr. Somervell telling me that an abridgement, made by him, was now in existence.

When Mr. Somervell sent me his manuscript, more than four years had already passed since the publication of volumes IV–VI and more than nine years since that of volumes I–III. For a writer the act of publication always, I suppose, has the effect of turning into a foreign body the work that, so long as it was in the making, was a part of its maker's life; and in this case the war of 1939–1945, with the changes of circumstance and occupation that it brought with it, had also intervened between my book and me (volumes IV–VI were published forty-one days before the war broke out). In working over Mr. Somervell's manuscript, I have therefore been able—notwithstanding his skill in retaining my own words—to read the abridgement almost as though it were a new book from another hand than mine. I have now made it fully my own by here and there recasting the language (with Mr. Somervell's good-natured acquiescence) as I have gone along, but I have not compared the abridgement with the original line by line, and I have made a point of never reinserting any passage that Mr. Somervell had left out—believing, as I do, that the author himself is unlikely to be the best judge of what is and is not an indispensable part of his work.

The maker of a skilful abridgement does an author a most valuable service which his own hand cannot readily do for him, and readers of the present volume who are acquainted with the original text will, I am sure, agree with me that Mr. Somervell's literary craftsmanship has been skilful indeed. He has managed to preserve the argument of the book, to present it for the most part in the original words and at the same time to abridge six volumes into

one volume. If I had been set this task myself, I doubt whether I could have accomplished it.

Though Mr. Somervell has made the lesser task of working over his abridgement as light a one for the author as it could well be, two further years have passed since I first set to work on it. For periods of weeks and months on end I have had to let it lie untouched at my elbow. These delays have been due to the exigencies of war-work; but the notes for the rest of the book are intact, in the safe keeping of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (I posted them in Munich week to the Executive Secretary of the Council, Mr. Mallory, who kindly undertook to look after them), and while there is life there is hope of finishing one's work. Not the least of my reasons for being grateful to Mr. Somervell is that the process of working on his abridgement of those volumes of the book that have already been published has helped me to begin to turn my mind again to those that I have still to write.

It is also a happy thing for me that this volume is being published, like the full version of the book, by the Oxford University Press, and that the Index is being made by Miss V. M. Boulter, to whom readers of the full version are already indebted for the two indexes to Volumes I-III and Volumes IV-VI.

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

1946

NOTE

BY THE EDITOR OF THE ABRIDGEMENT

MR. TOYNBEE'S *Study of History* presents a single continuous argument as to the nature and pattern of the historical experience of the human race since the first appearance of the species of societies called civilizations, and that argument is illustrated and, so far as the nature of the material allows, 'proved' at every stage by a diversity of illustrations drawn from the whole length and breadth of human history, so far as human history is known to the historians of our day. Some of these illustrations are worked out in great detail. That being the nature of the book, the task of the editor of an abridgement is in essentials perfectly simple, namely to preserve the argument intact, though in an abbreviated statement, and to reduce in some degree the number of illustrations and, in a much greater degree, the detail of their exposition.

I think that this volume makes an adequate presentation of Mr. Toynbee's philosophy of history in so far as it is set forth in the six published volumes of his yet unfinished work. If it did not do so Mr. Toynbee would obviously not have approved its publication. But I should be very sorry if it came to be regarded as an entirely satisfactory substitute for the original work. For 'business purposes' it is perhaps an adequate substitute: for pleasure surely not; for a large part of the charm of the original resides in the leisured amplitude of its illustrations. Only the big book, one feels, is aesthetically worthy of the bigness of its subject. I have been able to use to such a very large extent the actual sentences and paragraphs of the original that I have no fear that this abridgement will be found dull, but I am equally certain that the original will be found much more entrancing.

I made this abridgement for my own amusement, without Mr. Toynbee's knowledge and without any idea of publication. It seemed to me an agreeable way of passing the time. Only when it was finished did I tell Mr. Toynbee of its existence and place it at his disposal if at any time he cared to make any use of it. Such being its origin I allowed myself occasionally to interpolate a little illustration of my own not found in the original work. After all, it is written 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treadeth out his master's corn'. These intrusions of mine are small in extent and smaller in importance. As the whole of my manuscript has been carefully revised by Mr. Toynbee and they have received his *imprimatur* along with all the rest, there is no need to indicate them

either here or by means of footnotes to the text. I mention them merely because a careful reader who discovered them by comparing this book with the original might feel that, in respect of them, the game of abridgement was not being played according to the strictest rules. There are also one or two places where a few sentences have been interpolated, either by Mr. Toynbee or by myself, in view of events that have occurred since the original work was published. But on the whole, seeing that the first three volumes were published in 1933 and the others in 1939, it is amazing how little work of that kind was called for.

The 'Argument' which appears as an Appendix to the work is in effect an abridgement of an abridgement. Whereas this work presents an original of over 3,000 pages in 565, the 'Argument' presents the same in a mere 25. Read as a 'thing in itself' it would prove extremely indigestible, but it may prove useful for purposes of reference all the way through. It is, in fact, a kind of 'Table of Contents', and the only reason for not putting it at the beginning is that it would constitute a rather large and ugly object in the foreground of the picture.

For readers who wish to refer from this book to the original volumes the following equations will be useful.

Pages	1-79	represent	Volume	I of the original work.
"	80-164	"	II	"
"	165-243	"	III	"
"	244-359	"	IV	"
"	360-494	"	V	"
"	495-565	"	VI	"

D. C. SOMERVELL

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I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE UNIT OF HISTORICAL STUDY

HISTORIANS generally illustrate rather than correct the ideas of the communities within which they live and work, and the development in the last few centuries, and more particularly in the last few generations, of the would-be self-sufficient national sovereign state has led historians to choose nations as the normal fields of historical study. But no single nation or national state of Europe can show a history which is in itself self-explanatory. If any state could do so it would be Great Britain. In fact, if Great Britain (or, in the earlier periods, England) is not found to constitute in herself an intelligible field of historical study, we may confidently infer that no other modern European national state will pass the test.

Is English history, then, intelligible when taken by itself? Can we abstract an internal history of England from her external relations? If we can, shall we find that these residual external relations are of secondary importance? And in analysing these, again, shall we find that the foreign influences upon England are slight in comparison with the English influences upon other parts of the world? If all these questions receive affirmative answers we may be justified in concluding that, while it may not be possible to understand other histories without reference to England, it is possible, more or less, to understand English history without reference to other parts of the world. The best way to approach these questions is to direct our thought backwards over the course of English history and recall the principal chapters. In inverse order we may take these chapters to be:

(a) the establishment of the Industrial System of economy (since the last quarter of the eighteenth century);

(b) the establishment of Responsible Parliamentary Government (since the last quarter of the seventeenth century);

(c) the expansion overseas (beginning in the third quarter of the sixteenth century with piracy and developing gradually into a world-wide foreign trade, the acquisition of tropical dependencies, and the establishment of new English-speaking communities in overseas countries with temperate climates);

(d) the Reformation (since the second quarter of the sixteenth century);

(e) the Renaissance, including the political and economic as

well as the artistic and intellectual aspects of the movement (since the last quarter of the fifteenth century);

(f) the establishment of the Feudal System (since the eleventh century);

(g) the conversion of the English from the religion of the so-called Heroic Age to Western Christianity (since the last years of the sixth century).

This glance backwards from the present day over the general course of English history would appear to show that the farther back we look the less evidence do we find of self-sufficiency or isolation. The conversion, which was really the beginning of all things in English history, was the direct antithesis of that; it was an act which merged half a dozen isolated communities of barbarians in the common weal of a nascent Western Society. As for the Feudal System, Vinogradoff has brilliantly demonstrated that the seeds of it had already sprouted on English soil before the Norman Conquest. Yet, even so, the sprouting was stimulated by an external factor, the Danish invasions; these invasions were part of the Scandinavian *Völkerwanderung* which was stimulating simultaneously a similar growth in France, and the Norman Conquest undoubtedly brought the harvest to rapid maturity. As for the Renaissance, in both its cultural and its political aspect it is universally admitted to have been a breath of life from Northern Italy. If in Northern Italy Humanism, Absolutism and the Balance of Power had not been cultivated in miniature, like seedlings in a sheltered nursery garden, during two centuries that fall approximately between 1275 and 1475, they could never have been bedded out north of the Alps from about 1475 onwards. The Reformation, again, was not a specifically English phenomenon, but a general movement of North-Western Europe for emancipation from the South, where the Western Mediterranean held the eye fixed upon worlds that were dead and gone. In the Reformation, England did not take the initiative, nor did she take it in the competition between the European nations of the Atlantic seaboard for the prize of the new worlds overseas. She won that prize as a comparatively late comer, in a series of struggles with Powers that were before her in the field.

It remains to consider the two latest chapters: the geneses of the Parliamentary System and the Industrial System—institutions which are commonly regarded as having been evolved locally on English soil and afterwards propagated from England into other parts of the world. But the authorities do not entirely support this view. With reference to the parliamentary system Lord Acton says: 'General history naturally depends on the action of forces

which are not national but proceed from wider causes. The rise of modern kingship in France is part of a similar movement in England. Bourbons and Stuarts obeyed the same law though with different results.' In other words the Parliamentary System, which was the local result in England, was the product of a force which was not peculiar to England but was operating simultaneously in England and France.

On the genesis of the Industrial Revolution in England no higher authorities could be cited than Mr. and Mrs. Hammond. In the preface to their book *The Rise of Modern Industry* they take the view that the factor which goes farthest towards accounting for the genesis of the Industrial Revolution in England rather than elsewhere is England's general position in the eighteenth-century world—her geographical position in relation to the Atlantic and her political position in respect of the European balance of power. It seems, then, that British national history never has been, and almost certainly never will be, an 'intelligible field of historical study' in isolation; and if that is true of Great Britain it surely must be true of any other national state *a fortiori*.

Our brief examination of English history, though its result has been negative, has given us a clue. The chapters which caught our eye in our glance backward over the course of English history were real chapters in some story or other, but that story was the history of some society of which Great Britain was only a part, and the experiences were experiences in which other nations besides Great Britain were participants. The 'intelligible field of study', in fact, appears to be a society containing a number of communities of the species represented by Great Britain—not only Great Britain herself but also France and Spain, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries and so on—and the passage quoted from Acton indicates the relation between these parts and that whole.

The forces in action are not national but proceed from wider causes, which operate upon each of the parts and are not intelligible in their partial operation unless a comprehensive view is taken of their operation throughout the society. Different parts are differently affected by an identical general cause, because they each react, and each contribute, in a different way to the forces which that same cause sets in motion. A society, we may say, is confronted in the course of its life by a succession of problems which each member has to solve for itself as best it may. The presentation of each problem is a challenge to undergo an ordeal, and through this series of ordeals the members of the society progressively differentiate themselves from one another. Throughout,

it is impossible to grasp the significance of any particular member's behaviour under a particular ordeal without taking some account of the similar or dissimilar behaviour of its fellows and without viewing the successive ordeals as a series of events in the life of the whole society.

This method of interpreting historical facts may, perhaps, be made clearer by a concrete example, which may be taken from the history of the city states of Ancient Greece during the four centuries falling between 725 and 325 B.C.

Soon after the beginning of that period the society of which these numerous states were all members was confronted with the problem of the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence—means which the Hellenic peoples at that time were apparently obtaining almost entirely by raising in their territories a varied agricultural produce for home consumption. When the crisis came, different states contended with it in different ways.

Some, like Corinth and Chalcis, disposed of their surplus population by seizing and colonizing agricultural territories overseas—in Sicily, Southern Italy, Thrace and elsewhere. The Greek colonies thus founded simply extended the geographical area of the Hellenic Society without altering its character. On the other hand certain states sought solutions which entailed a variation of their way of life.

Sparta, for instance, satisfied the land-hunger of her citizens by attacking and conquering her nearest Greek neighbours. The consequence was that Sparta only obtained her additional lands at the cost of obstinate and repeated wars with neighbouring peoples of her own calibre. In order to meet this situation Spartan statesmen were compelled to militarize Spartan life from top to bottom, which they did by re-invigorating and adapting certain primitive social institutions, common to a number of Greek communities, at a moment when, at Sparta as elsewhere, these institutions were on the point of disappearance.

Athens reacted to the population problem in a different way again. She specialized her agricultural production for export, started manufactures also for export and then developed her political institutions so as to give a fair share of political power to the new classes which had been called into being by these economic innovations. In other words, Athenian statesmen averted a social revolution by successfully carrying through an economic and political revolution; and, discovering this solution of the common problem in so far as it affected themselves, they incidentally opened up a new avenue of advance for the whole of the Hellenic Society. This is what Pericles meant when, in the crisis of his own

city's material fortunes, he claimed that she was 'the education of Hellas'.

From this angle of vision, which takes not Athens or Sparta or Corinth or Chalcis but the whole of the Hellenic Society as its field, we are able to understand both the significance of the histories of the several communities during the period 725-325 B.C. and the significance of the transition from this period to that which followed. Questions are answered to which no intelligible answer could be found so long as we looked for an intelligible field of study in Chalcidian, Corinthian, Spartan or Athenian history examined in isolation. From this point of view it was merely possible to observe that Chalcidian and Corinthian history was in some sense normal whereas Spartan and Athenian history departed from the norm in different directions. It was not possible to explain the way in which this departure took place, and historians were reduced to suggesting that the Spartans and Athenians were already differentiated from the other Greeks by the possession of special innate qualities at the dawn of Hellenic history. This was equivalent to explaining Spartan and Athenian development by postulating that there had been no development at all and that these two Greek peoples were as peculiar at the beginning of the story as at the end of it. That hypothesis, however, is in contradiction with established facts. In regard to Sparta, for example, the excavations conducted by the British Archaeological School at Athens have produced striking evidence that down to about the middle of the sixth century B.C. Spartan life was not markedly different from that of other Greek communities. The special characteristics of Athens also, which she communicated to the whole Hellenic World in the so-called Hellenistic Age (in contrast to Sparta, whose peculiar turning proved to be a blind alley); were likewise acquired characteristics, the genesis of which can only be apprehended from a general standpoint. It is the same with the differentiation between Venice, Milan, Genoa and other cities of Northern Italy in the so-called Middle Ages and with the differentiation between France, Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain and other national states of the West in more recent times. In order to understand the parts we must first focus our attention upon the whole, because this whole is the field of study that is intelligible in itself.

But what are these 'wholes', which form intelligible fields of study, and how shall we discover their spatial and temporal boundaries? Let us turn again to our summary of the principal chapters of English history, and see what larger whole is found to constitute the intelligible field of which English history is a part.

If we start with our latest chapter—the establishment of the Industrial System—we find that the geographical extension of the intelligible field of study which it presupposes is world-wide. In order to explain the Industrial Revolution in England we have to take account of economic conditions not only in Western Europe but in Tropical Africa, America, Russia, India and the Far East. When, however, we go back to the Parliamentary System and pass, in so doing, from the economic to the political plane, our horizon contracts. 'The law' which (in Lord Acton's phrase) 'Bourbons and Stuarts obeyed' in France and England was not in force for Romanovs in Russia or 'Osmanlis in Turkey or Timurids in Hindustan or Manchus in China or Tokugawas in Japan. The political histories of these other countries cannot be explained in the same terms. We here come up against a frontier. The operation of 'the law' which 'Bourbons and Stuarts obeyed' extended to the other countries of Western Europe and to the new communities planted overseas by West-European colonists, but its writ did not run beyond the western frontiers of Russia and Turkey. East of that line other political laws were being obeyed at that time with other consequences.

If we pass back to the earlier chapters of English history on our list, we find that the expansion overseas was confined not merely to Western Europe but almost entirely to the countries with sea-boards on the Atlantic. In studying the history of the Reformation and the Renaissance we may ignore without loss the religious and cultural developments in Russia and Turkey. The feudal system of Western Europe was not causally connected with such feudal phenomena as were to be found in contemporary Byzantine and Islamic communities.

Finally, the conversion of the English to Western Christianity admitted us to one society at the cost of excluding us from the possibility of membership in others. Down to the Synod of Whitby in 664 the English might have become converts to the 'Far Western Christianity' of 'the Celtic Fringe'; and, had Augustine's mission ultimately proved a failure, the English might have joined the Welsh and Irish in founding a new Christian church out of communion with Rome—as veritable an *alter orbis* as the world of the Nestorians on the Far Eastern fringe of Christendom. Later on, when the Muslim Arabs appeared on the Atlantic sea-board, these Far Western Christians of the British Isles might have lost touch as completely as the Christians of Abyssinia or Central Asia with their co-religionists on the European Continent. They might conceivably have become converts to Islam, as so many Monophysites and Nestorians actually did when the Middle