

# **THE INCREDIBLE INVASION**

**BY GEORGE O. SMITH**

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Jim Franklen paused a moment before he opened the door of the office. He stopped to read the black lettering with a surface of pride—he was a part of it.

The sign read:

UNITED NATIONS  
WEAPON SECURITY  
COUNCIL

Thomas Winter, President

Then Franklen opened the door and went in, confidently. He greeted the man behind the desk, who looked up worriedly from a maze of paper work and bade Franklen to sit down.

Winter said: "Trouble, Franklen. Bad trouble."

Franklen nodded. "I know," he said. "I've been following it. I gather that the fools are getting worse?"

Winter agreed with a slight nod of the head and replied: "I can't imagine what they're up to. Yet they continue to rattle the saber and make demands. The Central Power is not ignorant of the ramifications of their acts. Not after we've made point-blank statements. But they continue to get rougher and bolder, just as though they had the world in the palm of their hands."

"They know that they can't win, don't they?" asked Franklen.

"They should—they've been told, and they have been shown exactly what will happen, how, and why. The proof is irrevocable, undeniable. Still they continue."

"I understand we've been watching them closely."

Winter smiled bitterly. "I've got so many men watching their separation plants and their atomic stockpile that even the janitors must find UN Representatives looking up out of their coffee cups in the morning. There's no activity there that can be construed as dangerous, even admitting that we're leaning way over backwards and would be suspicious of a single gram of missing fissionable matter. Of course, they have the standard United Nations stockpile; the safety value that all nations hold against possible aggression.

They're also aware that this quantity is also a fraction of what the rest hold all together."

Franklen looked at the big flag on the back wall of the office. "The United Nations," he said bitterly. "With one member slightly disunited." He turned back to the president of the Weapon Council. "Have they, by any chance, made secret pacts with other nations?"

"Not that we can tell," said Winter. "Now don't say that this is negative evidence and therefore inconclusive. It is admittedly negative evidence, but so definitely negative that it is conclusive. The Central Power has been told that if they make a move, they'll be counter-attacked within the hour."

Franklen paused in his walking and said: "Look, sir, there's one thing about the atomic weapon that is seldom considered. I've been thinking about this for a long time. Frankly, the atomic weapon is a fine instrument for any country to use—providing it has no intention of invading for territorial aggrandization."

"What do you mean?"

"Cities are where they are because it is economically sound that they should be there. New York is the largest city in North America only because it is situated on the one spot where most goods funnel out of the country. It grew because of that fact—the fact did not follow the city's growth. In all the world, perhaps Washington, D. C., is the only city that is where it is because someone said 'we shall place our city here!' and Washington could function very well if it were lifted in toto and dropped on the center of Ohio, providing it landed on some big railroad junction. Boston is a second rate city despite all the efforts of the city planners only because its harbor is less efficient than New York's

harbor and because Boston is not handily located geographically for the rest of the country. Even though Boston is closer to Europe than New York, it is cheaper to ship the goods a little farther by water, for they've got to be transshipped anyway, somewhere. For inland cities, both Detroit and Chicago are great because of their location; if their locations were not good, Chicago might still be a little tank town called Fort Dearborn, situated on the South Bank of the Chicago River—which would still be emptying into Lake Michigan."

"Granted, but what are you getting at?" asked Winter.

"Mankind has dropped two bombs in anger so far," said Franklen. "Both were dropped at the close of a war, to end it. Japan was not invaded for aggrandization. Therefore, no Americans were required to enter Hiroshima and try to rebuild it. We don't care too much whether Nagasaki ever gets rebuilt, though it will, eventually, because of the necessity of having a city right there."

"Yes, go on."

"The next time we have atomic trouble," said Franklen, "it'll not be exploded high in the air. It's more likely to emerge right out of the walls of one of those buildings. That will mean radioactivity in the area that will render it dangerous to life for some time. In any case, a totally destroyed New York is not an economic asset."

"Yes?"

"And the Central Power knows that we will not use the atomic weapons until they are used in aggression."

"No, you're wrong," said Winter. "We have promised them—and everybody—that at the first outbreak of hostility, the United

Nations Weapon Council will see to it that one of their cities is reduced each day until the aggression ceases and reparations are made." He banged a hand into his fist. "It's a harsh promise, my boy, but it must be. For a border fist fight leads to knives, and knives lead to revolvers, and they lead to rifles, which lead to artillery. The next step in the scene is the works, complete and whole."

Franklen shook his head. "The first step is words," he said positively. "Then come the fists. We should let 'em have a sample on the first angry words."

"Can't. It's entirely possible that a party can be so nasty and quiet that steps are necessary on the part of the other. The truth must be investigated."

"Is that what's been happening?" asked Jim Franklen.

"At first it looked so," said Winter. "They started by upping tariffs and getting too rigorous with people coming in. They were told, and they replied that their country was at present overcrowded. Why, Jim, the entire pattern is familiar. They've been holding elections and all the trimmings for years, now, and every election they hold brings more territory into their hands."

"That's something that can't be easily judged," admitted Franklen grudgingly.

"No, it can't; you're right. In any election there are plenty of unsatisfied people. We assume that the Central Power is padding the elections, but we cannot be sure. Well, again they have overrun most of Europe and now they're looking outward. We've got to do something, Jim. But we've got to be absolutely right before we

move. That's what makes being right so hard, sometimes. He who is wrong can move without conscience. Well, it's now being tossed into your hands. See what you can do, take a carte blanche and see what you can find out."

Franklen nodded glumly. "I know what you mean," he said. "I'd hate to be the cause of fifty thousand killed, unless I was dead certain that my actions would save a million later."

Winter shook the younger man's hand. "Well, you've been brought into it," he said, "and you're trained to handle hypothetical problems of this nature anyway. So, my boy, go out and stop that incipient war for me!"

Jim Franklen remembered that ringing order many times in the following days. "Go out and stop that war!" was his order, and he was hoping he could. There was little real saber-rattling, but only a slow spread of the Central Power's influence that was conducted in a quiet fashion.

He read the previous reports several times, and analyzed them carefully. There was one more thing, a direct, personal, man-to-man warning that could be tried and must be tried before he moved. This act must also be publicized so that his following moves would be greeted with the proper attitude. The public must know that his course met with their approval.

This brought him to the government of the Central Power, where he was first stopped by an undersecretary.

"You may state your business," said the underling with all the authority of bureaucracy.

"I'm special representative of the United Nations Weapon Council," said Franklen, "and request audience with your state head, the Commissario Hohmann."

"You may state your business to me," said the underling.

"I'll state it to Hohmann himself," snapped Franklen quickly. "And he'll right well see me, too!"

"I'll inquire," said the undersecretary.

"You'd better."

"You understand that the Commissario speaks personally only with officials of his own rank."

"That's rank enough," grunted Franklen. "And I can be just as rank as he is. Now stop caging and make that appointment for me—no later than tomorrow morning! Rank? Spinach! Where I come from, we elect our rulers and they'd better do as we want them to, or they don't stay rulers! And Hohmann can put you in his pipe and smoke it! Or," he added softly, "shall I order a cordon of United Nations marines out to see that I am properly escorted into his presence?"

"That would create an international incident," replied the undersecretary.

"Uh-huh," snorted Franklen. "It sure would, wouldn't it?"

Both he and the underling knew at that point just who would be deemed responsible for the international incident, and so there was no point in further argument. The phone was used three times, and ultimately it was reported that James Franklen would be most welcome in the morning at eight-thirty—and would he partake of breakfast with Commissario Hohmann?



He nodded. After all, Hohmann might not spoil his digestion—Franklen had a stomach installed by a copper company and felt safe.

There was pomp and ceremony as Franklen entered the swanky apartments of the Commissario Hohmann. He was escorted in by an honor-guard, and once in the ornate dining room, Franklen came face to face with the commissario himself.

Hohmann bowed genially and Franklen returned the pleasantry. He was seated across a small table from the dictator of the Central Power, and as he settled in the chair, silver service with a half grapefruit came from a servitor for each man simultaneously. Hohmann tasted his, smiled and nodded at it. "Excellent," he said to Franklen. Jim tried his and was forced to agree.

"Now," said Hohmann easily, "I've been told that the United Nations do not approve of certain happenings?"

"We do not," said Franklen. "We do not intend to interfere with the usual run of events, but we dislike to see the same pattern coming up again."

"Pattern?" asked Hohmann in surprise. His spoon paused in mid-flight as surprise caught him unawares, but then it continued on, upwards.

Franklen nodded, and then swallowed. "The pattern should be familiar," he said. "Small districts lying between larger countries suddenly vote alliance with your Central Power. A couple of years pass, and another district still farther out allies itself with you. Commissario Hohmann, your Central Power has increased its

geographic size by a factor of two to one during the past five years."

"That I know—and I am also gratified to know that my government has something to offer these outlying districts."

"The trouble is," said Franklen pointedly, "that all of these districts have—or had—a system of voting that lends itself very well to a long-term carpetbagging system. The residence required before voting in the maximum case is one year."

"You accuse me of padding ballot boxes?" demanded Hohmann angrily.

"Not at all," said Franklen. "Padding a ballot box is illegal, which you would not condone. No, Commissario Hohmann, you are proceeding quite legally, but you are, nevertheless, twisting the law to suit your needs."

"Nonsense!"

"We know differently. There was the Phalz District that voted into your Power two years ago. Its voting population rose markedly for two years before the election, and dropped shortly afterwards. Strangely, its drop coincided with the rise of voting population in the Rhehl District a year later."

"You approach me with the accusation that people of mine are traveling from district to district and voting them into my government for them—and against their wishes?" demanded Hohmann.

"I wouldn't state whether it was the same people that moved," said Franklen, "but there is definitely some exchange."

"My dear young fellow," said Hohmann consolingly, "please do not be alarmed by some of the problems of the floating population of Central Europe. That is what happens when cities are decentralized, you know. And may I remind you that the United Nations were instrumental in decentralizing the cities of my country some twenty years ago?"

"You have all the rationalization of the last ruler of Central Europe. He proceeded legally at first."

"He proceeded legally until he was forced to move illegally. He was attacked first, you know."

"Look, Hohmann, he who eludes the legal statement by twisting the law to suit his own illegal end is illegal."

"That's sophistry."

"No, it is not. It is a statement of the fact that you are legally right and morally wrong and you know it. Frankly, you are expanding at a rate that will bring on a state of war and you know it. Regardless of your spoken intent, you are expanding illegally and it must cease!"

"And I assure you that if people decide to join my government, I can but be gratified and accept them."

"Even though the populace disagrees?"

"They voted, didn't they?" asked Hohmann. And seeing Jim Franklen's answer, even though skeptical, Hohmann added: "And if they want to, they can as easily vote out again."

"Oh certainly," snorted Franklen angrily. "The district of one quarter of a million people vote in all by themselves, but in voting

out again they must submit to a national election. One quarter million versus some seventy million."

"Well, the welfare of my country is a national problem, and the welfare of any part of it is equally a national concern. To secede, any part, therefore, should convince the entire nation that this course is best. That is, naturally, very difficult."

"Impossible," snapped Franklen.

"Almost impossible," agreed Hohmann, nodding his head slowly in complete agreement. "Yet for all your distrust of my government and its supposed aggressive attitude, I assure you that we are humanitarian to the core, and will go to any lengths to make our people happy. Unlike the former ruler, who insisted that the individual is second to the State, I know that the State is the property of the individual. Unfortunately—or fortunately—there are always differences of opinion. That makes it difficult to please everybody with any single act. We try, however, to make the bulk of the people satisfied. I—"

He was interrupted by the arrival of an aide, who brought him a sheet of teletyped copy. "Commissario Hohmann," said the aide, "I am sorry to disturb your breakfast, but this is an important message."

"Quite all right, Jenks," smiled Hohmann. "Pardon me?" he asked of Franklen. Then he read, first quietly and then aloud:

"International News Service representatives in Paris, France, today told of a serious pandemic sweeping the country. This illness seems to be some strange combination of mild dysentery complicated with very mild influenza. It is quite contagious;

isolated cases were first noted three days ago, but the epidemic has been spreading into dangerous proportions. It is believed that if this pandemic gets worse, the government may close all places of business and public works."

When he finished, Hohmann looked up across the table at Jim Franklen. "Unfortunate," he said sincerely. "Yet one man's meat is another man's poison. This distressing affair may give me a chance to prove to you that the Central Power is still a member of the United Nations, and concerned about the common lot of all mankind."

"Meaning?" asked Franklen.

"Meaning that I must leave you for a bit. I intend to muster all forces that the Central Power owns that can, in any way, be used to combat the common enemy that is striking at France. I invite you officially to join and observe."

"I may take that invitation," said Jim.

"The Central Power will enter that plague area to take relief and aid—even though we may ourselves suffer greatly. It is things like this, James Franklen, that endears us to our immediate neighbors. You may watch one half of the population of my country turn from their own problems, and bravely enter France to aid the stricken. Jenks! A message to Le Presidente Jacques La Croix. 'We stand ready to aid in every way if your need increases. You have but to request, and we will answer in the name of humanity! Signed Edvard Hohmann, Commissario of the Central Power.'"

Jim Franklen faced Winter wearily in the latter's office. It was two weeks later, and Jim was glad to be back, even though his mission was but half accomplished.

"I don't know how to stop him," he told the president of the Weapon Council. "He's like a stock market operator that doles out quarters to the beggar on the corner and then enters the Curb to squeeze some small operator out of his life savings. It is admitted—almost—that he is running a carpetbagging program over there. Then comes this plague in France. Like a first-class humanitarian, he musters his forces and they go into that area and take control for two solid weeks while practically every person in France is flat on his back with this devil's disease. It would have been easy for him to take over, Winter. But he sent in doctors and aides, and the like, and the only armed men he sent were merely small-arm troops. He sent just barely enough of them to maintain order, which they did and no more. I doubt if there was a store-window broken or a bottle of milk stolen over and above any normal interval. Then as the people of France recovered, he gracefully turned everything back, gave them a written report on his actions, apologized for whatever minor expenses his aid might have cost—his men did live off of the country, and that costs, you know—and then marched out with the bands playing and the people cheering.

"It gives me to wonder," continued Franklen. "Remember the 'Union—Now' cries between the United States and Great Britain during the last fracas? Well, solidarity between France and the Central Power was never so great before. Hohmann could ask them for the moon, and they'd present him with a gold tablet, suitably engraved, giving him clear and unrestricted title. Watch for a first-class alliance, Winter."

Winter nodded. "I've been watching," he said. "Regardless of how he does it, and he is a supreme opportunist, it is oppression."

Franklen grunted. "Even anarchy is oppression for some classes of people."

"But you and I both know that he rode into his office initially on a program of oppressing the minority groups. He's made no great mass-murder of them as his predecessor did, nor has he collected them in concentration camps. Yet they are oppressed, for they have little free life. They are permitted to work only as their superiors dictate, and for a subsistence wage. They do the rough jobs; they work in Hohmann's separation plants, do the mining, and the dirty work. Each is given a card entitling him to secure employment in certain lines. All of these lines are poorly paid and quite dangerous or dirty. The wage is so low that the children are forced to forgo schooling in order to help pay for the family. Regardless of his outward act of humanitarianism, Hohmann is none the less a tyrant with ideas of aggrandization. That he is able to take a catastrophe and turn it into a blessing for himself is deplorable, but it seems to be one of those unfair tricks of fate to favor the ill-minded, for some unknown reason. I never knew a stinker that didn't get everything his own way for far too long for the other's comfort. Eventually, of course, the deal evens out, but the waiting is often maddeningly long."

"And we sit here helpless," growled Franklen, "all clutching our atomic weapons that could wipe out Hohmann and most of his country. And as we hang on to them, and rub their rounded noses angrily, we watch Hohmann walk in and take over—we are unsure of our grounds. Bah! Why not claim it for what it is—aggressive

acquisition of territory? Then let's bomb him and let the world judge for itself."

Winter shook his head slowly. "And if we do, La Belle Francaise will rise up and scream 'Oppression!' For France is probably an operating country today because of Edvard Hohmann. There was once a first-class criminal, Public Enemy Number One, who, during a period of economic depression, used some of his ill-gotten gains to set up soup kitchens for the underfed. You'd hardly convince any one of them that he was entirely worthy of the electric chair and not much better. That was when his crimes were known to all. And people said: 'O.K., so he's killed a bunch of people. They were all criminals, too, and so he saved the country some expense. And besides, he set up soup kitchens, and so he's not a bad sort of fellow!' No, Jim, we've got to get evidence of definite acts of belligerency."

"Sort of like trying to get evidence against a confidence-man who sells his victims something that they believe valuable."

Winter nodded at the simile.

"More like a druggist who sells opiates indiscriminately. The people who buy them do so because they find them useful even though they are dangerous in the long run. But you keep on trying, Jim. The rest of us will see to it that Hohmann isn't running himself up a stockpile of atomics all the time that his underground warfare is going on."

Jim Franklen left the office and wandered down the hall to the Chief Physician's office. Shield greeted Franklen cheerfully and asked what was on the younger man's mind.



"Nothing much," said Jim. "I was just wondering if you'd isolated the bug or whatever it was that hit France."

"We believe so," said Dr. Shield. "We'll know in another couple of weeks. It seems to be some sort of filterable virus, air-borne for contagion, and very rugged. Intelligent, too. It apparently knows enough not to touch diparasulfathiazole."

"How do these rare illnesses get going?" questioned Jim.

"In several ways. The Law of Simple Reactions also applies, you know." And seeing the blank look on Franklen's face, he added: "When a number of reactions are possible, the one that requires the least energy will happen first. That's saying that the most likely will happen first. A few hundred years ago, so many people died of typhoid, yellow fever, and smallpox that a more complex disease like meningitis or polio seldom got beyond the normal case frequency. When the more prevalent—the more likely diseases—were stopped, we could have polio plagues. It's probably been here for a long time, killing its quota every year, but never noticed because of other, more devastating affairs."

"I think I understand."

"Why did you ask?" asked the doctor.

"Well, I was there, you know. It was rather devastating, though it didn't kill off very many."

"It isn't that type," said Shield. "Which is another factor in its not being noticed. The early symptoms are dysentery, not violent, but definitely weakening. The secondary symptoms are similar to influenza in a mild form. The whole thing just takes all the energy out of the system and leaves you weaker than a kitten for about

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