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Albert Ogilvie and Stymie Gaha World-wise Tasmanians

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In 1935 Albert George Ogilvie, recently elected Labor Premier of Tasmania, travelled to Europe. His itinerary included Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany, and Stalin's Russia. Accompanying the Premier was John Francis ('Stymie') Gaha, his close friend and minister responsible for health matters within the Tasmanian government. In due course the two wrote a long report on their travels, and this – fully reproduced – is in every sense central to this book. The pair's observations go beyond travellers' comment, interesting in itself though that is, to confront fundamental issues of politics and society. The resulting document is rare in the Australian canon.

Ogilvie abhorred policies being pursued in fascist Italy and – if to a lesser extent – Germany. In particular he berated Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia/Ethiopia. The Premier receded from this international consciousness in 1936–37, but thereafter he became one of the most outspoken of Australian politicians in urging resistance against the Axis powers.

While international themes have dominant part in *Ogilvie and Gaha*, they do not have exclusive play. The two cared much for human health and happiness, and Ogilvie's government had a fair record of pertinent achievement. Roe recognises the tension between such human concerns and Ogilvie's invocation of martial strength against the fascists. Thereby this story took its place in the world-wide tragedy of the 1930s.

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