

The date was August 1, 1941. World War II had been raging for two years. France had fallen, the Battle of Britain had been fought, and the Soviet Union had just been invaded by Nazi Germany. The bombing of Pearl Harbor was four months in the future. But on that day, with Europe in flames, and the evil shadow of Adolf Hitler apparently falling over all the world, what was chiefly on my mind was a meeting toward which I was hastening.

I was 21 years old, a graduate student in chemistry at Columbia University, and I had been writing science fiction professionally for three years. In that time, I had sold five stories to John Campbell, editor of *Astounding*, and the fifth story, "Nightfall," was about to appear in the September 1941 issue of the magazine. I had an appointment to see Mr. Campbell to tell him the plot of a new story I was planning to write, and the catch was that I had no plot in mind, not the trace of one. I therefore tried a device I sometimes use. I opened a book at random and set up free association, beginning with whatever I first saw. The book I had with me was a collection of the Gilbert and Sullivan plays. I happened to open it to the picture of the Fairy Queen of Iolanthe throwing herself at the feet of Private Willis. I thought of soldiers, of military empires, of the Roman Empire - of a Galactic Empire -

aha!

Why shouldn't I write of the fall of the Galactic Empire and of the return of feudalism, written from the viewpoint of someone in the secure days of the Second Galactic Empire? After all, I had read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* not once, but twice. I was bubbling over by the time I got to Campbell's, and my enthusiasm must have been catching for Campbell blazed up as I had never seen him do. In the course of an hour we built up the notion of a vast series of connected stories that were to deal in intricate detail with the thousand-year period between the First and Second Galactic Empires. This was to be illuminated by the science of psychohistory, which Campbell and I thrashed out between us.

On August 11, 1941, therefore, I began the story of that interregnum and called it "Foundation." In it, I described how the psychohistorian, Hari Seldon, established a pair of Foundations at opposite ends of the Universe under such circumstances as to make sure that the forces of history would bring about the second Empire after one thousand years instead of the thirty thousand that would be required otherwise.

The story was submitted on September 8 and, to make sure that Campbell really meant what he said about a series, I ended "Foundation" on a cliff-hanger. Thus, it seemed to me, he would be forced to buy a second story.

However, when I started the second story (on October 24), I found that I had outsmarted myself. I quickly wrote myself into an impasse, and the Foundation series would have died an ignominious death had I not had a conversation with Fred Pohl on November 2 (on the Brooklyn Bridge, as it happened). I don't remember what Fred actually said, but, whatever it was, it pulled me out of the hole.

"Foundation" appeared in the May 1942 issue of Astounding and the succeeding story, "Bridle and Saddle," in the June 1942 issue.

After that there was only the routine trouble of writing the stories. Through the remainder of the decade, John Campbell kept my nose to the grindstone and made sure he got additional Foundation stories.

"The Big and the Little" was in the August 1944 Astounding, "The Wedge" in the October 1944 issue, and "Dead Hand" in the April 1945 issue. (These stories were written while I was working at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia.)

On January 26, 1945, I began "The Mule," my personal favorite among the Foundation stories, and the longest yet, for it was 50,000 words. It was printed as a two-part serial (the very first serial I was ever responsible for) in the November and December 1945 issues. By the time the second part appeared I was in the army.

After I got out of the army, I wrote "Now You See It-" which appeared in the January 1948 issue. By this time, though, I had grown tired of the Foundation stories so I tried to end them by setting up, and solving, the mystery of the location of the Second Foundation. Campbell would have none of that, however. He forced me to change the ending, and made me promise I would do one more Foundation story.

Well, Campbell was the kind of editor who could not be denied, so I wrote one more Foundation story, vowing to myself that it would be the last. I called it "-And Now You Don't," and it appeared as a three-part serial in the November 1949, December 1949, and January 1950 issues of Astounding.

By then, I was on the biochemistry faculty of Boston University School of Medicine, my first book had just been published, and I was determined to move on to new things. I had spent eight years on the Foundation, written nine stories with a total of about 220,000 words. My total earnings for the series came to \$3,641 and that seemed enough. The Foundation was over and done with, as far as I was concerned.

In 1950, however, hardcover science fiction was just coming into existence. I had no objection to earning a little more money by having the Foundation series reprinted in book form. I offered the series to

Doubleday (which had already published a science-fiction novel by me, and which had contracted for another) and to Little-Brown, but both rejected it. In that year, though, a small publishing firm, Gnome Press, was beginning to be active, and it was prepared to do the Foundation series as three books.