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BOOK ONE

DAWN

CHAPTER 1

ARISIA AND EDDORE

Two thousand million or so years ago two galaxies were colliding; or, rather, were passing through each other. A couple of hundreds of millions of years either way do not matter, since at least that much time was required for the inter-passage. At about that same time—within the same plus-or-minus ten percent margin of error, it is believed—practically all of the suns of both those galaxies became possessed of planets.

There is much evidence to support the belief that it was not merely a coincidence that so many planets came into being at about the same time as the galactic inter-passage. Another school of thought holds that it was pure coincidence; that all suns have planets as naturally and as inevitably as cats have kittens.

Be that as it may, Arisian records are clear upon the point that before the two galaxies began to coalesce, there were never more than three solar systems present in either; and usually only one. Thus, when the sun of the planet upon which their race originated grew old and cool, the Arisians were hard put to it to preserve their culture, since they had to work against time in solving the engineering problems associated with moving a planet from an older to a younger sun.

Since nothing material was destroyed when the Eddorians were forced into the next plane of existence, their historical records also have become available. Those records—folios and tapes and playable discs of platinum alloy, resistant indefinitely even to Eddore's noxious atmosphere—agree with those of the Arisians upon this point. Immediately before the Coalescence began there was one, and only one, planetary solar system in the Second

Galaxy; and, until the advent of Eddore, the Second Galaxy was entirely devoid of intelligent life.

Thus for millions upon untold millions of years the two races, each the sole intelligent life of a galaxy, perhaps of an entire space-time continuum, remained completely in ignorance of each other. Both were already ancient at the time of the Coalescence. The only other respect in which the two were similar, however, was in the possession of minds of power.

Since Arisia was Earth-like in composition, atmosphere, and climate, the Arisians were at that time distinctly humanoid. The Eddorians were not. Eddore was and is large and dense; its liquid a poisonous, sludgy syrup; its atmosphere a foul and corrosive fog. Eddore was and is unique; so different from any other world of either galaxy that its very existence was inexplicable until its own records revealed the fact that it did not originate in normal space-time at all, but came to our universe from some alien and horribly different other.

As differed the planets, so differed the peoples. The Arisians went through the usual stages of savagery and barbarism on the way to Civilization. The Age of Stone. The Ages of Bronze, of Iron, of Steel, and of Electricity. Indeed, it is probable that it is because the Arisians went through these various stages that all subsequent Civilizations have done so, since the spores which burgeoned into life upon the cooling surfaces of all the planets of the commingling galaxies were Arisian, not Eddorian, in origin. Eddorian spores, while undoubtedly present, must have been so alien that they could not develop in any one of the environments, widely variant although they are, existing naturally or coming naturally into being in normal space and time.

The Arisians—especially after atomic energy freed them from physical labor—devoted themselves more and ever more intensively to the exploration of the limitless possibilities of the mind.

Even before the Coalescence, then, the Arisians had need neither of space-ships nor of telescopes. By power of mind alone they watched the lenticular aggregation of stars which was much later to be known to Tellurian astronomers as Lundmark's Nebula approach their own galaxy. They observed attentively and minutely and with high elation the occurrence of mathematical impossibility; for the chance of two galaxies ever meeting in

direct, central, equatorial-plane impact and of passing completely through each other is an infinitesimal of such a high order as to be, even mathematically, practically indistinguishable from zero.

They observed the birth of numberless planets, recording minutely in their perfect memories every detail of everything that happened; in the hope that, as ages passed, either they or their descendants would be able to develop a symbology and a methodology capable of explaining the then inexplicable phenomenon. Carefree, busy, absorbedly intent, the Arisian mentalities roamed throughout space—until one of them struck an Eddorian mind.

While any Eddorian could, if it chose, assume the form of a man, they were in no sense man-like. Nor, since the term implies a softness and a lack of organization, can they be described as being amoeboid. They were both versatile and variant. Each Eddorian changed, not only its shape, but also its texture, in accordance with the requirements of the moment. Each produced—extruded—members whenever and wherever it needed them; members uniquely appropriate to the task then in work. If hardness was indicated, the members were hard; if softness, they were soft. Small or large, rigid or flexible; joined or tentacular—all one. Filaments or cables; fingers or feet; needles or mauls—equally simple. One thought and the body fitted the job.

They were asexual: sexless to a degree unapproached by any form of Tellurian life higher than the yeasts. They were not merely hermaphroditic, nor androgynous, nor parthenogenetic. They were completely without sex. They were also, to all intents and purposes and except for death by violence, immortal. For each Eddorian, as its mind approached the stagnation of saturation after a lifetime of millions of years, simply divided into two new-old beings. New in capacity and in zest; old in ability and in power, since each of the two "children" possessed in toto the knowledges and the memories of their one "parent."

And if it is difficult to describe in words the physical aspects of the Eddorians, it is virtually impossible to write or to draw, in any symbology of Civilization, a true picture of an Eddorian's—*any* Eddorian's—mind. They were intolerant, domineering, rapacious, insatiable, cold, callous, and brutal. They were keen, capable, persevering, analytical, and efficient. They had no trace of any of the softer emotions or sensibilities possessed by races

adherent to Civilization. No Eddorian ever had anything even remotely resembling a sense of humor.

While not essentially bloodthirsty—that is, not loving bloodshed for its own sweet sake—they were no more averse to blood-letting than they were in favor of it. Any amount of killing which would or which might advance an Eddorian toward his goal was commendable; useless slaughter was frowned upon, not because it was slaughter, but because it was useless—and hence inefficient.

And, instead of the multiplicity of goals sought by the various entities of any race of Civilization, each and every Eddorian had only one. The same one: power. *Power!* P-O-W-E-R!!

Since Eddore was peopled originally by various races, perhaps as similar to each other as are the various human races of Earth, it is understandable that the early history of the planet—while it was still in its own space, that is—was one of continuous and ages-long war. And, since war always was and probably always will be linked solidly to technological advancement, the race now known simply as "The Eddorians" became technologists supreme. All other races disappeared. So did all other forms of life, however lowly, which interfered in any way with the Masters of the Planet.

Then, all racial opposition liquidated and overmastering lust as unquenched as ever, the surviving Eddorians fought among themselves: "push-button" wars employing engines of destruction against which the only possible defense was a fantastic thickness of planetary bedrock.

Finally, unable either to kill or to enslave each other, the comparatively few survivors made a peace of sorts. Since their own space was practically barren of planetary systems, they would move their planet from space to space until they found one which so teemed with planets that each living Eddorian could become the sole Master of an ever increasing number of worlds. This was a program very much worthwhile, promising as it did an outlet for even the recognizedly insatiable Eddorian craving for power. Therefore the Eddorians, for the first time in their prodigiously long history of fanatical non-cooperation, decided to pool their resources of mind and of material and to work as a group.

Union of a sort was accomplished eventually; neither peaceably nor without

highly lethal friction. They knew that a democracy, by its very nature, was inefficient; hence a democratic form of government was not even considered. An efficient government must of necessity be dictatorial. Nor were they all exactly alike or of exactly equal ability; perfect identity of any two such complex structures was in fact impossible, and any difference, however slight, was ample justification for stratification in such a society as theirs.

Thus one of them, fractionally more powerful and more ruthless than the rest, became the All-Highest—His Ultimate Supremacy—and a group of about a dozen others, only infinitesimally weaker, became his Council; a cabinet which was later to become known as the Innermost Circle. The tally of this cabinet varied somewhat from age to age; increasing by one when a member divided, decreasing by one when a jealous fellow or an envious underling managed to perpetrate a successful assassination.

And thus, at long last, the Eddorians began really to work together. There resulted, among other things, the hyper-spatial tube and the fully inertialess drive—the drive which was, millions of years later, to be given to Civilization by an Arisian operating under the name of Bergenholm. Another result, which occurred shortly after the galactic inter-passage had begun, was the eruption into normal space of the planet Eddore.

"I must now decide whether to make this space our permanent headquarters or to search farther," the All-Highest radiated harshly to his Council. "On the one hand, it will take some time for even those planets which have already formed to cool. Still more will be required for life to develop sufficiently to form a part of the empire which we have planned or to occupy our abilities to any great degree. On the other, we have already spent millions of years in surveying hundreds of millions of continua, without having found anywhere such a profusion of planets as will, in all probability, soon fill both of these galaxies. There may also be certain advantages inherent in the fact that these planets are not yet populated. As life develops, we can mold it as we please. Krongenes, what are your findings in regard to the planetary possibilities of other spaces?"

The term "Krongenes" was not, in the accepted sense, a name. Or, rather, it was more than a name. It was a key-thought, in mental shorthand; a condensation and abbreviation of the life-pattern or ego of that particular

Eddorian.

"Not at all promising, Your Supremacy," Krongenes replied promptly. "No space within reach of my instruments has more than a small fraction of the inhabitable worlds which will presently exist in this one."

"Very well. Have any of you others any valid objections to the establishment of our empire here in this space? If so, give me your thought now."

No objecting thoughts appeared, since none of the monsters then knew anything of Arisia or of the Arisians. Indeed, even if they had known, it is highly improbable that any objection would have been raised. First, because no Eddorian, from the All-Highest down, could conceive or would under any circumstances admit that any race, anywhere, had ever approached or ever would approach the Eddorians in any quality whatever; and second, because, as is routine in all dictatorships, disagreement with the All-Highest did not operate to lengthen the span of life.

"Very well. We will now confer as to ... but hold! That thought is not one of ours! Who are you, stranger, to dare to intrude thus upon a conference of the Innermost Circle?"

"I am Enphilistor, a younger student, of the planet Arisia." This name, too, was a symbol. Nor was the young Arisian yet a Watchman, as he and so many of his fellows were so soon to become, for before Eddore's arrival Arisia had had no need of Watchmen. "I am not intruding, as you know. I have not touched any one of your minds; have not read any one of your thoughts. I have been waiting for you to notice my presence, so that we could become acquainted with each other. A surprising development, truly—we have thought for many cycles of time that we were the only highly advanced life in this universe...."

"Be silent, worm, in the presence of the Masters. Land your ship and surrender, and your planet will be allowed to serve us. Refuse, or even hesitate, and every individual of your race shall die."

"Worm? Masters? Land my ship?" The young Arisian's thought was pure curiosity, with no tinge of fear, dismay, or awe. "Surrender? Serve you? I seem to be receiving your thought without ambiguity, but your meaning is entirely...."

"Address me as 'Your Supremacy'," the All-Highest directed, coldly. "Land now or die now—this is your last warning."

"Your Supremacy? Certainly, if that is the customary form. But as to landing—and warning—and dying—surely you do not think that I am present in the flesh? And can it be possible that you are actually so aberrant as to believe that you can kill me—or even the youngest Arisian infant? What a peculiar—what an *extraordinary*—psychology!"

"Die, then, worm, if you must have it so!" the All-Highest snarled, and launched a mental bolt whose energies were calculated to slay any living thing.

Enphilistor, however, parried the vicious attack without apparent effort. His manner did not change. He did not strike back.

The Eddorian then drove in with an analyzing probe, only to be surprised again—the Arisian's thought could not be traced! And Enphilistor, while warding off the raging Eddorian, directed a quiet thought as though he were addressing someone close by his side:

"Come in, please, one or more of the Elders. There is a situation here which I am not qualified to handle."

"We, the Elders of Arisia in fusion, are here." A grave, deeply resonant pseudo-voice filled the Eddorians' minds; each perceived in three-dimensional fidelity an aged, white-bearded human face. "You of Eddore have been expected. The course of action which we must take has been determined long since. You will forget this incident completely. For cycles upon cycles of time to come no Eddorian shall know that we Arisians exist."

Even before the thought was issued the fused Elders had gone quietly and smoothly to work. The Eddorians forgot utterly the incident which had just happened. Not one of them retained in his conscious mind any inkling that Eddore did not possess the only intelligent life in space.

And upon distant Arisia a full meeting of minds was held.

"But why didn't you simply kill them?" Enphilistor asked. "Such action would be distasteful in the extreme, of course—almost impossible—but even I can perceive...." He paused, overcome by his thought.

"That which you perceive, youth, is but a very small fraction of the whole. We did not attempt to slay them because we could not have done so. Not because of squeamishness, as you intimate, but from sheer inability. The Eddorian tenacity of life is a thing far beyond your present understanding; to have attempted to kill them would have rendered it impossible to make them forget us. We must have time ... cycles and cycles of time." The fusion broke off, pondered for minutes, then addressed the group as a whole:

"We, the Elder Thinkers, have not shared fully with you our visualization of the Cosmic All, because until the Eddorians actually appeared there was always the possibility that our findings might have been in error. Now, however, there is no doubt. The Civilization which has been pictured as developing peacefully upon all the teeming planets of two galaxies will not now of itself come into being. We of Arisia should be able to bring it eventually to full fruition, but the task will be long and difficult.

"The Eddorians' minds are of tremendous latent power. Were they to know of us now, it is practically certain that they would be able to develop powers and mechanisms by the use of which they would negate our every effort—they would hurl us out of this, our native space and time. We must have time ... given time, we shall succeed. There shall be Lenses ... and entities of Civilization worthy in every respect to wear them. But we of Arisia alone will never be able to conquer the Eddorians. Indeed, while this is not yet certain, the probability is exceedingly great that despite our utmost efforts at self-development our descendants will have to breed, from some people to evolve upon a planet not yet in existence, an entirely new race—a race tremendously more capable than ours—to succeed us as Guardians of Civilization."

Centuries passed. Millenia. Cosmic and geologic ages. Planets cooled to solidity and stability. Life formed and grew and developed. And as life evolved it was subjected to, and strongly if subtly affected by, the diametrically opposed forces of Arisia and Eddore.

CHAPTER 2

THE FALL OF ATLANTIS

1. EDDORE

"Members of the innermost circle, wherever you are and whatever you may be doing, tune in!" the All-Highest broadcast. "Analysis of the data furnished by the survey just completed shows that in general the Great Plan is progressing satisfactorily. There seem to be only four planets which our delegates have not been or may not be able to control properly: Sol III, Rigel IV, Velantia III, and Palain VII. All four, you will observe, are in the other galaxy. No trouble whatever has developed in our own.

"Of these four, the first requires drastic and immediate personal attention. Its people, in the brief interval since our previous general survey, have developed nuclear energy and have fallen into a cultural pattern which does not conform in any respect to the basic principles laid down by us long since. Our deputies there, thinking erroneously that they could handle matters without reporting fully to or calling for help upon the next higher operating echelon, must be disciplined sharply. Failure, from whatever cause, can not be tolerated.

"Gharlane, as Master Number Two, you will assume control of Sol III immediately. This Circle now authorizes and instructs you to take whatever steps may prove necessary to restore order upon that planet. Examine carefully this data concerning the other three worlds which may very shortly become troublesome. Is it your thought that one or more others of this Circle should be assigned to work with you, to be sure that these untoward developments are suppressed?"

"It is not, Your Supremacy," that worthy decided, after a time of study. "Since the peoples in question are as yet of low intelligence; since one form of flesh at a time is all that will have to be energized; and since the techniques will be essentially similar; I can handle all four more efficiently alone than with the help or cooperation of others. If I read this data correctly, there will be need of only the most elementary precaution in the employment of mental force, since of the four races, only the Velantians have even a rudimentary

knowledge of its uses. Right?"

"We so read the data." Surprisingly enough, the Innermost Circle agreed unanimously.

"Go, then. When finished, report in full."

"I go, All-Highest. I shall render a complete and conclusive report."

2. ARISIA

"We, the Elder Thinkers in fusion, are spreading in public view, for study and full discussion, a visualization of the relationships existing and to exist between Civilization and its irreconcilable and implacable foe. Several of our younger members, particularly Eukonidor, who has just attained Watchmanship, have requested instruction in this matter. Being as yet immature, their visualizations do not show clearly why Nedanillor, Kriedigan, Drounli, and Broolenteen, either singly or in fusion, have in the past performed certain acts and have not performed certain others; or that the future actions of those Moulders of Civilization will be similarly constrained.

"This visualization, while more complex, more complete, and more detailed than the one set up by our forefathers at the time of the Coalescence, agrees with it in every essential. The five basics remain unchanged. First: the Eddorians can be overcome only by mental force. Second: the magnitude of the required force is such that its only possible generator is such an organization as the Galactic Patrol toward which we have been and are working. Third: since no Arisian or any fusion of Arisians will ever be able to spear-head that force, it was and is necessary to develop a race of mentality sufficient to perform that task. Fourth: this new race, having been instrumental in removing the menace of Eddore, will as a matter of course displace the Arisians as Guardians of Civilization. Fifth: the Eddorians must not become informed of us until such a time as it will be physically, mathematically impossible for them to construct any effective counter-devices."

"A cheerless outlook, truly," came a somber thought.

"Not so, daughter. A little reflection will show you that your present thinking is loose and turbid. When that time comes, every Arisian will be ready for the change. We know the way. We do not know to what that way leads; but the

Arisian purpose in this phase of existence—this space-time continuum—will have been fulfilled and we will go eagerly and joyfully on to the next. Are there any more questions?"

There were none.

"Study this material, then, each of you, with exceeding care. It may be that some one of you, even a child, will perceive some facet of the truth which we have missed or have not examined fully; some fact or implication which may be made to operate to shorten the time of conflict or to lessen the number of budding Civilizations whose destruction seems to us at present to be sheerly unavoidable."

Hours passed. Days. No criticisms or suggestions were offered.

"We take it, then, that this visualization is the fullest and most accurate one possible for the massed intellect of Arisia to construct from the information available at the moment. The Moulders therefore, after describing briefly what they have already done, will inform us as to what they deem it necessary to do in the near future."

"We have observed, and at times have guided, the evolution of intelligent life upon many planets," the fusion began. "We have, to the best of our ability, directed the energies of these entities into the channels of Civilization; we have adhered consistently to the policy of steering as many different races as possible toward the intellectual level necessary for the effective use of the Lens, without which the proposed Galactic Patrol cannot come into being.

"For many cycles of time we have been working as individuals with the four strongest races, from one of which will be developed the people who will one day replace us as Guardians of Civilization. Blood lines have been established. We have encouraged matings which concentrate traits of strength and dissipate those of weakness. While no very great departure from the norm, either physically or mentally, will take place until after the penultimates have been allowed to meet and to mate, a definite general improvement of each race has been unavoidable.

"Thus the Eddorians have already interested themselves in our budding Civilization upon the planet Tellus, and it is inevitable that they will very shortly interfere with our work upon the other three. These four young

Civilizations must be allowed to fall. It is to warn every Arisian against well-meant but inconsidered action that this conference was called. We ourselves will operate through forms of flesh of no higher intelligence than, and indistinguishable from, the natives of the planets affected. No traceable connection will exist between those forms and us. No other Arisians will operate within extreme range of any one of those four planets; they will from now on be given the same status as has been so long accorded Eddore itself. The Eddorians must not learn of us until after it is too late for them to act effectively upon that knowledge. Any chance bit of information obtained by any Eddorian must be obliterated at once. It is to guard against and to negate such accidental disclosures that our Watchmen have been trained."

"But if all of our Civilizations go down...." Eukonidor began to protest.

"Study will show you, youth, that the general level of mind, and hence of strength, is rising," the fused Elders interrupted. "The trend is ever upward; each peak and valley being higher than its predecessor. When the indicated level has been reached—the level at which the efficient use of the Lens will become possible—we will not only allow ourselves to become known to them; we will engage them at every point."

"One factor remains obscure." A Thinker broke the ensuing silence. "In this visualization I do not perceive anything to preclude the possibility that the Eddorians may at any time visualize us. Granted that the Elders of long ago did not merely visualize the Eddorians, but perceived them in time-space surveys; that they and subsequent Elders were able to maintain the status quo; and that the Eddorian way of thought is essentially mechanistic, rather than philosophic, in nature. There is still a possibility that the enemy may be able to deduce us by processes of logic alone. This thought is particularly disturbing to me at the present time because a rigid statistical analysis of the occurrences upon those four planets shows that they cannot possibly have been due to chance. With such an analysis as a starting point, a mind of even moderate ability could visualize us practically in toto. I assume, however, that this possibility has been taken into consideration, and suggest that the membership be informed."

"The point is well taken. The possibility exists. While the probability is very great that such an analysis will not be made until after we have declared

ourselves, it is not a certainty. Immediately upon deducing our existence, however, the Eddorians would begin to build against us, upon the four planets and elsewhere. Since there is only one effective counter-structure possible, and since we Elders have long been alert to detect the first indications of that particular activity, we know that the situation remains unchanged. If it changes, we will call at once another full meeting of minds. Are there any other matters of moment...? If not, this conference will dissolve."

3. ATLANTIS

Ariponides, recently elected Faros of Atlantis for his third five-year term, stood at a window of his office atop the towering Farostery. His hands were clasped loosely behind his back. He did not really see the tremendous expanse of quiet ocean, nor the bustling harbor, nor the metropolis spread out so magnificently and so busily beneath him. He stood there, motionless, until a subtle vibration warned him that visitors were approaching his door.

"Come in, gentlemen.... Please be seated." He sat down at one end of a table molded of transparent plastic. "Psychologist Talmonides, Statesman Cleto, Minister Philamon, Minister Marxes and Officer Artomenes, I have asked you to come here personally because I have every reason to believe that the shielding of this room is proof against eavesdroppers; a thing which can no longer be said of our supposedly private television channels. We must discuss, and if possible come to some decision concerning, the state in which our nation now finds itself.

"Each of us knows within himself exactly what he is. Of our own powers, we cannot surely know each others' inward selves. The tools and techniques of psychology, however, are potent and exact; and Talmonides, after exhaustive and rigorous examination of each one of us, has certified that no taint of disloyalty exists among us."

"Which certification is not worth a damn," the burly Officer declared. "What assurance do we have that Talmonides himself is not one of the ringleaders? Mind you, I have no reason to believe that he is not completely loyal. In fact, since he has been one of my best friends for over twenty years, I believe implicitly that he is. Nevertheless the plain fact is, Ariponides, that all the precautions you have taken, and any you can take, are and will be useless

insofar as definite knowledge is concerned. The real truth is and will remain unknown."

"You are right," the Psychologist conceded. "And, such being the case, perhaps I should withdraw from the meeting."

"That wouldn't help, either." Artomenes shook his head. "Any competent plotter would be prepared for this, as for any other contingency. One of us others would be the real operator."

"And the fact that our Officer is the one who is splitting hairs so finely could be taken to indicate which one of us the real operator could be," Marxes pointed out, cuttingly.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" Aripontides protested. "While absolute certainty is of course impossible to any finite mind, you all know how Talmonides was tested; you know that in his case there is no reasonable doubt. Such chance as exists, however, must be taken, for if we do not trust each other fully in this undertaking, failure is inevitable. With this word of warning I will get on with my report.

"This worldwide frenzy of unrest followed closely upon the controlled liberation of atomic energy and may be—probably is—traceable to it. It is in no part due to imperialistic aims or acts on the part of Atlantis. This fact cannot be stressed too strongly. We never have been and are not now interested in Empire. It is true that the other nations began as Atlantean colonies, but no attempt was ever made to hold any one of them in colonial status against the wish of its electorate. All nations were and are sister states. We gain or lose together. Atlantis, the parent, was and is a clearing-house, a co-ordinator of effort, but has never claimed or sought authority to rule; all decisions being based upon free debate and free and secret ballot.

"But now! Parties and factions everywhere, even in old Atlantis. Every nation is torn by internal dissensions and strife. Nor is this all. Uighar as a nation is insensately jealous of the Islands of the South, who in turn are jealous of Maya. Maya of Bantu, Bantu of Ekopt, Ekopt of Norheim, and Norheim of Uighar. A vicious circle, worsened by other jealousies and hatreds intercrossing everywhere. Each fears that some other is about to try to seize control of the entire world; and there seems to be spreading rapidly the utterly baseless belief that Atlantis itself is about to reduce all other nations of Earth

to vassalage.

"This is a bald statement of the present condition of the world as I see it. Since I can see no other course possible within the constituted framework of our democratic government, I recommend that we continue our present activities, such as the international treaties and agreements upon which we are now at work, intensifying our effort wherever possible. We will now hear from Statesman Cleto."

"You have outlined the situation clearly enough, Faros. My thought, however, is that the principal cause of the trouble is the coming into being of this multiplicity of political parties, particularly those composed principally of crackpots and extremists. The connection with atomic energy is clear: since the atomic bomb gives a small group of people the power to destroy the world, they reason that it thereby confers upon them the authority to dictate to the world. My recommendation is merely a special case of yours; that every effort be made to influence the electorates of Norheim and of Uighar into supporting an effective international control of atomic energy."

"You have your data tabulated in symbolics?" asked Talmonides, from his seat at the keyboard of a calculating machine.

"Yes. Here they are."

"Thanks."

"Minister Philamon," the Faros announced.

"As I see it—as any intelligent man should be able to see it—the principal contribution of atomic energy to this worldwide chaos was the complete demoralization of labor," the gray-haired Minister of Trade stated, flatly. "Output per man-hour should have gone up at least twenty percent, in which case prices would automatically have come down. Instead, short-sighted guilds imposed drastic curbs on production, and now seem to be surprised that as production falls and hourly wages rise, prices also rise and real income drops. Only one course is possible, gentlemen; labor *must* be made to listen to reason. This feather-bedding, this protected loafing, this...."

"I protest!" Marxes, Minister of Work, leaped to his feet. "The blame lies squarely with the capitalists. Their greed, their rapacity, their exploitation of...."

"One moment, please!" Aripónides rapped the table sharply. "It is highly significant of the deplorable condition of the times that two Ministers of State should speak as you two have just spoken. I take it that neither of you has anything new to contribute to this symposium?"

Both claimed the floor, but both were refused it by vote.

"Hand your tabulated data to Talmonides," the Faros directed. "Officer Artomenes?"

"You, our Faros, have more than intimated that our defense program, for which I am primarily responsible, has been largely to blame for what has happened," the grizzled warrior began. "In part, perhaps it was—one must be blind indeed not to see the connection, and biased indeed not to admit it. But what should I have done, knowing that there is no practical defense against the atomic bomb? Every nation has them, and is manufacturing more and more. Every nation is infested with the agents of every other. Should I have tried to keep Atlantis toothless in a world bristling with fangs? And could I—or anyone else—have succeeded in doing so?"

"Probably not. No criticism was intended; we must deal with the situation as it actually exists. Your recommendations, please?"

"I have thought this thing over day and night, and can see no solution which can be made acceptable to our—or to any real—democracy. Nevertheless, I have one recommendation to make. We all know that Norheim and Uighar are the sore spots—particularly Norheim. We have more bombs as of now than both of them together. We know that Uighar's super-sonic jobs are ready. We don't know exactly what Norheim has, since they cut my Intelligence line a while back, but I'm sending over another operative—my best man, too—tonight. If he finds out that we have enough advantage in speed, and I'm pretty sure that we have, I say hit both Norheim and Uighar right then, while we can, before they hit us. And hit them hard—pulverize them. Then set up a world government strong enough to knock out any nation—including Atlantis—that will not cooperate with it. This course of action is flagrantly against all international law and all the principles of democracy, I know; and even it might not work. It is, however, as far as I can see, the only course which *can* work."

"You—we all—perceive its weaknesses." The Faros thought for minutes.

"You cannot be sure that your Intelligence has located all of the danger points, and many of them must be so far underground as to be safe from even our heaviest missiles. We all, including you, believe that the Psychologist is right in holding that the reaction of the other nations to such action would be both unfavorable and violent. Your report, please, Talmonides."

"I have already put my data into the integrator." The Psychologist punched a button and the mechanism began to whirl and to click. "I have only one new fact of any importance; the name of one of the higher-ups and its corollary implication that there may be some degree of cooperation between Norheim and Uighar...."

He broke off as the machine stopped clicking and ejected its report.

"Look at that graph—up ten points in seven days!" Talmonides pointed a finger. "The situation is deteriorating faster and faster. The conclusion is unavoidable—you can see yourselves that this summation line is fast approaching unity—that the outbreaks will become uncontrollable in approximately eight days. With one slight exception—here—you will notice that the lines of organization and purpose are as random as ever. In spite of this conclusive integration I would be tempted to believe that this seeming lack of coherence was due to insufficient data—that back of this whole movement there is a carefully-set-up and completely-integrated plan—except for the fact that the factions and the nations are so evenly matched. But the data are sufficient. It is shown conclusively that no one of the other nations can possibly win, even by totally destroying Atlantis. They would merely destroy each other and our entire Civilization. According to this forecast, in arriving at which the data furnished by our Officer were prime determinants, that will surely be the outcome unless remedial measures be taken at once. You are of course sure of your facts, Artomenes?"

"I am sure. But you said you had a name, and that it indicated a Norheim-Uighar hookup. What is that name?"

"An old friend of yours...."

"Lo Sung!" The words as spoken were a curse of fury.

"None other. And, unfortunately, there is as yet no course of action indicated which is at all promising of success."