

# LIGHT ON MOSCOW

SOVIET POLICY ANALYSED

WITH A NEW CHAPTER ON FINLAND

by

D. N, PRITT, K.C., M.P.

“We never had any orientation towards Germany, nor have we any orientation towards Poland and France. Our orientation in the past and our orientation in the present is towards the U.S.S.R., and toward the U.S.S.R. alone.”

J. V. STALIN, 1934

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*The Tiger*,: "STRANGE! I SEEM TO HEAR A CHILD WEeping."

A cartoon by the late Will Dyson, which appeared in the *Daily Herald* on the 17th May, 1919. It shows the "Big Four," with Clemenceau ("The Tiger") in the foreground, followed by President Woodrow Wilson, Baron Sonnino, and Lloyd George.

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## PREFACE

The war that has been feared and expected for many years has broken out. Britain and France are in a state of war with Germany.

What are the causes of this war? And to what end is it being fought? These are vital questions to which each of us should strive to find the answer.

Both causes and objects are in part immediate and in part remote. The immediate causes can be seen fairly clearly from the British Government's Blue Book recording the discussions and diplomatic correspondence between London and Berlin in the weeks before the war; and the immediate aims have been stated in brief and summary form.

But the deeper causes of the war are much more difficult to ascertain or estimate; and the more far-reaching objects are not too easy to state, and have certainly not been formulated. There is as yet no answer to the questions; what are the broad terms of peace that we demand, what sort of a world do we seek to build on the ruins of the old? Our government has not disclosed its war aims, although pressed to do so from many quarters, more or less influential, including amongst the former the Indian National Congress, representing 20,000,000 out of 30,000,000 voters.

Something depends in the war, and far more depends in the peace, on our relations with the Soviet Union; but few of us have any precise knowledge of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations in the Spring and Summer of this tragic year 1939. In a proper understanding of those negotiations, and of the events that flowed from their termination, including especially the swift emergence of Moscow as a main centre of gravity of world politics, lie many of the clues to a real comprehension of the causes of the war, as well as to a correct estimation of the British Government's war aims and of the peace that is likely to come. Such a comprehension will affect all our ways of living, and, it may be, our ways of dying.

In this book I have tried to give an explanation of the position and policy of the U.S.S.R., and of the attitude of the British Government to that State, and thus to remove some of the difficulties that beset us when we seek to understand the urgent questions of war and peace. If my explanation is correct, I shall have helped to bring about that fuller appreciation of the facts by which alone we can guide our thoughts and actions with any hope of reaching an early and an enduring peace.

October, 1939.

D. N. PRITT.

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P.S.—At the end of November, 1939, some weeks after the publication of this book, hostilities began between the U.S.S.R. and Finland. I had then already undertaken to write a further Penguin Special, “The Drift Towards World War in 1940,” warning the public against the schemes afoot for forming a common front of the Capitalist powers against the U.S.S.R., and for bringing about a war against that country; and the case of Finland comes logically enough into that book. But meanwhile “Light on Moscow” is selling steadily, and whilst I feel that there is nothing in it that needs to be altered as a result of recent events I think that an addition should be made to cover to some extent the problem of Finland. I have accordingly arranged to reproduce in this edition the major part of one of the chapters in my new book dealing with Finland. It begins at page 99.

January, 1940.

D. N. P.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTORY

A good deal of misconception, and, not a little hostility, has been aroused by the signature in August of a non-aggression pact between Germany and the U.S.S.R., and by the more recent occupation by the forces of the latter country of the White Russian and Ukrainian areas of Eastern Poland, followed in the last days of September by the German-Soviet agreement on demarcation of State interests, trade treaty, and proposal for ending the war.

The Soviet Union is accused of having, by these agreements and proposals, “betrayed democracy,” “destroyed the Peace Front,” and displayed treacherous double-dealing. By occupying the territories in question, she is said to have not merely broken the non-aggression pact between herself and Poland, but also to have “stabbed Poland in the back” and to have prevented her from continuing to resist the German invasion.

It is in my view vital to the lasting peace which we hope soon to build, and to the whole history of the world, that the people of Great Britain—not merely those who are actively or consciously political, but the great mass of us, the man in the street, who must now, I suppose, be called the man in the black-out—should have a right understanding of these events in particular and of the Soviet Union in general. That country is growing rapidly in strength and importance, and was already taking its place among the two or three great powers of the world, in military and in industrial importance, when the events of this last month of September brought it right to the forefront; and the future of every one of us depends to a very great extent on the relations between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R.

Now, these relations cannot be stable or secure without mutual understanding; and it would be disastrous if criticisms and attacks based on wrong information or misrepresentation were to lead the man in the black-out into feelings of unjustified hostility to the Soviet Union. Apart altogether from the selfish consideration that long before this war is over we may need her active help, in the form of supplies or otherwise, it is of the utmost importance that the accusations I have mentioned should be examined, tested, and shown, as I believe them to be, to be unfounded. If they can be cleared out of the way, we shall have removed a substantial obstacle to the building of friendly relations. It has not been uncommon in the history of the

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Soviet Union, and more particularly in the history of the varying attitudes to that country of the British Press and Government, and of the public which they influence, to meet with furious denunciations of the Soviet Union, which seem plausible enough at the time, but a short time after are realised by almost everybody to be unreasonable and unfounded. I feel sure that these accusations will prove to be of that class, but that makes it actually more important that they should be answered.

I propose to deal with all these accusations as fully and as fairly as I can. I must begin by recalling the difficulties which we nearly all have in trying to make up our minds on any question concerning the U.S.S.R. That country is a long way away, and it is not easy for many of us to go and study its features on the spot; life under its economic and social system is in any case not an easy thing to understand if one has never lived in it, for all the fundamental assumptions on which life moves are different from those on which our lives in the West are based; and, above all, there is an overwhelming temptation for our ruling class, and for the Press which is so very largely identical in interest with it, to present us with a false view. The result is that, for most of us, the picture of anything that happens in the U.S.S.R. is presented even in peace time with the same obscurity and distortion that we find in any picture of what is really happening anywhere in war time.

Why do I say that there is so great a temptation for our ruling class to give us a false view of the U.S.S.R.? I can answer this clearly, I hope, if not very briefly. To begin with, when one gives the matter a little thought, one realises that our existing social system, capitalism, is working badly; some of us are too rich, many are desperately and unnecessarily poor; millions are out of work whilst others lack the things they might make; foodstuffs and other raw materials are destroyed in peace time whilst millions who could enjoy them starve, and stocks run short in war; tension between states is so great that all are arming to the teeth for a conflict which as has long been known might come at any moment, which really indeed began in Spain in 1936, and has certainly begun now. Secondly, whilst millions of workers must be wondering why these evils exist at a time when the world's capacity for production should give all of us real peace and modest plenty, and are wondering, too, whether it is the system that is at fault, the Soviet Union, a state built up and carried on by its workers, with no help—indeed with a good deal of hindrance—from



the former upper classes of the country, or from the ruling class of any other country, begins to appear ever more prominently on the scene. If the workers in the Western democracies once get the idea that this new state is a success, they will insist on the existing social system being abolished here, and replaced by a socialist one; and our ruling class does not want this to happen. Some of the members of this class may actually believe that our capitalist system is a good system; but one thing they all know quite certainly, that it is a very nice system *for them*, giving them lives of comfort and power, and even until lately of security.

In such a situation, it must follow that there is an obviously overwhelming incentive to present to the British public (whether it corresponds with the true position or not) as unfavourable a picture of the Soviet Union as possible; and, with the advantages I have just mentioned, the work has so far been done pretty well. Millions of people in Great Britain, not merely in the middle class but also among the workers, have been led to entertain the quaintest misconceptions about the U.S.S.R. It is not necessary for me to suggest that the Soviet Union is perfect, or that it has not made mistakes; I need only assert, and I can and do assert, that everyone who has really had the opportunity to investigate it must admit that in industry, agriculture, science, education, aviation, military strength, indeed in almost every branch of human activity, it has in two decades, in the face of almost unexampled difficulties, progressed to an extent which is probably without parallel in the history of the world. Our ruling class can see that, if they are to keep their position in a period of break-up and insecurity, it is vital that a picture of U.S.S.R., not as a land of remarkable progress, but as an unsuccessful experiment should be continuously presented to the public, a picture which will prevent more than a few thousand of the working-classes saying to themselves; "If the backward workers of Tsarist Russia, after war, revolution and famine, can do that much in twenty years, we can make an earthly paradise of Britain in half the time, without war, without revolution, and without famine; and we will!"

### THREE GROUPS OF POWERS

With that necessary preamble, and warning, let me turn to deal with these accusations, which involves some study of recent history. I must begin by pointing out that it is wrong to say, as many critics are at present either asserting or implying (after, it may be noticed,

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having denied it for many years), that the Western world is divided into two ideological groups. In truth, it is divided into three. There is a Socialist state,\* the U.S.S.R.; there is a group of states, which we may call the Western democracies (and which Hitler calls the pluto-democracies), ruled in the main by finance capital but presenting to various extents and with varying degrees of reality the forms of political but not of social or economic democracy; and there are then two or three other states, ruled by a degenerate and restricted form of finance-capitalism called Fascism.

These three groups are living in a world in which the fundamental difficulties and contradictions of existing social systems in general, and of Fascism in particular, with the perennial danger of war that follows from them, compel every nation to seek alliances or at the least non-aggression pacts with its neighbours; and it may be helpful, at the outset of a discussion of the circumstances under which the Socialist state of the U.S.S.R. has made a series of agreements with Germany, the principal Fascist state, to consider what sort of pacts or alliances the three groups of states might naturally be expected to make, and what they have already done in the direction of such groupings or alliances.

Taking first the Western democracies, one can well imagine them seeking alliances or agreements either with the Soviet Union, with whom they have this much in common, that their possessions and their security are threatened by the Fascist states, or with the Fascist States, with which they have even more in common, for they are all capitalist states, hostile to and fearful of Socialism. As for the Fascist states, it would be natural enough for them to make agreements with the Western democracies, and within certain limits with the Socialist State, the U.S.S.R. The latter State, one can imagine, might hold wholly aloof from the other states, from all of which it differs fundamentally, or it might hold aloof except in so far as it would make commercial agreements and pure non-aggression pacts; or it might conceivably make alliances, if satisfactory conditions prevailed, with the Western democracies.

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\* Both doctrinaire Socialist critics and others may object that the U.S.S.R. is not truly Socialist. I do not agree with them; but I need not develop the controversy here, for it is quite plain that in any view the Soviet Union cannot be regarded as falling into either of the two other ideological groups,

Turning to examine what the three groups have done in actual practice, and taking the principal Fascist state, Germany, first, one finds that, until after the Soviet Union began a policy of collaboration with the Western democracies and joined the League of Nations in 1934, Germany was friendly and even cordial towards the new state to a degree which few people now recall.

The friendliness and cordiality were certainly very well displayed. The first example after the advent of Hitler was in the interview which he himself gave to the *Sunday Express* in February, 1933, when he had just become Chancellor of the Reich. In this interview, the German text of which was published in Berlin as an official statement on foreign policy, whilst attacking the Treaty of Versailles and France, and complaining about the Polish corridor, he said nothing against the U.S.S.R., and stated that Communism was an internal German political problem, in respect of which he was not concerned with any foreign state. It is true that on the 2nd March, 1933, just after the burning of the Reichstag (for which his newspapers at different times laid the blame on the Communists, Mr. Leopold Harris, and myself) in an election speech in Berlin, he did attack the Soviets, declaring that it was better "to be in a German prison than at liberty in Soviet Russia." But that was an election speech, and only three weeks later, in his famous programmatic speech in the Reichstag, after talking in the usual strain about France and the Treaty of Versailles, he said: "As far as the Soviet Union is concerned the Government of the Reich is anxious to maintain friendly and mutually profitable relations. The Government ... is particularly well placed for such a policy towards Soviet Russia. The struggle against Communism is an internal business, in which we will never put up with interference from outside, but the political relations of the State with other powers, with whom we are tied by mutual interests, will not be affected by this."

And his search for friendship and mutual profit did not stop at words, for in this same month of March, 1933, he granted Mk. 200,000,000 of credits to the Soviets.

#### GERMAN-SOVIET TREATY OF 1933

Again, on the 5th May, 1933, after a long and friendly talk with the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, who was not only a Communist but also, by the accident of birth, a Jew, he ratified the extension of the 1926 Treaty of Berlin between the Reich and Soviet Russia. This treaty, one of a number of treaties between the two countries made

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between 1921 and 1929, eight of which were of major importance and not one of which Hitler denounced during the first four years of his rule, had fallen due for renewal two years before, in 1931. The Government of that time had continually postponed the ratification, and it was left to Hitler to carry it through. The following passages may be quoted from this document:

“The German Government and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, being animated by the desire to do everything that can contribute to the maintaining of general peace, and convinced that the interests of the German people and the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics demand a continued confidential collaboration, have agreed to consolidate their existing friendly relations through a special Treaty....

“Article 1. —The basis of the relations between Germany and the U.S.S.R. remains the Treaty of Rapallo. The German Government and the Governments of the U.S.S.R. will remain in friendly contact with each other in order to bring about an understanding in the problems of political and economic nature that are of mutual interest.

“Article 2. —If one of the contracting parties were, despite its peaceful behaviour, attacked by a third Power or several Powers, the other contracting party must observe neutrality during the whole duration of the conflict.

“Article 3.—If, as a result of a conflict whose nature is indicated in article 2, or else at a time when neither of the contracting parties is involved in military complications, a coalition were to be formed by third Powers for the purpose of conducting an economic or financial boycott of one of the contracting Powers, the other contracting Power shall not join such a coalition.”

(This is the Treaty which is referred to in the preamble to the non-aggression pact of the 23rd August, 1939; see p. 62. The Treaty of Rapallo mentioned in Article One is dealt with later at p. 19.)

There were, of course, also some quarrels in 1933, and attacks in the press, but harmony was again restored in October, when an official communique in Berlin announced that “the difference in Governmental form would on no account be allowed to interfere with the good relations between the two countries.”

So much for 1933: what passed in 1934? It began well, for in his programmatic speech to the Reichstag on the 30th January, Hitler said:

“Despite the great difference between the two respective outlooks on life, the German Reich has endeavoured to look after its friendly relations with Russia also this year. If Herr Stalin in his latest great speech expressed apprehension lest forces inimical to the Soviets be at work in Germany, I must correct this opinion here.... We welcome the desire for a stabilisation in the East through a system of pacts, especially if the guiding considerations in this are less of a tactical and political nature and more of a nature to consolidate peace.”

Later, in April, 1934, when the Soviet Government offered to sign a pact guaranteeing the neutrality of the Baltic countries, Hitler issued a statement from which one may quote the following:

“We can, of course, only welcome with satisfaction the Soviet Government’s present desire to do something definite to restore confidential relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. The German Government has always unequivocally emphasised its desire in that direction at every suitable opportunity.”

He added that there was nevertheless no need to enter into any agreement guaranteeing the neutrality of the Baltic countries, as there was no reason to assume that they were in any danger of attack from the Soviet Union, and that the German Government was not disposed to sign any such guarantee, because:

“The German Government believes that the Treaty of Berlin which it ratified the previous year contains all the elements for the preservation and shaping of their mutual relations.”

Moreover, it should be added, throughout the year 1934, whilst the U.S.S.R. was not only greatly increasing her armaments but also making a public parade of the fact, Hitler in his repeated pleas and arguments for German rearmament never even hinted at the idea of a “Soviet menace.” Neither Soviet Russia nor the Red Army were mentioned in any of the official documents relating to German rearmament. It is not surprising that the Contemporary Review for

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December, 1936, described Hitler's "anti-Soviet bluff" as a "gigantic piece of political fraud," and classified those "who may be taken in by the assertion that Hitler has saved them from Bolshevism" as "a few decrepit dowagers or a few short-sighted financiers."

But, subsequently, mainly owing to the U.S.S.R. having entered to some extent into collaboration with the Western democracies, Germany grew more and more hostile. It established the Anti-Comintern Pact, and sought both to persuade the Western democracies that its own power should be maintained and increased so that it might constitute a "bulwark against Bolshevism," and also to reconcile its own population to enduring hardship and repression on the plea that this was necessary in order to beat off an attack by the Soviet Union, which was, it pretended, seeking to destroy Germany by force of arms.

The attitude of Germany to the Western democracies throughout was in the main a mixture of readiness to trade and to borrow money and of unexampled insolence and aggression in political matters.

### EARLY SOVIET-ITALIAN RELATIONS

The attitude of the other European Fascist great power, Italy, followed a similar course. She recognised the Soviet Union as early as the 7th February, 1924, being one of the first countries to do so.

In June, 1929, General Balbo, commanding a squadron of hydro-planes, made an official visit to the Russian Black Sea ports, and in May, 1933, this was followed by the tour of a flotilla of Italian submarines which sailed to Batum; this latter visit, the first of its kind since the revolution, was made the occasion of Italo-Soviet demonstrations of friendship. Throughout this period, of course, Fascist Italy negotiated and signed commercial agreements with the U.S.S.R., and, like Germany, granted them considerable credits.

Italo-Soviet friendship was solemnly confirmed by the signing of the pact of the 2nd September, 1933, which is still in force, whereby Italy undertakes not to participate in any bloc or diplomatic understanding calculated to injure the interests of the Soviet Union. The Italian press described this pact as the most important political event of the year, and the *Messaggero* wrote that it was "one of the most important steps towards the recovery of Europe," and that it was in keeping with "the spirit and the tendency of all the international acts of Italian fascism," marking "an essential step along the path of European cooperation in the spirit of Mussolini's policy." "It is the merit

of Mussolini," it declared, "that he was the first to feel that any attempt to build up a new Europe would be in vain without the co-operation of two such nations as Germany and Russia."

In an article entitled "Italy and Russia," published in his own newspaper, the *Popolo d'Italia*, on the 30th September, 1933, Mussolini congratulated himself on having "assisted" the Soviet Union by means of the Italo-Russian Treaty "to abandon its isolation," and on having led it "to collaborate closely with the Western powers," thus succeeding in stabilising "a vast part of Europe." In short, Rome was proud of "the return of Russia to the concert of Europe."

On the 30th October, 1933, a Soviet flotilla went to Naples to return the visit of the Italian submarines to Batum in the previous May, and was welcomed with great cordiality; and in December of the same year, Litvinov visited Rome at the express invitation of the Duce himself; this visit was described in the Italian press as "an event of historic importance." In an excessively laudatory article, entitled "Russia and Mussolini," the Duce's own mouthpiece wrote: Mussolini dominates his century with an authority and prestige which is henceforth not open to discussion but must be accepted. The only parallels that can be drawn in order of grandeur are the wars of Napoleon, Talleyrand and Metternich, the world war and Mussolini."

Italy, like Germany, only became hostile to the U.S.S.R. when the latter country began to co-operate with the Western democracies, and particularly with France.

### THE ATTITUDE OF GREAT BRITAIN

Turning to the Western democracies, and particularly to Great Britain, the attitude at all crucial times to the Fascist States and particularly to Germany has been one of willingness to trade and indirectly to finance, of occasional hesitant opposition to the grosser manifestations of insolence and aggression, but fundamentally of abject surrender in the political field and in particular of conduct manifestly only consistent with a resolve that the Fascist governments shall at almost all costs or risks be maintained in power against either external or internal difficulties. The attitude of the Western democracies to the Soviet Union during the same period has shown willingness to trade, and even to give credits, but politically has been one of cold hostility, and of contempt gradually changing to fear.

On balance, both before and after the advent of Hitler, Germany is entitled to more good marks for friendly conduct towards the

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U.S.S.R. than we are; and it is not even more than partly true to say that she should also be given more bad marks for unfriendly conduct. If one includes the very early days, when we were financing one semi-piratical invasion after another against the Soviet Republic, the score is heavily against us; if one looks only at the more recent years, it is true that the leaders of Germany have fulminated against her more vilely and more officially than our leaders ever did, but is that not perhaps only a difference of technique and manners?

The attitude of the Soviet Union both to the Fascist States and to the Western democracies, and indeed to the capitalist world in general, has (as is more fully explained below\*) from the earliest days been one of readiness to make both commercial agreements and non-aggression pacts with any country that was willing to make them with her; but she held aloof from any further or closer contact or engagement until, in 1934, she took what did substantially amount to a new step in policy. She seems to have come at that time to the conclusion, which in the light of after-events may be thought too optimistic, that the Western democracies were sufficiently genuinely attached to peace and opposed to Fascism to make it useful for her to try to cooperate with them, and she accordingly joined the League of Nations. As already mentioned, this collaboration lost her the good will which she had previously enjoyed from the Fascist states. Her reaction to their increasing hostility was continually to strengthen her military forces, and to make it quite plain that she would resist any attack upon her territories, either from Germany and Italy, or from the third great Fascist state, Japan, which comes into the picture very prominently from the Soviet point of view, but somewhat less directly from that of Great Britain and France.

The adhesion of the U.S.S.R. to the League of Nations was really the beginning of an attempt, in which she persisted until August, 1939, to cooperate with the Western democracies against Fascism. In the main the story of this book is the story of the Soviet Union's growing and only too fully justified disillusionment with the Western democracies, spreading over five years and more particularly over the period March-August, 1939.

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\* See p. 57.



## CHAPTER II

### THE TWENTY YEARS BETWEEN

Before we deal with that most tragic period, let us glance back at the history of the last twenty years. It will help in an understanding of these last twenty weeks before the 1st September, 1939. It is now a truism to say that the events of the war of 1914-1918, and the peace of Versailles which followed it, sowed the seeds of the conflicts that have resulted in this present war. This truism has been so frequently repeated by those who, like Mr. Neville Chamberlain, were enthusiastic supporters of the Treaty of Versailles, that it is worthwhile examining rather carefully. When so examined, it turns out to be true in a much wider sense than would be gathered from those who used it mainly as an argument for yielding to Hitler, to Mussolini and to Franco.

#### RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AROUSES HOSTILITY

The war of 1914-18 resulted in a beaten and dismembered Germany. So much is widely known and indeed has been trumpeted abroad by Nazi propaganda and re-echoed for twenty months and more by the nearest supporters of the Prime Minister. But it also resulted in the biggest revolution in history, the Russian Revolution, in which the mass of the peoples of that vast country freed themselves from their landlords and their capitalists and set out to construct a Socialist society. By so doing they incurred the hostility of all the big powers, who sought to strangle the infant Soviets by armed intervention and support of counter-revolutionary rebellions. Beaten in these first endeavours, the big powers found themselves one after another compelled to enter into diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. But these relations never developed into any close friendship on the part of such powers as Britain, for example. On the contrary, the hostility continued in one form or another. Sometimes it was overt and acute, as when the Marquess Curzon in 1923 sent an ultimatum on a dispute over fishing rights and other matters of secondary importance; or when Sir Austen Chamberlain, in February, 1927, dealt in ultimatory tones with some minor questions, including the publication in a Russian newspaper of a cartoon which he considered offensive to himself personally; or when Ramsay MacDonald wrote a minatory note over the forged "Red Letter" in 1924 (professional forgers seem always to have found a ready market for their bogus

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documents in the circles of the Foreign Office—and the Home Office); or when the Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, persuaded himself by his own speeches about the “Red Peril” that there must be some basis for what he was saying, and sought for it by a police raid on the Soviet trade agency of Arcos, Ltd.,\* followed by a breach of diplomatic relations (usually a prelude to war) in 1927: or at the time of Sir John Simon’s ultimatum in 1933.

Other examples could be given from other countries. Enough to say that the mere existence of what Beatrice and Sidney Webb in their two-volume study have called “Soviet Communism: A *New Civilisation*” was regarded by the rulers of other countries as a challenge and a menace to *their* civilisation.

The argument was sometimes put forward in Parliament, and loudly repeated by the millionaires who own our big newspapers, that the Soviet Government was carrying on insidious propaganda and was therefore placed by the Foreign Office in a special category amongst governments. Singularly little evidence of this allegation was ever produced (although press repetition made it into an article of popular belief); but, whether or not there was much truth in it, any argument based on it has since been invalidated by the inability or unwillingness of the National Government to take up any similar attitude to the Fascist governments of Italy and Germany, whose “insidious propaganda” within the British Empire in the last few years has been notorious.

It is plain that during the last twenty years there have been behind the scenes repeated endeavours to isolate the Soviet Union, to group the Great Powers in an anti-Soviet alliance, or to set one or two Powers at loggerheads with the U.S.S.R. These endeavours have never been fully successful owing to differences and jealousies amongst the Powers on the one hand and the skilful diplomacy of the U.S.S.R. on the other. But up to a year ago there were half a dozen European Powers which still refused even to recognise the U.S.S.R.: and the attempt at concerted measures to stifle the U.S.S.R. emerges again and again in the records of European diplomacy (and is likely to be clearer still if and when the secret records of various countries see the

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\* It is interesting to note that the raid on Arcos was carried out under the Disorderly Houses Act, and that it resulted after hours of pneumatic drilling through concrete walls in precisely no evidence whatever.

light of day).

This may appear a hold assertion, and the belief current amongst the people of the Soviet Union that they have been subject to a hostile capitalist encirclement may seem a delusion. It is easy for those who live in Great Britain to think so; but the history of international agreements and conferences appears to give strong confirmation to this view.

### GENOA AND LOCARNO

Let us take two or three examples, and first of all the Genoa Conference of 1922, where Mr. Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, presided over a gathering of all the nations of Europe, for the purpose of restoring the ravages of war. The Soviet delegates were informed that their country would be aided to repair the ravages of war and civil war on condition that it gave up its plans of socialism and agreed to the restoration of capitalism. They refused. At the same conference, defeated Germany was left out in the cold and treated as a pariah; this gave fruitful soil for Soviet-German co-operation, and much to the chagrin of the French and British Governments there was signed the Treaty of Rapallo to which reference is made in the German-Soviet treaty already quoted on page 19. It was clear that the Powers had over-reached themselves in trying to oppress both the "Huns" and the "Bolshies" at one and the same time, and as a result attempt after attempt was made in subsequent years to break this co-operation and to form a front of the Western Powers against the U.S.S.R.

Three years later the Treaty of Locarno gives another case in point. This was concluded at the end of 1925, after a diplomatic honeymoon of the British Foreign Secretary (Sir Austen Chamberlain) in the Mediterranean with Benito Mussolini. Locarno was hailed as a guarantee of peace between France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Belgium. Unfortunately, these loudly proclaimed alliances *for* peace between a group of powers often provoke the question "Alliance *against* whom?" And in this case the answer was given indiscreetly enough by a member of the British Government, Mr. Ormsby-Gore (now Lord Harlech), in a public speech made shortly after the signature of the treaty. He said:

"The solidarity of Christian civilisation is necessary to stem the most sinister growth that has arisen in European history.... The struggle at Locarno, as I see it, was this: Is

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Germany to regard her future as bound up with the fate of the great Western Powers, or is she going to work with Russia for the destruction of Western civilisation.... Locarno means that so far as the present Government of Germany is concerned, it is detached from Russia and is throwing in its lot with the Western party.”

Two years after Locarno the “Arcos” raid of the Baldwin Government was commonly believed to have been intended as the signal for the isolation of the Soviet Union and for the provocation of war upon it. Soviet embassies were attacked in more than one country. In China relations were broken off. In the West, Voikov, the Soviet Ambassador to Poland, was assassinated. But the other great Powers were not ready to move; and the isolation was only partial.

The tale of the almost universal instigation of hostility, however, goes on. In 1929 the Chinese Tu-chun (or Governor) of Manchuria, Marshal Chang-tso-lin, launched an attack on the eastern borders of the Soviet Union. The American Secretary of State, Stimson, following the old claim made by Senator Knox in 1909 that the Manchurian Railway was a matter of “international concern,” endeavoured to intervene, and wrote a note to France, for delivery to the Soviet Government.\*

## SIR JOHN SIMON SPEAKS FOR JAPAN

In 1931-2 the Japanese armies seized Manchuria, and began a policy of war-provocation on the Soviet borders. And their action coincided with the setting up of the National Government in Britain. It was a fateful autumn for the peoples of Europe, since from that moment began the rapid deterioration of political relations throughout the world, and the renewed growth of armaments whose increasing cost forced up national budgets and restricted the social services in every country. For what was happening? The Japanese militarists had broken the Covenant of the League of Nations as well as the Washington Nine-Power Pact on China. If the Covenant had been

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\* He could not write direct, for the U.S.A. had not recognised the U.S.S.R. But the easy defeat of Chang-tso-lin’s forces by the Red Army (the battle of Hailar resulted in the capture of the entire enemy army of 13,000 troops at a cost of a few score casualties to the Red Army) gave point and emphasis to the forceful reply of the Soviet Government, telling Mr. Stimson not to poke his nose into the business.

enforced, all the Powers belonging to the League of Nations, together with the U.S.A. (which was more than willing to join in), could have broken the Japanese aggression and compelled the observance of treaties. But in the end it was the League of Nations that was broken. And the Power which was responsible for protecting Japan and for the beginning of the breakdown of the League of Nations was the National Government of Britain. Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary, used his forensic powers so successfully at Geneva that the Japanese delegate Matsuoka exclaimed like a gratified client that Sir John said in half an hour what he had been trying to impress on the Assembly for weeks. The Japanese aggression continued unchecked. The League of Nations began to wither. The armament firms began to blossom. And why? Largely because it was hoped that the Japanese seizure of Manchuria would lead direct to a Japanese seizure of the Far Eastern provinces of the U.S.S.R.

During these years up to 1931-2 the Soviet Government was not unaware of the risks it ran as the only Socialist state in a capitalist world. It knew that its diplomacy, however skilful, could not by itself provide immunity from attack for more than a limited period, and that only its own military strength could ensure safety. Accordingly, the first Five-Year Plan was hurried through in four years; it laid the basis not only for the construction of socialism, but for military preparedness.

### STALIN'S RETORT

This was the real significance, as we can now understand, of the report of Stalin in January, 1933, on the completion of the Five-Year Plan, when he said:

“It was the basic task of the Five-Year Plan to transform the U.S.S.R. from an agrarian and weak country, subservient to the caprices of capitalist countries, into a powerful industrial land, fully independent of and not subservient to the caprices of world capitalism....

“True, we are here six per cent. short of fulfilling the general programme. This is explained by the fact that owing to the refusal of neighbouring countries to conclude non-aggression pacts with us, and to the complications in the Far East, we were compelled hurriedly to switch over a number of factories to the production of modern means of defence, in order to strengthen our national defence. This switching

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over, compelled by the necessity to make certain preparations, meant that these factories stopped the manufacture of products for a period of four months. This could not but affect the fulfilment of the general programme of production of the Five-Year Plan during 1932. By this operation we were able to fill up completely the gap in the defensive power of the country.”

If this had not been done, he explained:

“We would not then have all the up-to-date means of defence, without which is impossible the national independence of the country, without which the country is transformed into an object of military operations on the part of external enemies. Our situation would then be more or less analogous to the present situation of China, which does not possess its own heavy industry, which does not have its own war industry, and which is picked upon by any country which wants to do so. In one word, we would have in such circumstances armed intervention, not non-aggression pacts, but war, a dangerous and deadly war, a sanguinary and unequal war, because in this war we would be almost unarmed before the enemies, who would have at their disposal all the modern means of attack.”

Now this brief mention of some salient incidents in the years from 1922 onwards (actual hostilities within the Soviet borders had pretty well come to an end in 1921) does not purport to be a complete statement. But what it does show is that while we in Britain had no real reason to fear attacks from other Powers until the National Government's policy began to tear down the machinery of collective security and to aid the advance of Fascism, the peoples of the Soviet Union were compelled all through these years to face an entirely different situation. To put it bluntly, the Soviet Union was still being treated as a pariah amongst the nations. This even extended to the common courtesies of international intercourse, and was reinforced by the personal contempt of diplomats and foreign secretaries for “common working men” functioning as the Government of the U.S.S.R.

## THE TWENTY YEARS BETWEEN ONE FINAL CONTRAST

It would be wearisome to multiply examples of this special attitude of Britain and other Powers to the U.S.S.R. One final contrast will prove the point. In 1933 several British engineers in the Soviet Union were arrested and sent to trial on a charge of espionage. Immediately, and while the matter was still *sub judice*, our National Government demanded their release (though one of them had actually admitted his guilt!). When the Soviet Government refused to submit with all humility like a small Arab chieftain, the National Government used truculent language and followed it up by rushing an Act\* through Parliament placing an embargo on trade with the U.S.S.R. But, on the other hand, when the Japanese Government some four years later arrested British Subjects in China, fired on ships under the British flag and even beat up British policemen, the National Government took no such drastic action. It sent a note of protest, to which the Japanese returned an apology, followed by another outrage. For this another apology was rendered and accepted. Then a British Ambassador was machine-gunned by the Japanese. The Japanese sent another apology and the National Government pocketed the affront. After a time it became a regular process, until in this last year the officials of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan felt they could safely arrest a military attaché (besides stripping British subjects of their trousers and inflicting other indignities) without any risk whatever of the British Government laying an embargo on trade with Japan. The contrast is significant; and it may almost be taken as an epitome of world politics, or at any rate of the National Government's attitude to Japan and the U.S.S.R. respectively.

How did the U.S.S.R. meet this difficult situation, which they may well have regarded as one of encirclement by hostile capitalist powers? One means was to strengthen the U.S.S.R. militarily up to the point where an aggressor would think twice before launching an attack. The other means found was the conclusion of non-aggression pacts with other countries. Pacts of this kind were concluded with the smaller neighbouring countries. But with the exception of Italy, which signed a Non-Aggression Pact in 1933, the Great Powers refused to sign such pacts.

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\* The Russian Goods (Import Prohibition) Act, 1933.

U.S.S.R. ENTERS THE LEAGUE

Great Powers and lesser Powers were up to 1933 all included in the League of Nations. Outside the League stood the United States of America, which in the last twelve years confined itself (apart from the gesture of the Kellogg Pact) to strengthening Pan-American relations, and the Soviet Union. But in the spring of 1933 the Japanese Government, after the seizure of Manchuria, left the League of Nations (thereby depriving itself of any future gratuitous advocacy by Sir John Simon at Geneva) and was followed in the autumn of the same year by Fascist Germany. Sir John Simon had won the case for Japan, and we can now see had lost the case for the maintenance of peace through the machinery of the League. But even so there was then still a hope that the League might prove of use in preventing war. On her eastern border the U.S.S.R. saw Japan engaged in warlike operations with a huge army, on her western border she saw Fascist Germany, which had followed up its exit from the League by refusing in 1934 to conclude a non-aggression pact with her. It was clearly a situation dangerous for world peace. Two foci of war had come into being. The French Republic became alarmed, and took the step of approaching the Soviet Union, of asking her aid to prevent war (by the Pact of Mutual Assistance which was open to any Power who wished to join) and of inviting her to enter the League of Nations.

The U.S.S.R. accepted the invitation, and with her entry into a League that had been abandoned by the two chief Fascist Powers there seemed to open up a prospect for the maintenance of peace through a strengthened machinery of collective security. But to realise this fair prospect (and how eagerly it was regarded in this country was shown by the eleven million voluntary ballot of the League of Nations Union in 1935!) one condition had to be fulfilled; there had to be a genuinely friendly attitude on the part of the British Government to the new member of the League, a sincere effort to use and develop the League's machinery, and an end to all the intrigues and attempts to build up Fascist Germany as a potential weapon against the U.S.S.R. This condition, as we shall see, was not to be fulfilled.



### CHAPTER III

## THE LAST FIVE YEARS (1934—1939)

Let us now consider the recent period—the period from U.S.S.R. joining the League of Nations in 1934 until Munich in September, 1938, or perhaps Prague in March, 1939. It is not unfair to say that during most of that period the Western democracies, and particularly France and England, were working harder to emasculate the League of Nations than they had ever done before. It is impossible without undue length to examine in detail the conduct both of the Western democracies themselves and of the League of Nations which they in substance controlled, in relation to Abyssinia, Spain, Austria and Sudetenland—the last-named with its culmination at Munich, where U.S.S.R. was even excluded from the discussions. But a brief summary will be attempted in this chapter in order to furnish the reader with a picture of what led up to the events of the last six months.

The U.S.S.R. joined the League of Nations in September, 1934. At the same time negotiations were being carried through for the formation of the Pact of Mutual Assistance between France and the U.S.S.R. and also between Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R., the latter on terms that became effective if France helped Czechoslovakia. It should be noted that the Pact of Mutual Assistance was open to any nation to join, including Germany. Britain refused to join in the negotiations, and after consideration Poland also refused. The Pact, it should be further noted, was strictly subordinate to the machinery of the League of Nations but the refusal of Britain to enter into the Franco-Soviet arrangements was an indication already in the winter of 1934-35 of its attitude towards any such “Eastern Locarno.”

In February, 1935, a renewed agreement was reached between Britain and France, and a joint statement was issued. In this agreement Britain “disinterested herself” from Eastern European questions, which was an indication that while the National Government regarded the treaties of Locarno and above all the spirit of Locarno as still valid it was not inclined to ascribe the same validity to the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Strong indications to the same effect were given in many debates in the House of Commons, and in public and Press discussions throughout Britain in the winter of 1934-35; indeed, one of the strongest “pointers” was the Government opposition to the Peace Ballot, which lasted right up to

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the early summer.

The Soviet Union cannot have failed to notice this immediate deterioration in the prospects of the League of Nations, or the significance of the failure of the Disarmament Conference, the object of one of the main provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, "indissolubly linked" with the Covenant of the League of Nations. With the failure of that conference, the prospects of disarmament had completely collapsed. The Soviet Union had entered the preparatory commission of the Disarmament Conference in 1927 and participated at the sessions held from 1931 onwards under the chairmanship of the late Mr. Arthur Henderson. It had seen the violently hostile attitude of the National Government first to its proposals for immediate total and general disarmament and then to its modified proposals for partial disarmament. It was soon to read of Lord Londonderry's triumphant vindication in the summer of 1935 of the part he played in the wrecking of the Disarmament Conference by his insistence on the retention of bombing aeroplanes.

With these facts in mind, the U.S.S.R. clearly must have entered the League of Nations without any illusions as to the past of that body under its British-French control or the condition in which it was at the moment of entry; but it seems to have been determined to do all it could to enable the League of Nations to function as a machinery for the preservation of peace, and to abide strictly by the engagements into which it entered. Among the extraordinarily variegated accusations that have been made against the Soviet Union, none has yet hinted that it did not abide strictly by its duties and obligations as a member of the League.

### THE ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL TREATY

In the year 1935, however, the position of the League was further injured by two sinister events or series of events which seemed to show that the Western democracies were not in earnest in resisting Fascist aggression and war-mongers. The first was the Anglo-German Naval Treaty; the second was the Abyssinian War. In the case of the first, it must be remembered that there had been not only a joint British-French declaration in the February, but a conference at Stresa in April 1935, between Italy, France and Great Britain, preceding the meeting of the League of Nations, at which conference there was agreement to resist aggression or changes in treaty positions without agreement. It was, therefore, a surprised and shocked world that

heard at the beginning of June 1935 the announcement of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty. The French were extremely critical, but their views were not taken into consideration before the Treaty was signed.

From the point of view of the building up of collective security under the aegis of the League of Nations this treaty was a sudden and unexpected blow. At the same time it enormously strengthened the position of Nazi Germany, only a couple of months after that power had broken the clause of the Versailles Treaty which forbade it to have a large conscript army. It was an encouragement to Fascism and a blow to the friends of peace.

The Italian war in Abyssinia cannot be treated in detail. Mussolini had openly and steadily been preparing for the war for over a year, yet it was not mentioned at the Stresa Conference. In June 1935, however, the Peace Ballot which embraced 11,000,000 people and which had been ardently denounced by Sir John Simon (then near the close of his period as perhaps Britain's worst Foreign Secretary) resulted in an overwhelming majority for the League of Nations and for the restraint of aggressors.

In the course of the summer a temporary improvement in British policy took place, and it was not realized for some time that the change was only ostensible, and for electoral purposes. It was clear that if a general election had been held at that moment the National Government would have received a tremendous defeat; its sapping and undermining of the League of Nations clearly ran counter to the desires of the vast majority, and it was necessary to present it to the public in the disguise of excavation work for the purpose of underpinning and restoring the structure.

Accordingly, the National Government was reconstructed, Sir John Simon being replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare as Foreign Secretary. The war of Italy and Abyssinia becoming imminent, Sir Samuel Hoare proceeded to Geneva where he denounced the very thought of aggression, and proclaimed the disinterested adherence of his Majesty's Government to the Covenant of the League of Nations in language of a moral loftiness that an archangel might have envied.

#### WHY "SANCTIONS" FAILED

Presently war began. Sanctions were applied; but the sanctions in so far as the British Government and the French Government were concerned did not include the stoppage of the most essential supplies (such as oil), which would have crippled the Italian Fascist adventure,

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

and as a sequel would probably have brought about the downfall of Mussolini and the Fascist regime in Italy. Consequently, when the General Election was safely over, and the British Government was free to turn once again to the sabotage of the League of Nations and the preservation of the Fascist powers, the Hoare-Laval Pact was announced in December 1935. When the news came of this scheme to save Mussolini from the consequences of his adventure in Abyssinia and to give him a large portion of that country, preserving the rest as a "sphere of influence" for the benefit of the British and French and others, there was universal indignation in Britain in all parties, expressed so strongly that Sir Samuel Hoare was burlled from office.

During the whole of this unsavoury episode the U.S.S.R. as a member of the League of Nations had strictly carried out its duties, including the imposition of the sanctions decided upon; but both in the infructuous visit of Mr. Eden to Moscow (the failure was not Moscow's fault and perhaps not Mr. Eden's) and in the behaviour of the British and French Governments over Abyssinia, the Soviet Union could scarcely have found much encouragement.

The French Government had plainly no intention at that stage of implementing the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance, and the National Government here annulled any good results that might have come from Mr. Eden's visit to Moscow. In all essentials, the position was still the same; neither of the Western Democracies, it appeared, was willing to follow through to the end any measures that would strengthen the League of Nations—that is, the regime of collective security and guarantee of peace, and they unmistakably shrank from any step that would ensure peace if it appeared to imperil a Fascist regime.

## THE TRAGEDY OF SPAIN

If this was the balance to be drawn at the end of 1935, we can imagine what effect would be produced by the years 1936 and 1937, with their record of subservience to the Fascist aggressors and of covert aid in many respects to the Fascist rebellion and invasion of Spain. It must have become clear to the Soviet Union that the National Government, rather than offend the Fascist powers, was prepared to sacrifice not only the machinery of collective security and the League of Nations, but ordinary principles and rules of international law that its predecessors had accepted and acted soon for generations, to say nothing of the protection of British lives and British commerce. The

tragedy of Spain and the destruction of its constitutionally elected Republican Government by the Fascist powers with the connivance of the British Government—a tragedy not only for the Spaniards but for us as well—is so recent in people’s minds that there is no need for me to recall the story. This, too, must have affected the views of the Soviet Union.

When in July 1937, the Far Eastern Fascist Power—Japan—in-  
vaded China, a meeting of the signatories of the Nine-Power Pact (the Washington 1922 Treaty which guaranteed the territorial integrity of China), was called at Brussels. No action was taken because the assembled powers did not wish to take any, and there were sections—in Britain and America—which looked forward to a defeat of China. The U.S.S.R., though not a signatory of the Nine-Power Pact, had been invited to the Brussels Conference. It is on record that the Soviet representatives were approached by some of the diplomats, who suggested to them that the Soviet Union was in the best position to take action against Japan. If this conference did nothing else, it served to convince the Soviet Government that some of the powers desired to see the U.S.S.R. embroiled in war. In short, here were the chestnuts on the fire.

#### THE YEAR 1938

The general tendency of British policy in 1938, even prior to the dreadful series of surrenders that culminated in Munich, cannot have been encouraging to the Soviet Government. Every effort of the U.S.S.R. to maintain collective security was collectively repulsed; for example, her proposal on the 17th March, immediately after the seizure of Austria, “for a firm and unambiguous stand in regard to the problem of the collective ‘salvation of peace’ by the great Powers,” was rejected by London on the 24th March as inopportune.

During the spring of that year the Soviet Union was kept at arm’s length. When Kalinin, as the titular head of the U.S.S.R., said on the 11th May, and when the Soviet Ambassador at Washington repeated on the 25th August, that the U.S.S.R. would carry out her undertakings to Czechoslovakia and to France “to the letter,” and that “a firm stand against the aggressors is the fundamental solution of the present international tension” those statements evoked no response. And the suggestion on the 2nd September from the Soviet Government, repeated on the 11th September at Geneva, for a joint *démarche* of U.S.S.R., Britain and France in favour of the Czechs and of the use

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of Article 11 of the Covenant of the League of Nations remained equally unanswered. Indeed, those who had prepared for and were then about to carry through the betrayal of Czechoslovakia could not very well give any answer without making known in advance their intentions, which were afterwards made so horribly clear by the three British-French ultimata which forced the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at the time of Munich.

Munich itself was regarded by the Soviet Government as a definite attempt to build up the Four-Power Pact of Britain and France, with the two Fascist powers, against herself, and she interpreted the concessions to Hitler at that time as “payment in advance” for the attack which it was hoped he would make upon the U.S.S.R. and in particular upon the Ukraine, an adventure to which he might well be encouraged by his belief that he would find in the U.S.S.R. some measure of help from a “Fifth Column” of counter-revolutionists.

## UNHEEDED WARNINGS

All these incidents that we have recalled, and many another in the conduct of Baldwin and Chamberlain and their Governments and of the French Government, prove with varying degrees of certainty but in the main quite definitely the following points: that the Western democracies were not in earnest either in desiring the friendship and co-operation of the Soviet Union or in intending to make the League of Nations a real force; that they had no genuine resolve to resist Fascism, which they preferred to the spread of Socialism; that they had a very strong desire to maintain the strength of Hitler and Mussolini, to save them from internal collapse, and to keep on friendly terms with them—indeed, if possible, to make a Four-Power Pact in which they should be prominent partners; and that they were also pursuing with more or less consistency a policy of diverting by one means or another the force and aggressiveness of Hitler eastwards against the Soviet Union, in order to save themselves from having to face his aggression in the west. In short, as between making friends with Fascism (which is merely capitalism carried one feverish stage further, and manifesting in that fever a heightened aggressiveness and lack of moral scruples), and making friends with the U.S.S.R., thus increasing the danger of the establishment of Socialism in Western Europe, it was plain by March, 1939, at the very latest that the Western democracies had, perhaps hesitantly but pretty clearly, chosen the former course, and that if they were in the near future seriously to seek

co-operation with the Soviet Union or to oppose the Fascist states they would do so not because they were opposed to Fascism as such, but merely because they would feel that they could no longer tolerate the Fascist domination over themselves in Europe. That their support of Fascism in general and of Germany in particular would aid in building up Germany's strength and at the same time convince Hitler that the Western democracies would always give way to threats of aggression, thus making war in the near future inevitable, never seems to have been present to the minds of Mr. Baldwin or Mr. Chamberlain, in spite of the incessant warnings of the Opposition.\*

One would have thought that this tragic story would have sufficed to convince anybody in the position of the Soviet Union that any hope of cooperation with the Western democracies, or any hope that they would resist Fascism as such, was quite baseless; but, as will be seen, she did not give up hope for a long time.

But political memories in these crowded days are so short that many of us are apt to think of our Government as having always been anti-Fascist; and it is necessary to remind ourselves, now that we are at war against Germany, that it is only very recently that it has been possible to regard it as anti-Fascist at all. To approach the consideration of the recent negotiations and of the conduct of the U.S.S.R. in signing a non-aggression pact with Germany with the idea that the British Government in August, 1939, was so clearly and reliably anti-Fascist as to be entitled to demand the confidence and the support of other anti-Fascist forces, or was even anti-Fascist at all, would be to start from utterly wrong premises. This will, I think, become clear from the subsequent narrative.

And the U.S.S.R. has of course to look at things, not from our point of view, but from her own; she is not in the world merely for our benefit, or to defend the things we want to defend. As Molotov said in his speech on the 31st August, to the Supreme Soviet (the

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\* Who can tell how great an element in Hitler's calculations, and thus in bringing about the war, lies in the utterly ineradicable belief in the mind of Hitler and of Ribbentrop that the British Government, so long as it was headed by Mr. Chamberlain, would always give way at the last moment. That they might reasonably entertain such a belief can be understood; that they in fact entertained it is attested by all observers with a real and up-to-date knowledge of the Nazi leaders and their policy.

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Parliament of the U.S.S.R.), in which he presented the non-aggression pact for ratification: "It is our duty to think of the interests of the Soviet people, the interests of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." And we must now, I fear, realise that, largely as a result of the story which I have to tell, she has lost faith in our government and is convinced that it does not genuinely seek to resist Fascism. She must in those circumstances follow her own course, and defend herself in her own way, whether that suits us or not. It has, I think, taken her a long time to come to the conclusion that our Government was not in earnest. She was not driven to it, apparently, even by the cumulative effect of everything that happened up to September, 1938; and even the next major horror after that September—namely the seizure of the whole of Czechoslovakia in March, 1939—did not turn her away from us but actually made her more willing than ever to join us in an alliance against Fascism.



## CHAPTER IV

### MARCH TO SEPTEMBER, 1939

The full story of the offers, manoeuvres and negotiations during the most fateful period of all, namely, from March, 1939, onwards, has yet to be told, but much of it is already known, and has been the subject of many reports and articles. To retell it in full would carry this short work to intolerable length; to compress it greatly would involve the omission of many vital incidents. I propose to take a middle course and to set out the essential points in the negotiations in some detail, endeavouring to give as true and undistorted an impression of the matter as I can. Anyone who reads this description will, I think, conclude that the assertion summarily made above, that the Western democracies had really decided, as a choice of evils, to make friends with the Fascist aggressors rather than with the Socialist U.S.S.R., is amply established. He will also find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that throughout the negotiations the British Government were constantly "blowing hot and cold," and were behaving generally in the manner best calculated to convince the U.S.S.R. that they either did not want a pact at all or only wanted a one-sided pact on their own terms, and that they were willing at all stages to make an agreement with Germany if they could, leaving the U.S.S.R. either in cold isolation or, worse still, face to face with German aggression against her territories.

The true view of the position is probably not merely that the Government did not want a pact, or a fair and reciprocal and watertight pact, but that they were playing a somewhat more elaborate game. British public opinion wanted a pact, and the Government did not dare openly to oppose or reject this; but in its heart it really wanted an agreement with the Fascist powers. In the circumstances, it had to negotiate with the U.S.S.R. for a pact, taking care not to succeed; to negotiate for "appeasement" with Germany meanwhile and succeed in that if possible; and in any case to prepare the ground for throwing the whole blame on the U.S.S.R. when the pact negotiations should fail. These manoeuvres were prophesied and exposed in print by left-wing publications—including the very excuse of the Poles not wanting Soviet troops on their soil—as early as May last; and, indeed, if one devotes the necessary time now, in the knowledge of the final breakdown of the negotiations, to go back to March last and read through from then onwards the day to day reports of the negotiations

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in the columns of, say, *The Times*, it becomes pretty clear that that is what was happening.

It will be said, no doubt, that no British Government could behave as badly as that; but the tragically true answer is. that anyone who will take the trouble to read the history of our foreign policy for the last eight years—to read, say, “Inquest on Peace” and “The Road to War”—will see proof positive, from official documents and from their own public declarations, that the group which has formed our Government through those eight years has in fact pursued a course in foreign affairs, both in strategy and tactics, so cynically bad that in the light of it this particular diplomatic activity seems almost mild. I myself, a strong opponent of the Government, have gone many times in the last eight years through the simple mental process of saying to myself: (1) it looks as if they were here behaving in an outrageous fashion; but (2) surely no British politician would descend so low; it cannot be true; I am being too suspicious, and there must be some less sinister explanation; (3) (a few months later) my first suspicion was right after all; they have now proved that they were behaving even worse than I thought; I must not let hope triumph over experience again.

If we in Great Britain are forced to such conclusions, it is not easy to see how statesmen in Moscow, who do not start with a natural conviction that British statesmen are more honest than all other statesmen, can entertain any real confidence in the sincerity or consistency of the British. It is probably partly true that the actual “wobbling” to and fro which is such a marked feature of the negotiations was due to disagreements in the Cabinet, and to the tussle between public opinion which did want a pact and the majority of the Cabinet, which sought to avoid a pact but felt the necessity of appearing to desire it; but whatever the real cause, the results were and are plain enough. From the story of the negotiations, to which we are about to turn, it will be seen that whenever any apparent progress was made towards realising an agreement with the U.S.S.R., some backward step in the direction of “appeasement” of Germany was immediately taken, as if to cancel the effect of the progress.

## PRAGUE AND AFTER

The story, for our purposes, really begins on the 15th March, 1939, but to gauge the true attitude of the British Government it is as well to remember that the period from the 9th to the 13th March was

occupied by a Press campaign, inspired by Mr. Chamberlain himself, to the effect that international relations had taken so great a turn for the better that there was good hope of a new disarmament conference by the end of the year. Sir Samuel Hoare joined in, growing lyrical over the prospective "creation of a golden age," whilst *The Times* on the 13th March described the rape of Austria and of Sudetenland by Germany as "those demands upon her neighbours which, by their own profession, they were unable conscientiously to contest, and yet had failed to satisfy while the way of orderly settlement was still open," and rejoiced over the knowledge that Germany "has completed" (i.e. come to the end of) "those demands." This campaign no doubt had the effect of lulling the British public into a transitory feeling of semi-security; but it is difficult to understand how any Cabinet Minister could have embarked on it, since by the 8th March, the day before the campaign began, Hitler's intention to move on the 15th of March into Prague was fully known.

However that may be, the fact remains that on the 15th March Hitler, by an act of insolent international outrage, inarched into Prague and in effect annexed the whole of Czechoslovakia, a state whose independence was guaranteed, under arrangements made in the Munich negotiations in the previous September, by Germany and Great Britain among others; this guarantee the British Government had told the House of Commons that it regarded as binding and in force, although it had not yet been embodied in a formal treaty. On the following day, when informing the House of Commons as to what had taken place, Mr. Chamberlain expressed scarcely a single word of regret, gave a cheap "lawyer's excuse" for evading the guarantee, and seemed to be concerned actually to defend Hitler's conduct; he stated *inter alia* that he did not desire to be associated with any charge (against Hitler!) of a breach of faith in the matter. It is not without significance that, at that very moment, representatives of the powerful "Federation of British Industries" were on the point of concluding at Dusseldorf a commercial agreement with the corresponding organisation of German industry, which amounted in substance to an offensive-defensive alliance of British and German industry directed largely against the trade of the U.S.A.

This attitude of Mr. Chamberlain aroused much public indignation, and even brought about an incipient revolt in the Conservative party; and accordingly, in a speech to Birmingham Unionists on the 17th March, he sought to remove the bad impression he had made,

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by speaking more strongly, condemning the annexation of Czechoslovakia, and announcing that the British Ambassador in Berlin was being withdrawn to London for consultation. The "F.B.I." negotiations at Dusseldorf were not repudiated, however, nor indeed were they even "suspended" until a good many days had elapsed.

On the following day, the 18th March, the U.S.S.R., being asked by the British Ambassador in Moscow its attitude to the threat which Hitler was then developing to Rumania, was hopeful enough to propose a conference of Britain, France, U.S.S.R., Poland, Rumania and Turkey, to devise means of resistance to further aggression. (It is useful to ask oneself, both at this stage of the negotiations and at many others, what would have happened if the Western democracies had accepted the suggestions of the U.S.S.R. as a basis for negotiations. The answer on every occasion must be that a triple pact would have followed, that there would probably have been no war, and that, if by the hundredth chance war had come, it would speedily have led to the collapse of Hitler.)

To this admirable suggestion, which might have saved the peace of the world, our Government replied on the following day to the effect that the proposal was "premature" (although most people would have thought that there was not a moment to lose), and asked whether the U.S.S.R. would join Great Britain, France and Poland in a declaration against aggression, envisaging immediate consultation between the four Powers in case of aggression. The Soviet Government pointed out that this was not a very satisfactory alternative, but agreed to the proposal, and suggested that as much weight and authority as possible should be lent to it by affixing to the formal declaration the signatures of the Prime Ministers as well as those of the Foreign Secretaries of the four States.

This proposal was rendered abortive by the Polish Government refusing to sign any document side by side with the U.S.S.R.; the British Government apparently did not bring to bear its powers of persuasion (so well exercised on the Czech Government in 1938) to bring the Polish Government to a more friendly frame of mind, and the suggestion dropped; nor did the British Government even consult the Soviet Government again until the middle of April. Meanwhile, on the 23rd March, the Prime Minister, in answer to a question in the House of Commons, had made the discouraging observation that the Government was not "anxious to set up in Europe opposing blocks of countries with different ideas about the forms of their internal

administration.” As most people were aware of the fact that such “blocks” already existed, this observation naturally suggested that Mr. Chamberlain was, at any rate, anxious that Great Britain should not join any anti-Fascist block, especially when they recalled that about a year before, on the 4th April, 1938, he had spoken in a similar strain, going out of his way to describe the proposal to unite France, the United Kingdom and the U.S.S.R. in a common stand against the aggressor (these words are after all a pretty accurate description of what was supposed to be sought by the negotiations in 1939) thus: “The real effect of this proposal would be to do what we, at any rate, have always set our faces against, namely, to divide Europe into two opposing blocks or camps. So far from making a contribution to peace, I say that it would inevitably plunge Europe into war.”

### PANIC GUARANTEE TO POLAND

Meanwhile, on the 22nd March, Hitler seized Memel, and shewed plainly that he was meditating the seizure of Danzig as well. Mr. Chamberlain was sufficiently alarmed by this to give the now famous guarantee to Poland on the 31st March; this he did precipitately, without seeking the co-operation of the Soviet Union and without even consulting her, although it was difficult to see how he could effectively help Poland without her aid. The admission made by Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons on the 3rd October, that “when we gave the guarantee to Poland the matter was imminent. We did not know that Poland might not be invaded within a term which could be measured by hours and not by days” makes it even more difficult to understand how the proposal of the Soviet government, made less than a fortnight before, for a conference to devise means of *inter alia* defending Poland against German aggression can have been sincerely described as premature.

Immediately afterwards, on the 1st April, *The Times* printed a leading article which repays study. Dealing with the announcement of the Polish pact, it gave somewhat unctuous advice of the type which the German propagandists call “English governess,” deprecating the use of force, of “bullying and despoiling”; but it scarcely mentioned the U.S.S.R., and in every other line it carried a pretty plain hint to Germany that she could get all she wanted “by free negotiation.” True, she had seized things roughly in the past, but “in every case but one... there has been something to be said for the actual settlement that was reached; and Mr. Chamberlain’s statement involves

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no blind acceptance of the *status quo*. On the contrary, his repeated references to free negotiation imply that he thinks that there are problems in which adjustments are still necessary." The use of force is deprecated, but "the relative strengths of nations will always, and rightly, be an important consideration in diplomacy," and Germany is "admittedly bound to be the most powerful Continental state." What is all this but taking a column of good pompous English to say: "Don't handcuff us; we'll come quiet! You are strong enough to do what you want!"

Things were moving more swiftly at this period, for on the 7th April, Mussolini seized Albania, and Great Britain, reacting to this as it had done to the menace to Poland, gave similar guarantees to Greece and Rumania on the 13th April, again without even consulting the U.S.S.R.

After these guarantees had been thus hastily given—and, it may be mentioned in passing, they constituted a complete departure from age-long British policy on the Continent—Mr. Chamberlain, on the 15th April, asked through our Ambassador in Moscow if the U.S.S.R. would make a declaration of unilateral guarantee to Poland and Rumania. This proposal is not put in any very favourable light by what Mr. Chamberlain told the House of Commons on the 3rd October, as quoted above; for it amounted to a suggestion that the U.S.S.R. should gratuitously undertake to defend a country likely to be attacked in the very near future. To this proposal, Moscow replied on the 17th April, proposing a triple pact of Britain, France and U.S.S.R., not merely to protect the particular countries involved but to resist aggression anywhere. She pointed out, as was obvious, that to guarantee only some of the border states involved was practically to invite an attack on one or more of the others, and emphasised that if there was a serious intention to resist aggression the proposals of the Western democracies were insufficient. She did not desire, she said, to insist on any pact, but if Great Britain was in earnest no proposal was really effective which did not embrace at least three points: (1) a triple pact of mutual assistance between France, Great Britain and herself; (2) a military convention reinforcing that pact; and (3) a guarantee of all the border states from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

The British Government made no answer for three weeks—indeed, some six valuable weeks were yet to elapse before it got as far as agreeing to negotiate on the basis of a triple pact proposal; and meanwhile, on the 18th April, *The Times* printed another leading

article encouraging Hitler with suggestions of appeasement and negotiations, and a few days later, on the 24th, a very bad effect was produced by the decision to send our Ambassador back to Berlin, for it had been expected that he would remain at home for a considerable time—indeed, until Germany showed some sign of improvement in international conduct. According to *The Times*, the decision even “took Berlin by surprise”; and it was at this moment that one of the American newspapers referred to the British lion as the “lion of least resistance.”

#### “APPEASEMENT AGAIN!”

On the 26th April, the British Government, which had still made no reply to the important communication from Moscow of the 17th April, was further alarmed by Germany’s sudden denunciation of the Anglo-German naval treaty and of the German-Polish non-aggression pact; but she still put forward no proposal to the U.S.S.R.; and on the 3rd May there appeared in *The Times* a letter from Lord Rushcliffe, which is commonly thought to have been prepared in collaboration with Sir Horace Wilson, a distinguished Civil Servant with a minimum of experience in foreign affairs, who is very closely associated with Mr. Chamberlain in his work. In this letter, Lord Rushcliffe, who is a close friend of Mr. Chamberlain, put forward a strong plea for further “appeasement” of Germany, having the air of a new instalment of “Munich.” On the 5th May, Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons followed this up by sneering at the Soviet Union, in particular retorting to a suggestion that he should make personal contact with Stalin: “Perhaps the Hon. Member would suggest with whom I should make personal contact, because personalities change rather rapidly.”

Finally, on the 9th May, the British Government answered Moscow’s proposal of the 17th April; but the reply proved to be no more than a reiteration of the previous proposal of the 15th April, with mere modifications of wording. The proposal for a triple pact was ignored, and the suggestion that the Soviet Union should give a simple guarantee to Poland and Rumania still took a form which involved that it should be for the British Government to decide when the guarantee should come into operation, Great Britain being thus in a position to determine when the U.S.S.R. was to embark on military operations. Moreover, as the Moscow Government officially announced on that very day, the British Government had up to that point “said

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nothing about any assistance which the Soviet Union should on the basis of reciprocity receive from France and Great Britain if the Soviet Union were likewise drawn into military operations in fulfilment of obligations.”

A one-sided agreement of this kind was really a wholly indefensible proposal. It involved that, in the not unlikely event of German aggression against Poland, the heavy burden of resisting that aggression would fall upon the Soviet Union; the history of the last few weeks has made plain to us, as it must always have been plain to the clear-sighted people in Moscow, that the whole military weight of Germany would be flung against Poland, and, further, that no direct and little indirect help would be forthcoming from the West. Even to make such an offer to the U.S.S.R. was scarcely conducive to a belief in our sincerity; but there are too many people in important positions in Britain who would have been delighted to see the Soviet Union placed in that position.

The Soviet Union was naturally unwilling to be employed to pick the chestnuts out of the fire for the Western democracies in this fashion, and on the 14th May replied, repeating that if resistance to aggression was seriously intended it was essential to have a three-power pact to resist direct aggression, a military convention side by side with the political treaty, and joint guarantees of all the States between the Baltic and the Black Sea.

## WALL OR VEIL?

A few days later, on the 19th May, Mr. Chamberlain, in the House of Commons, said: “I cannot help feeling that there is a sort of veil, a sort of wall,\* between the two governments, which it is extremely difficult to penetrate”; and, when challenged as to his meaning, he went on to give a clue to the origin and texture of the veil or wall, saying: “I must walk warily, and I do not want to say anything which will make things more difficult than they are already. What I

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\* As it is not unprecedented in times of crisis for politicians to quote from the works of Shakespeare, one may refer to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Act V., Scene I: —

“Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;  
But wonder on, till truth makes all things plain...  
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present  
Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder.”



have said was, that we are not concerned merely with the Russian Government. We have other Governments to consider." (An Hon. Member, "Italy.") "I am not going any further."

Mr. Lloyd George then said: "It is vital that we should know who it is that is standing in the way." Mr. Chamberlain retorted, "It may be vital for Mr. Lloyd George," and the latter replied, truly enough: "That is nonsense. It is vital for the country." Mr. Chamberlain gave no further enlightenment, but his words were generally understood to mean that he was confessing or professing reluctance to make a pact with Moscow for fear of offending Italy, or some other power.

At last, on the 27th May, 1939, ten vital weeks after the seizure of Prague, the British and French Ambassadors in Moscow were instructed by their respective governments to agree to discuss a triple pact. At the outset, the somewhat insincere proposal was made that the pact should operate through the League of Nations machinery, and it was also still limited to the protection of Poland and Rumania, leaving uncovered the Baltic neighbours of U.S.S.R. through whose territory Germany might well launch an attack; but it was at any rate a step forward.

#### MOLOTOV'S CRITICISM

It is worth notice that, on the 31st May, in the third session of the Supreme Soviet, Molotov said:

"Certain changes in the direction of counteracting aggression are to be observed in the policy of the non-aggressive countries of Europe, too. How serious these changes are still remains to be seen. As yet it cannot even be said whether these countries are seriously desirous of abandoning the policy of non-intervention, the policy of non-resistance to the further development of aggression. May it not turn out that the present endeavour of these countries to resist aggression in *some* regions will serve as no obstacle to the unleashing of aggression in *other* regions? \*... We must therefore be vigilant. We stand for peace and for preventing the further development of aggression. But we must remember Comrade Stalin's precept 'to be cautious and not allow our country to

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\* This was a very plain hint of a suspicion that the game of diverting the aggression of Hitler to the East was still being played.

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be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.' Only thus shall we be able to defend to the end the interests of our country and the interests of universal peace."

Molotov went on:

"In connection with the proposals made to us by the British and French Governments, the Soviet Government entered into negotiations with them regarding measures necessary for combating aggression. This was in the middle of April. The negotiations begun then have not yet ended. But even at that time it was apparent that if there was a real desire to create an effective front of the peaceable countries against the advance of aggression, the following minimum conditions were necessary: that an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression, a pact of an exclusively defensive character, be concluded between Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R.; that a guarantee against attack by aggressors be extended by Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. to the states of central and eastern Europe, including all European countries bordering on the U.S.S.R., without exception; that a concrete agreement be concluded by Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. regarding the forms and extent of the immediate and effective assistance to be given to each other and to the guaranteed states in the event of attack by aggressors.

"Such is our opinion, an opinion we force upon no one, but to which we adhere. We do not demand the acceptance of our point of view, and do not ask anybody to do so. We consider, however, that this point of view really answers the interests of security of the peaceable states.

"It would be an agreement of an exclusively defensive character, operating against attack on the part of aggressors, and fundamentally differing from the military and offensive alliance recently concluded between Germany and Italy.

"Naturally the basis of such an agreement must be the principle of reciprocity and equality of obligations.

"It should be noted that in some of the British and French proposals this elementary principle did not meet with favour. While guaranteeing themselves from direct attack on the part of aggressors by mutual assistance pacts between

themselves and with Poland, and while trying to secure for themselves the assistance of the U.S.S.R. in the event of attack by aggressors on Poland and Rumania, the British and French left open the question whether the U.S.S.R. in its turn might count on their assistance in the event of it being directly attacked by aggressors, just as they left open another question, namely, whether they could participate in guaranteeing the small states bordering on the U.S.S.R. and covering its north-western frontiers, should these states prove unable to defend their neutrality from attack by aggressors.

“Thus, the position was one of inequality for the U.S.S.R.

“The other day new British and French proposals were received. In these proposals the principle of mutual assistance between Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. on the basis of reciprocity in the event of direct attack by aggressors is now recognised. This, of course, is a step forward, although it should be noted that it is hedged around by such reservations—even to the extent of a reservation regarding certain clauses in the League of Nations Covenant—that it may prove to be a fictitious step forward. As regards the question of guaranteeing the countries of central and eastern Europe, on this point the proposals mentioned show no progress whatever from the standpoint of reciprocity. They provide for assistance being given by the U.S.S.R. to the five countries which the British and French have already promised to guarantee, but say nothing about their giving assistance to the three countries on the north-western frontier of the U.S.S.R., which may prove unable to defend their neutrality in the event of attack by aggressors. But the Soviet Union cannot undertake commitments in regard to the five countries mentioned unless it receives a guarantee in regard to the three countries on its north-western frontier.

“That is how matters stand regarding the negotiations with Great Britain and France.

“While conducting negotiations with Great Britain and France, we by no means consider it necessary to renounce business relations with countries like Germany and Italy. At the beginning of last year, on the initiative of the German Government, negotiations were started for a trade agreement

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and new credits. Germany offered to grant us a new credit of 200,000,000 marks. As at that time we did not reach unanimity on the terms of this new economic agreement, the matter was dropped. At the end of 1938 the German Government again proposed economic negotiations and a credit of 200,000,000 marks, the German side expressing readiness to make a number of concessions. At the beginning of 1939 the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade was informed that a special German representative, Herr Schnure, was leaving for Moscow for the purpose of these negotiations. Subsequently, the negotiations were entrusted to Herr Schulenburg, the German ambassador in Moscow, instead of Herr Schnure, but they were discontinued on account of disagreement. To judge by certain signs, it is not precluded that the negotiations may be resumed.

“I may add that a trade agreement for the year 1939 of advantage to both countries was recently concluded with Italy.

“As you know, a special announcement was published in February confirming the development of neighbourly relations between the U.S.S.R. and Poland. A certain general improvement should be noted in our relations with that country. For its part, the trade agreement concluded in March may considerably increase trade between the U.S.S.R. and Poland.”

The precept quoted above by Molotov from Stalin is to be found in the important speech which Stalin had made on the 10th March, 1939, to the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a speech which was very largely ignored by the British Press.\* Extracts from this speech, dealing with foreign policy and the international position generally, are given in Appendix I, pp. 123-132.

The speech of Molotov made very plain both the attitude of the Soviet Union in the negotiations, and the suspicions entertained in

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\* The systematic failure by almost the whole of the British press to report, or to report adequately, important declarations of the leaders of the U.S.S.R. forms an important element in the work of misleading our public opinion in relation to that country which is discussed above, at p. 9.

Moscow as to the serious intentions of the Western democracies in seeking a pact. In the light of after events, most people will agree that the attitude was reasonable and the suspicions justified. The critics of the British Government in Great Britain were, of course, constantly asserting throughout this period that the Government were not sincerely desirous of bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion; and at the very least it was obviously right for Molotov and his colleagues to act with the greatest caution and to scan every draft document, with a jealous eye for loopholes or "escape clauses." The *Manchester Guardian*, commenting on the efforts of the British Government to introduce the League of Nations machinery into a pact the whole value of which would have been that it should come into operation automatically and without delay, put the position neatly in the phrase:—"When the Government only bring the League out of their refrigerator for the benefit of Soviet Russia, it is reasonable for us to borrow a little Molotoffian scepticism."

#### BRITISH FRANKNESS: ORIENTAL BARGAINING

The suggestion of introducing League of Nations machinery was dropped by the British Government. So many suggestions of no apparent merit were indeed made and then dropped that a French commentator described the negotiations thus: "The Russians have put forward their demands with British frankness and the British have replied with Oriental bargaining."

The details of the negotiations in June, July and August are perhaps a little less fully known than those of the preceding months, but it is best to continue giving the story chronologically and in the same moderately full detail.

The first incident of any importance in June, the first indeed from the British side since negotiations on the basis of the proposal for a triple pact had begun in Moscow on or about the 27th May, was a somewhat surprising speech in the House of Lords on the 8th June, by Lord Halifax. This speech was interpreted, and indeed in spite of subsequent efforts to explain it away could only be interpreted, as a reversion to "appeasement." He offered to the German aggressor a conference, and consideration of the old fallacious claim to an extended "Lebensraum" (living space). He talked of the "adjustment of rival claims," and once again expressed his distaste for "division into potentially hostile groups." It was really impossible for intelligent realists such as are rightly believed to inhabit Moscow to see in this

speech anything but a request for arrangements with Germany inconsistent with the triple pact which was supposed to be at that very moment the object of earnest desire and negotiation. It is perhaps worthwhile recording the view expressed, in the same debate as that in which Lord Halifax made this speech, by Lord Davies, who is not without experience and study of foreign affairs. Speaking on the 12th June (the debate having been adjourned to that date), he suggested that the U.S.S.R. did not trust our government, and added: "The Russian government know perfectly well that in certain quarters in this country there was lurking a hope that the German Eagles would fly eastwards and not westwards, as it was apparently intended that they should do at the time when Hitler wrote '*Mein Kampf*' ... Sometimes I wonder whether, even now, the Cabinet are really in earnest, or whether these negotiations are not merely another sop to public opinion."

#### "LEBENSRAUM"

It is worth pausing for a moment to examine the theory or slogan of "Lebensraum"—an older label was "Raum und Volk" (space and people)—which figures in Nazi propaganda as one of the main justifications for the seizure of territory, and in particular for the proposed seizure of territory from the Soviet Union. The theory is roughly this, that the German people has the right to take (by force of arms if necessary) and retain enough territory to live in, both now and in the future, and in addition the right to whatever further territory is necessary to give a frontier that is militarily defensible. Hitler himself has stated the doctrine in "Mein Kampf" as follows:—

"Never consider the Reich secure if it cannot give, *for hundreds of years to come*, to every scion of our nation his own piece of land. Never forget that the most sacred right in the world is the right to have land to cultivate for oneself, and the most sacred sacrifice is the blood shed for this land."

The theory is superficially plausible, but in truth it is both immoral and devoid of any real foundation. It is plausible, for at first sight nothing seems fairer than that a people should have enough room to live, and, preferably, enough room in one inclusive area; and it seems reasonable too, at first blush, to suggest that nations without enough room can never have an independent existence. But what appears on consideration? Hitler's demand for his own race is that they

should have enough territory to live in, not only now but as their population expands in the future; that in itself leaves it, so to speak, to the optimism of the statistician to decide how large the state is to be. And when that is done, the process is not finished, for Hitler then claims the additional right to enlarge his frontier and territory in order to achieve safety from a military point of view. He, of course, entirely ignores the circumstance that every time he thus justifies and demands an extension of frontier (an extension not, of course, limited to, and indeed wholly unconnected with, any question of the land being already peopled by those whom he can claim as "Germans"), he is claiming territory already held by other nations and races, who in their turn want land on which to live, to expand, and to defend themselves, land which has perhaps been in their possession for many centuries. He would no doubt reply that if they were not Germans they were an inferior race, fit to be removed by force of arms; but that retort will not be accepted by other races.

There is, of course, another fallacy in the reasoning, in that he tacitly assumes that there is some fixed human measure whereby it can be postulated that a certain quantity of land, or a certain quantity of land of a certain quality, is required by a certain number of people; nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Even from an exclusively agricultural point of view, the number of people who can live on a given quantity of agricultural land of given quality will vary greatly according to the standard of living they demand, their methods of cultivation, the amount of capital that can be embarked in the land, and other similar points. When one passes from agricultural land to review the whole economy of a country or an area, the variations are greater. Apart from any question of mineral wealth, there are additional elements in the intensity and efficiency of industrialisation, the availability of export markets, the skill of the workers, and above all in the economic system of the country with its varying extent and kind of effective demand for commodities. The upward limit of the number of people who can be maintained on say 100 square miles of land in Europe, with the best possible economic system, has probably never been determined; the lower limit in its turn would depend on the degree of inefficiency and waste that may be realised. Logically, if Germany were only half as efficient as it is, it must be supposed that Hitler's "justified" demand for territory would be doubled. It is noteworthy that, under the selfish and reactionary policy of the great landlords of East Prussia, the density of population in

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immense areas of that portion of the Reich is actually lower than in similar territory in the backward country of Poland, just across the frontier; that in itself would, according to this theory, entitle East Prussia to take Polish territory for the expansion of its own German population (instead of improving its own agricultural methods), presumably turning out the Poles in order to do so.

On this topic, one can usefully quote Lord Halifax himself. Three weeks after the speech in the House of Lords quoted above, in which he offered to Germany consideration of the claim to “*Lebensraum*,” he spoke on the 29th June, at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, at Chatham House, as follows:—

“I come next to *Lebensraum*. This word, of which we have not heard the last, needs to be fairly and carefully examined. Every developed community is, of course, faced with the vital problem of living space. But the problem is not solved simply by acquiring more territory. That may indeed only make the problem more acute. It can only be solved by wise ordering of the affairs of a country at home, and by adjusting and improving its relations with other countries abroad. Nations expand their wealth and raise the standard of living of their people by gaining the confidence of their neighbours, and thus facilitating the flow of goods between them. The very opposite is likely to be the consequence of action by one nation in suppression of the independent existence of her smaller and weaker neighbours. And if *Lebensraum* is to be applied in that sense, we reject it and must resist its application. It is noteworthy that this claim to ‘living space’ is being put forward at a moment when Germany has become an immigration country, importing workers in large numbers from Czechoslovakia, Holland and Italy to meet the needs of her industry and agriculture. How, then, can Germany claim to be over-populated? Belgium and Holland, and to a less extent our own islands, have already proved that what is called over-population can be prevented by productive work.”

## LORD HALIFAX STAYS AT HOME

But we must return to Lord Halifax’s “appeasement” speech of the 12th June in the House of Lords, and see the reaction to it of the



Soviet Government, which is now accused of betraying democracy. Almost any unfavourable reaction might have been understood; but in fact all that Moscow did was to suggest that Lord Halifax should himself visit Moscow, to assist in bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion. He was assured of a very friendly welcome, and his visit would have done far more than merely to remove the bad impression made a few days before in the House of Lords; he would have found it interesting to compare his hosts in Moscow with Hitler, Goebbels and Goering with whom he had been (if we are to believe the Press) so happy in Germany in November, 1937, when well-informed opinion has it that the friendly conversations ranged over the topic of furnishing Germany with colonies. That visit was reported to have "smoothed the course of Anglo-German relations."

If Lord Halifax had gone to Moscow, the negotiations would probably have had so smooth a course that they would have succeeded. He did not go.

The negotiations continued in a somewhat dilatory fashion, the only notable incident for some time being that Mr. Strang went out to Moscow, arriving there on the 14th June, to assist in the negotiations. He was a man with some knowledge of the U.S.S.R., to which he was reputed to be hostile; but he was a minor official, he had no particular authority, and had constantly to refer back to London for instructions. He was commonly believed, moreover, to hold the somewhat odd view that it did not matter much whether the triple pact was achieved or not. To send a minor official, at such a time, was not really a step forward; indeed, it may well have been regarded as a diplomatic discourtesy, and it was not improved by another incident which occurred shortly after Mr. Strang's departure. Sir Francis Lindley, a former British Ambassador to the Japanese Government, with which he was at times on very friendly terms, had not long before had the honour of entertaining Mr. Chamberlain for the week-end, and very likely talked to him about the U.S.S.R.; and he now gave an address in the House of Commons to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Conservative Party, making an attack on the Soviet Union and speaking strongly against the idea of making any pact with that country. (This may have been another example of the technique employed with such success in the spring of 1938, when certain American and Canadian journalists, but none of their British colleagues, had the pleasure of learning from Mr. Chamberlain at the luncheon table his idea that Sudetenland might be lopped off and given to Germany, an

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idea which had at the time not been mooted by anyone even in Germany.)

It is worth noticing, in the light of after events, that *The Times* correspondent in Berlin was already at this time able to see what was likely to be arranged between Berlin and Moscow if these pact negotiations were allowed to fail; in a message which *The Times* printed from him on the 17th June he wrote: "If the negotiations should fail, the Reich will no doubt attempt to secure the Russian front by means of an economic rapprochement as well as political assurances."

### ZHDANOV CRITICISES

The negotiations still dragged on, and on the 29th June, Zhdanov, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet parliament and a secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, published an article in *Pravda*, which should have carried a very plain warning to the Governments of the Western democracies. He stated that the negotiations were making no progress, to the delight and encouragement of aggressors who hoped that no pact would be made. He expressed in clear language his disagreement with those of his colleagues who thought that the British and French were really desirous of making a mutual pact and of offering genuine resistance to Fascist aggression, and added that in his view what they wanted was a one-sided pact which would merely bind the U.S.S.R. to help them and would give no promise of mutual aid—a pact which no country with any self-respect could sign. He added that, of the seventy-five days over which the negotiations had already extended, the U.S.S.R. had only used sixteen for preparing and putting forward their answers and proposals, whilst the French and British had taken fifty-nine days, and concluded by suggesting in plain terms that the latter were really seeking other objects having no connection with the building of a peace front.

The negotiations dragged on, a good deal of difficulty being experienced over various points, particularly over the definition of "indirect aggression" of the border states. It is not necessary to discuss these in detail, or to seek to apportion blame, since the final cause of the rupture in the negotiations, as will be seen, is clearly established, and is unconnected with any difficulties of definition or formulae.

The next incident of importance came in the third week of July, when the news leaked out that "conversations" had been taking place between Herr Wohltat (a prominent German official who frequently

visited London and often saw Sir Horace Wilson), and Mr. Hudson, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade. These conversations dealt with the topic of the economic appeasement and reinforcement of Germany, and there was some talk of a possible loan to Germany of £500,000,000 or even of £1,000,000,000. In some quarters annoyance was felt that such conversations should have taken place; Mr. Chamberlain was plainly annoyed that they had been disclosed.

Public opinion was by this time gravely disquieted, and on the 29th July, in a speech in a bye-election campaign, Mr. Lloyd George gave it expression in energetic terms. After pointing out the impossibility of the British Government fulfilling its guarantee to Poland without the assistance of the U.S.S.R., he said:—

“Negotiations have been going on for four months with Russia, and no one knows how things stand to-day. You are dealing with the greatest military power in the world; you are asking them to come to your help; you are not negotiating terms with an enemy but with a friendly people whose aid you want. Mr. Chamberlain negotiated directly with Hitler. He went to Germany to see him. He and Lord Halifax made visits to Rome. They went to Rome, drank Mussolini’s health, shook his hand, and told him what a fine fellow he was. But whom have they sent to Russia? They have not sent even the lowest in rank of a Cabinet Minister; they have sent a clerk in the Foreign Office. It is an insult. Yet the Government want the help of their gigantic army and air force, and of this very brave people—no braver on earth—who are working their way through great difficulties to the emancipation of their people. If you want their help you ought to send somebody there who is worthy of our dignity and of theirs. As things are going on at present we are trifling with a grave situation. I cannot tell you what I think about the way things are being handled. Meanwhile, Hitler is fortifying Danzig. Danzig is becoming a fortress, and before that treaty is signed Danzig will be as much a city of the German Empire as Breslau or Berlin. They (the National Government) have no sense of proportion or of the gravity of the whole situation when the world is trembling on the brink of a great precipice and when liberty is challenged.”

## THE MILITARY MISSION

Shortly before this, the Soviet Government raised very urgently the question of the proposed staff talks. It had been understood since the latter part of May that a military convention was an essential part of the proposed agreement, and full defence preparations were obviously necessary if the pact was to have any effect or reality; but no practical measures had so far been taken to arrange staff talks, and the European situation was by now very tense, the general feeling in informed circles being that a grave crisis would arise in the latter part of August. Accordingly, on the 23rd July, Moscow suggested the immediate despatch of a military mission to begin these talks, hinting that if they made good progress it would probably prove more easy to smooth out any difficulties in the political negotiations. The British Government accepted the proposal on the 25th July.

At this stage one would have imagined—and it may well provide one acid test of the British Government's sincerity—that the mission would be sent out without a moment's delay, that it would be furnished with very full powers, and that it would contain officers of the very highest rank. The U.S.S.R. may well have expected to see General Gamelin and Lord Gort. who could have decided many things on the spot without reference back, and decided them in a manner to command full confidence; and very influential British quarters did press upon our Government the importance of sending Lord Gort. But the missions did not leave until the 5th August, eleven days after the acceptance of the proposal; and they did not travel by air, apparently for the reasons stated in *The Times*—a somewhat poor compliment to the present-day resources of air travel—that “the mission's natural wish had been to go by air; but as the British and French missions are each taking at least twenty advisers, to travel by air would mean chartering a small armada for officers, maps and luggage.” Nor did they even travel by a fast vessel; the Board of Trade chartered them a vessel capable of a speed of thirteen knots, a typical cargo-boat speed. They arrived in Moscow on the 11th August, six days after their departure; it would have taken a day to travel by air. When they did arrive, the extremely disconcerting discovery was made that they had no authority to agree to anything of importance, nor to reach any practical conclusion, let alone authority to sign an agreement, so that they had continually to report back for instructions.

Meanwhile, little as this military mission could do, the British

Government took the opportunity to adjourn the political negotiations, and recalled Mr. Strang to London by air.

It is interesting to find at this time full confirmation, in a despatch from its Moscow correspondent printed by *The Times* on the 3rd August, of the presence—and indeed of the reasonability—of the suspicions which I have suggested that the Moscow government then entertained. This despatch ran:—

“The Bolshevists have closely studied world events since the war and have come to definite conclusions. The conclusions are that the democratic states have not done their best to stop aggressions, partly because they have listened to denunciations of ‘Bolshevism’ and partly because they have been incapable of combining effectively. The Kremlin has been a critical spectator of the ‘helplessness’ over Manchuria, the ‘failure’ of sanctions, the ‘farce’ of non-intervention, and the ‘perjury’ of Munich, and while recognising that there has been a change of heart in the West, will not forget these painful lessons. Hence the difficulty about ‘indirect aggression.’”

As is pointed out below, at p. 59, if British sources entertain or express as much suspicion as that, it is only to be expected and understood that the U.S.S.R. should have stronger views and suspicions.

At about this time, on the 9th August, Lord Kemsley, the owner of important Conservative newspaper interests, visited Germany, ostensibly to make contacts with a view to news services, but suspicions were entertained in many quarters that he was really going to assist in arranging some compromise over the questions of Danzig and Poland. On his return, one of his newspapers, the *Sunday Graphic*, printed a leading article on the 20th August advocating in effect a four-Power conference of Britain, France, Italy and Germany.

#### POLAND REFUSES TO BE HELPED

This was presumably read with displeasure in Moscow; but what seems really and finally to have brought the Soviet Government to the end of a very long patience, and convinced them that no pact would ever be signed was, firstly, in a minor but substantial degree the fact that the military mission had no authority to make an agreement, and lastly and above all the attitude taken up by the Poles, which the British and French apparently did nothing to alter, to the

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question of military assistance from U.S.S.R. The Soviet representatives pointed out in the negotiations that, as the Soviet Union had no common frontier with Germany, it would be essential, if they were to render any military assistance to Poland, to have definite arrangements for their troops to pass over Polish territory in order to make contact with the enemy, just as Great Britain and the U.S.A. had had in France in 1914-18. France and Great Britain undertook to make the necessary *démarche* in Warsaw to this end, and brought back the answer that the Polish Government did not require Soviet aid at all, would not accept it, and were adequately prepared to meet a German attack without it! France and Great Britain apparently regarded this reply as final, and simply acquiesced in it. They could presumably, on international morals as they stand in 1939, have represented to the Poles without any loss of honour and without indeed causing any surprise to the Poles, that if the Poles did not give way on this point the British and the French could not be expected to sign treaties guaranteeing them; but they appear to have done nothing whatever to change the Polish attitude.

Such an attitude on the part of the Polish Government, and acquiescence in it by the French and British, must seem, in the light of the tragic events of September, 1939, and especially of what we now know of the inadequacy of the Polish preparations and equipment, to be not merely the rankest folly, but a cold-blooded sacrifice of thousands of Polish lives, and perhaps of many other valuable lives and interests besides. I meant, moreover, that if war should break out after the U.S.S.R. had entered into a Pact to assist Poland, she would have had to wait behind her own frontiers whilst Germany destroyed Poland without much hindrance from the Western democracies, and then meet on her own soil the formidable attack of several mass armies flushed by a tremendous victory. No one could expect her to do that, and indeed it is not easy to believe in the sincerity of negotiators who proposed such an agreement. The only hypotheses on which such conduct can be explained are either that the Western democracies desired to embroil the U.S.S.R., in the event of war, with the main burden of the fight against Germany, or else that they did not want a pact, and that they and Poland preferred to risk the triumph of German Fascism and the destruction of the Polish state rather than be saved by a Socialist state. There is, to put it no higher, nothing unfair in the comment of Molotov, when explaining the negotiations to the

Supreme Soviet, in the speech already mentioned,\* an important speech which, in the usual way, was largely ignored in our Press:

“What is the root of these contradictions in the position of Great Britain and France?

“In a few words, it can be put as follows. On the one hand, the British and French Governments fear aggression, and for that reason they would like to have a pact of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union provided it helped to strengthen them, Great Britain and France.

“But on the other hand, the British and French Governments are afraid that the conclusion of a real pact of mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R. may strengthen our country, the Soviet Union, which, it appears, does not answer their purpose. It must be admitted that these fears of theirs outweighed other considerations.

“Only in this way can we understand the position of Poland, who acts on the instructions of Britain and France.”

Whether Molotov and the other patient realists of Moscow were or were not indignant at the suggestion that they were unfit to associate with the Poles, even to save Poland—and although they seem very patient they are not devoid of pride and might have been excused if they had appeared resentful—the effect of the Polish attitude on the negotiations was decisive. The Soviet representatives of course pointed out to the British and the French that the whole negotiation was completely unreal if that standpoint was maintained, for they were being asked to give help and yet forbidden to give it in the only manner possible.

### THE FINAL BREACH

In these circumstances it was clear to the Soviet that they could not hope for any military alliance, without which a pact would not be of any value, and that they could not indeed hope for a pact at all. It is plain that, somewhere in the first fortnight of August, they became completely disillusioned, and probably the historians' only wonder will be why they had not become completely disillusioned long before. (One explanation of their finding it possible to maintain hope for so long is that, knowing the tremendous volume of support for the

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\* \* See p. 41.

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pact which existed among the general public within Great Britain and to a lesser extent in France, they could not but believe that this public opinion would find its expression either in forcing Chamberlain and the French Government to conclude the pact or, if the governments still hung back, in replacing them by governments which would carry it through. After the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact, Moscow citizens were still incredulous that the British and French people would continue to tolerate any longer Governments which exposed them to such danger.)

The immediate cause of the final breakdown of the negotiations, the refusal to contemplate Soviet military aid to Poland, may well seem conclusive as to whether the responsibility for the failure to bring about a pact lies with the British Government or with Moscow. In view of this outstanding fact—and it is to be noticed that no attempt has been made in London to deny the official statements from Moscow that this was the reason for the breakdown—it is unnecessary to discuss the endless details of the long-drawn-out negotiations and to try to assess the blame for this or that piece of delay or disagreement as between the two sides. But, as it has always been thought and asserted by the Opposition in this country that if the elements in our Government that were hostile to the Pact should succeed in defeating it they would also seek to throw the blame for the failure of the negotiations on to Moscow, it may be useful to add to the striking effect of the whole story as it is told above one or two other considerations of a general character that point in the same direction. They may be dealt with under two heads, firstly, the previous records and statements of the parties, and secondly, the degree of urgency of each party's need.

On the first point, it can be said of Mr. Chamberlain that the whole of his policy since he came to power, both in speech and action, had been the exact antithesis of friendship with the Soviets and of resistance to Fascism; and it must be said of Great Britain that neither public opinion, nor the Opposition, nor the section of the Conservative party which could see that continued surrender to aggression would only make war more certain and more terrible, ever acted or reacted with sufficient vigour to remove Mr. Chamberlain from his office.

It must be said, too, of the Soviet Union, if one attributes any sincerity to its statements and conduct, that it had shown itself steadily and systematically in favour of peace and opposed to Fascist



aggression. Indeed, if anyone had suggested, say, in July, 1939, that the British Government was sincerely anti-Fascist, and the Soviet Government was pro-Fascist, he would have been thought mad, and in the circumstances it should require overwhelming evidence to throw the blame for the breakdown of negotiations for a pact against Fascist aggression upon the Soviet Government or to provide any ground for suggesting that the Soviet Union is in any way less anti-Fascist than it was. The mere fact that after that breakdown the Soviet Government made the agreements of which so much has been written should have no weight in such a question, for such agreements are wholly consistent with the principles of its foreign policy. It is worth while attempting to understand the policy and outlook of the Soviet Union on the subject of such agreements and of its relations with foreign States generally. From its very early days, Lenin took the view that the new Socialist state (and possibly other Socialist states) would have to exist for many years side by side with Capitalist states, and he advocated that the new state should aim at a peaceful co-existence so long as Capitalist countries did not attempt either to suppress it or to impede its normal development. It was accordingly laid down as a principle of foreign policy that the Soviet Union should seek to live in good neighbourly relations with the capitalist countries wholly irrespective of their internal structure or ideology, so long as these countries would reciprocate; and in pursuance of that policy the Soviet Government set out to establish normal diplomatic and commercial relations with all countries, whether "bourgeois-democratic," semi-Fascist, or Fascist; it asked no more of them by way of qualifying to be a suitable contracting party than normal behaviour in foreign relations to itself. This policy was pursued with a good deal of success; for example, relations with the Fascist states of Germany and Italy were as already explained normal up to 1934. Non-aggression pacts were made at different times with semi-Fascist countries like Poland, Latvia and Esthonia, with democracies like France, and with Eastern countries like Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and China. Commercial agreements were, of course, made constantly, particularly with Germany. There is, in the light of this, no ground for the suggestion which is now being made, that the Soviet Union has ceased to be anti-Fascist. She is surely one of the very few states that can be relied upon to remain so. Merely to illustrate one aspect of the groundlessness of such a suggestion, it may be mentioned that in the Soviet Union, where membership of a trade union is not compulsory,

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there are more trade unionists than in the whole of the rest of the world put together. How could such a country not be anti-Fascist, when Fascism destroys all trade unions? What must not be forgotten, of course, is that it is, unfortunately for the peoples of the Western democracies, only too easy for her to be anti-Fascist without being pro-British or pro-French.

On the second question, that of urgency, one of the most outstanding features of the whole negotiation is this, that the British Government, which certainly should have regarded the matter as one of great urgency—of far more urgency for it than for the Soviet Union—was nevertheless extremely dilatory at almost every stage, and the Soviet Government was pressing. Why is it said that Great Britain should have regarded the matter as urgent? It might be a sufficient answer to refer to Mr. Chamberlain's statement in the House of Commons quoted above\* or even more to point to the very criticisms that are now being made because the opportunity has been lost, which betray at any rate a clear realisation how great the loss is; but it may be better to state the matter in a little detail. Great Britain was, in truth, in considerable difficulty; it had given guarantees to Poland and Rumania which it could not attempt to fulfil without the help of U.S.S.R.; it had to contemplate, in the absence of a pact, the very serious military enterprise of fighting Germany across the Siegfried Line without Russian aid against Germany on the other front; and it had to face all the time the danger that at any moment the U.S.S.R. might decide that its own interests would best be served by withdrawing into isolation in reliance on its own immense defensive strength. Great Britain ought, accordingly, at every stage of the negotiation to have been acutely conscious of the fact that the moment of extreme crisis was drawing ever nearer. That in such circumstances it should have behaved in the dilatory fashion recounted above seems, in the absence of incompetence which one is not willing to believe, to suggest once again the greatest reluctance to make a pact. The extent to which our Government procrastinated can be illustrated by the fact that, of the period of active negotiations for the political pact, which ran from the 15th April to the 27th July, or 104 days, the Soviet Government took up twenty days in preparing and delivering its suggestions, proposals, replies, counter-suggestions, or counter-proposals, and the British Government took the remaining eighty-four days.

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\* See p. 37.

## “PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE”

At this point we must face the task, never an easy one, of putting ourselves in the place of another people, and looking at the situation from their point of view. Even looking at things from our own point of view and with a natural bias in our own favour, we are forced to conclude from the consideration of the facts stated above that the long history of anti-Soviet and pro-Fascist policy and activities of our Government and our governing class is gravely to blame for what has come about; and we can only expect that the Soviet government and people, from their angle, will have formed a view of the British attitude and policy that is a good deal less favourable. No doubt Moscow feels strong, and confident in her strength; but she knows that the price of her survival in a ring of capitalist states, all armed to the teeth, is eternal vigilance. She had to consider the danger of attack from Germany and Japan; she had seen the Western democracies instigate and finance armed warfare against her before, and knew that many elements in those countries would like to instigate such hostile activity again; she knew clearly that the forces in Europe were constantly “jockeying for position” (with no stewards to keep order) and that it was just as likely that the Western democracies would make an alliance with Germany against her as it was that they would make an alliance with her for mutual protection against German aggression.

The view which she was bound to form in those circumstances was not, as many of us in Great Britain are apt to think, that she stood much nearer to the Western democracies than she could ever stand to Germany, but rather that, whilst the Nazi regime was far worse than ours internally,\* we both stood a long way from her; and that, her policy being, as is stated above, that of seeking to live at peace with all states, and to make non-aggression pacts with all states, ignoring for purposes of international relations (just as the British Government claims to do) their internal constitution or ideology, she must in pursuit of her paramount aim and duty of serving the interests of her own people co-operate with whichever of the two groups she could. She

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\* Nazi Germany would also be worse than the Western democracies in that she was highly aggressive—that indeed she must aggress or collapse—but that only made it more important for the Soviet Union to agree with one side or the other, with us if she could, but, if she could not, then with Germany.

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might well prefer to stand with the Western democracies, if they would stand with her, and she certainly displayed over a long period of Anglo-French flirtation and rebuff a consistent readiness to agree with us; but if she could not in the end do so, it was obviously to her advantage, and wholly consistent with her principles of foreign policy, to make agreements with Germany instead. No one, least of all Great Britain, could reproach her with associating herself with Germany on the ground of that country's bad character, for the British Government had been trying for years to enter into closer relations with Germany, and even as late as the 28th August the suggestion of Hitler that an actual alliance should be formed between Great Britain and Germany evoked from Sir Nevile Henderson the response, as described in the recent Blue Book:

“...Herr von Ribbentrop asked me whether I could guarantee that the Prime Minister could carry the country with him in a policy of friendship with Germany. I said there was no possible doubt whatever that he could and would, provided Germany co-operated with him. Herr Hitler asked whether England would be willing to accept an alliance with Germany. I said, speaking personally, I did not exclude such a possibility provided the development of events justified it.”

Moscow had obviously, moreover, in such an atmosphere as that, to watch incessantly for signs of negotiations or intrigues designed to produce a sudden alignment of Germany, Italy and the Western democracies against her. It is interesting again here to look at *The Times*, a valuable barometer of British Government thought. As late as the 27th September, it printed on its most important page a letter—a similar method was employed, it will be recalled, in the famous Rushcliffe letter mentioned above\*—from a gentleman in Cambridge suggesting that “if the people of Germany realised the situation they would sweep the whole Nazi gang into oblivion, reconstitute Western Poland as a buffer state, and seek an agreement with Britain, France, Italy and Spain for the defence of European civilisation.” The sting is, of course, in the tail. An agreement of a “nice new Germany” with the four countries mentioned, “for the defence of European civilisation” is obviously an agreement to build up a hostile block against the Soviet Union, reconstituting as the spear-head of that block a

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\* See p 39.

Germany which would be under the protectorate of the Western democracies as fully as Poland was under that of France for many years after her re-establishment twenty years ago.

The position of the Soviet Union was thus plainly one in which she owed it to herself to seek, not urgently or in panic, but nevertheless very definitely, pacts, agreements or alliances which should prevent either the Western democracies, or Germany, or both, from attacking her. No doubt an alliance with the Western democracies would have been the best way to achieve that; but as the Western democracies would have none of it, obviously far the best "second line" was to make an agreement with Germany—in such a form, of course, that it would not be easy for Germany to deprive her of the advantages of it by some betrayal. This was far better than splendid isolation, and she was perfectly entitled to prefer it. As Mr. Winston Churchill said in the House of Commons on the 3rd April:

"Why should we expect Soviet Russia to be willing to work with us? Certainly we have no special claims upon her good will, nor she on ours."

Turning to the question of the U.S.S.R.'s negotiations with Germany, it appears that about the end of July or the beginning of August, the Soviet authorities had been definitely approached by the Germans with a proposal that they should sign, in addition to the commercial pact which was being negotiated, a non-aggression pact. Such pacts, as has just been pointed out, are essentially consistent with the main lines of Soviet diplomacy; indeed the system of non-aggression pacts, which is the most valuable contribution to diplomacy in the last twenty years, is a Soviet invention. It was, of course, quite plain that the British and French Governments knew perfectly well that these negotiations were going on; indeed, they would not be fit to take part in government if they did not, and I understand that among the many warnings given at the time, both in Moscow and in London, to the British Government was one positive and definite one from the Foreign Office, two days before the non-aggression pact with Germany was actually made, to the effect that unless they came to terms with the Soviet Government within two days the Soviet Government would come to terms with the German Government.

CHAPTER V  
THE CHARGES EXAMINED

On the 23rd August, the pact of non-aggression was signed; its text runs as follows:—

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, guided by the desire to strengthen the cause of peace between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and taking as a basis the fundamental regulations of the Neutrality Agreement\* concluded in April, 1926, between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, have reached the following agreement:—

ARTICLE I.—The two Contracting Parties bind themselves to refrain from any act of force, any aggressive action and any attack on one another, both singly and also jointly with other Powers.

ARTICLE 2. —In the event of one of the Contracting Parties becoming the object of warlike action on the part of a third Power, the other Contracting Party shall in no manner support this third Power.

ARTICLE 3. —The Governments of the two Contracting Parties shall in future remain continuously in touch with one another, by way of consultation, in order to inform one another on questions touching their joint interests.

ARTICLE 4. —Neither of the two Contracting Parties shall participate in any grouping of Powers which is directed directly or indirectly against the other Party.

ARTICLE 5.—In the event of disputes or disagreements arising between the Contracting Parties on questions of this or that kind, both Parties would clarify these disputes or disagreements exclusively by means of friendly exchange of opinion or, if necessary, by arbitration committees.

ARTICLE 6. —The present Agreement shall be concluded for a period of ten years on the understanding that, in so far as one of the Contracting Parties does not give notice of termination one year before the end of this period, the

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\* See page 12.

period of validity of this Agreement shall automatically be regarded as prolonged for a further period of five years.

ARTICLE 7. —The present Agreement shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The instruments of ratification shall be exchanged in Berlin. The Agreement takes effect immediately after it has been signed.

To anyone who has read so far in this book, the pact may seem natural enough, and fully consistent; but the Soviet Government is now accused of betraying democracy, of destroying the Peace Front, and of treacherous double dealing, both in having made this pact and particularly in having made it before the rupture of the negotiations with the British Government.

It can well be understood that the conclusion of this agreement came as a shock to the general public in Great Britain. In the first place, unlike their Government, they had no idea that it was coming. In the second place, they were obviously very disappointed at the failure of their own Government to make a pact, for their widely-held hope of an Anglo-Soviet pact had led them to believe, as well as hope, that it would come about; indeed, it can be seen from the account of the negotiations given above that the Government was fostering this expectation, just as it was preparing all the time to throw the blame on the other side when the pact should not materialise. Finally, it was inevitable that, when the pact was lost and the non-aggression pact with Germany appeared instead, the many elements hostile to the Soviet Union in this country would exploit the situation to the full in order to inflame public opinion, none the less virulently because they must have realised that the defeat of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations, which they had so earnestly desired, had been followed by the non-aggression pact with Germany, constituting a substantial diplomatic defeat for Britain, for which they would one day be held responsible. (That they should not have foreseen that the U.S.S.R. was unlikely to remain passive and isolated, but would make some agreement with Germany when we would not make one with her, is a measure of their stupidity, and of the danger of allowing such persons to have any say in the government of our country.)

The accusations I have mentioned must nevertheless, in the light of the history set out above, seem ridiculous; but the shortness of public memories, and the general misunderstanding of the Soviet Union produced by twenty-two years of Press and government

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misrepresentation, have lent force to more ridiculous accusations in the past, and the accusations must accordingly be answered in detail. I think it is fair to say by way of preamble that the persons who accuse the Soviet Government of having betrayed democracy (whatever they may precisely mean by "democracy"), are in the main identical with those who for the last twenty-two years have at different stages carried on open warfare against the Soviet Union in the form of intervention, have boycotted it commercially and politically, hated, reviled, and slandered it, described it as the enemy of democracy, and in general done everything they possibly could at every stage to ensure that the British Government should never either negotiate with it for an agreement or make any agreement with it. They are also largely identical with the people who supported the "Munich" betrayal in general, and in particular the cold-shouldering of the U.S.S.R. both in the years before and in the negotiations at that time, and who supported the pressure put upon the Czechs not to accept Soviet aid to defend themselves against aggression.

### WAS IT BETRAYAL?

Taking first the allegation that the Soviet Union has betrayed democracy, this of course rests on the fundamental fallacy of assuming that the Soviet Union, which is thus suddenly discovered by these accusers to be a democracy, is not merely the same kind of democracy as France and England, but is so much the same kind of democracy that it owes a moral duty, the neglect of which can be called "betrayal," to save the western democracies from their own follies (even when they refuse to be saved); to pick the chestnuts out of the fire for them; and even to refrain from making an agreement with its own natural enemies that those enemies shall not fight it, when it has at last been convinced that it cannot hope for an agreement with the Western democracies to protect itself and them from these enemies. The point of view of the U.S.S.R. was expressed by Molotov in the speech in which he presented the pact to the Supreme Soviet on the 31st August:

"As the negotiations had shown that the conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance could not be expected, we could not but explore other possibilities of ensuring peace and eliminating the danger of war between Germany and the U.S.S.R.



“If the British and French Governments refused to reckon with this, that is their affair. It is our duty to think of the interests of the Soviet people, the interests of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. All the more since we are firmly convinced that the interests of the U.S.S.R. coincide with the interests of the people of other countries.”

There is, of course no more ground for saying that, by making a non-aggression pact with a Fascist country, the U.S.S.R. has betrayed democracy, or abandoned its anti-Fascist policy, than there would be for saying that by making the Franco-Soviet pact with capitalist France it abandoned Socialism. In truth, as these very critics have always pointed out, U.S.S.R. is a very different kind of state from the western democracies; and it cannot owe them any duty beyond those of observing the ordinary comity of international relations.

It may be added that if two states or peoples fail to make an agreement to defend something that somebody calls democracy, you cannot accuse either of them of “betraying” democracy unless you can show that it was its fault that an agreement was not made; and the question where the blame must lie has been answered above with great clarity. One may quote Mr. Lloyd George once again; in an article which he wrote in the *Sunday Express* on the 10th September, after pointing out the immense advantages which Poland would now possess if Marshal Voroshilov’s plan in the event of war breaking out in spite of the pact, of marching against East Prussia and towards Cracow in alliance with Great Britain, France and Poland had been adopted, he writes: “The tragic story of the rejection of this plan has yet to be told, and responsibility for the stupidities that lost us Russia’s powerful support justly affixed and sternly dealt with.”

When one recalls the various negotiations and flirtations with Germany recounted above, the persistent supply of war materials to Germany up to the very last moment, the incident of the surrender to Germany of £5,000,000 of Czech gold, and indeed the whole history of the British Government’s relations to Hitler, one can only be amazed at the courage of those who venture to bring up the question as to who betrayed democracy. If one takes a longer view backwards, to 1935 or to 1931, one can surely see nothing in the policy of the British government but a long-continued effort to “appease,” to strengthen, and if possible to make alliances with the Fascist states, which was clear to all Labour people and to many others then, and

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must be clear to the whole world now, as a betrayal of democracy.

The next accusation, a somewhat different one, is that the U.S.S.R., by failing to make an agreement with France and England, and by making a non-aggression pact with Germany, has destroyed the Peace Front, that is, presumably, a "Front" or alliance of France, England, and the U.S.S.R., with the addition perhaps of Poland and one or two other countries, to resist aggression, or Fascism. Nobody can have destroyed *that* Peace Front (unless one likes to say that Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier destroyed it at Munich), for it never existed. The facts set out above and many other facts referred to can be appealed to with confidence to establish that U.S.S.R. tried very hard to build it up, but that Great Britain and France preferred that it should not come into existence.

Indeed, the history of the Soviet Union since it had time to lay down its machine guns, take breath, and start to build up its new state, is almost universally recognised as one of wholehearted endeavour to build up a peace front; no country has or has had more to gain from peace, or less reason to engage in hostilities except in self-defence in the strictest and most direct meaning of the words. The history of the governments of Great Britain and France during the last eight years has, unfortunately, been one of kowtowing to Fascism, of sabotaging the League of Nations, of snubbing the U.S.S.R., and of displaying an obvious unwillingness to run the slightest risk or make the slightest effort to build up a peace front against aggression. It seems a little hard impliedly to accuse anyone of preventing the Western democracies from resisting Fascist aggression when it is clear that they had not at any time up to the breaking off of these negotiations shown any real intention of resisting it at all. This second accusation seems thus to be equally fallacious and unfounded.

### WAS IT "DOUBLE-DEALING"?

The third accusation, that of double-dealing, can be presented in an attractive guise, but a little examination shows it to be equally baseless. I have already shown, I think, that it is wrong to approach considerations of this problem on the assumption that Great Britain and France have a sort of lien on the Soviet Union. The negotiations between the two groups for an Anglo-Franco-Soviet pact were negotiations on equal terms between parties neither of whom was already bound. Either party could negotiate with others, if it desired. The British Government has, of course, throughout its long history and

particularly in the last few years negotiated with both “sides” or both potential sides to see which of them it could win as an ally; in particular there must have been many moments in the last few years when it appeared to be simultaneously negotiating or trying to negotiate, or flirting or trying to flirt, with the Fascist Powers and the Soviet Union. It has indeed been touch and go several times in the last year or two whether Great Britain would or would not make, formally or informally, a pact or treaty with Germany directed against the U.S.S.R., just as in August, 1939, it appeared to be touch and go whether it would make a pact with the U.S.S.R. directed against any aggression from Germany; and when one considers all the significant events of the spring and summer of 1939, above mentioned, there can be little doubt that the widespread belief that negotiations were continuously in progress, in a more or less disguised form, between Great Britain and Germany for some sort of appeasement, alliance, pact, or understanding directed to co-operation between the two countries, to the maintenance of the Hitler regime, and to the diversion of aggression towards the East, that is, against the U.S.S.R., is well founded. Nor could anyone even plausibly suggest that the Soviet Union was wrong in making an agreement with a state of a wholly different ideology. As has been explained, such an agreement is wholly consistent with Soviet foreign policy, and those who are prone to criticise the Soviet Union have always defended the conduct of the British Government in its attempts to arrive at agreement with Hitler, even in the humiliating conditions of Munich. They have not only rejected as baseless the objection that states of different ideologies should not enter into agreements with one another, but have gone further and said that Great Britain should not do anything which tended to “divide the world into two blocs of opposing ideologies.” In all these circumstances, what was the U.S.S.R. to do when it gradually but very definitely became convinced that the French and British would not make a genuine agreement with it? Surely no diplomat or politician in 1939 could be naive enough to suggest that, in the true spirit of English cricket, the U.S.S.R. should have ostentatiously broken off negotiations with Britain and France and *then* turned to Germany and said “I and I cannot make an agreement with your enemies. You need not fear any such agreement, and I can no longer offer you any particular inducement to persuade you to abandon your anti-Bolshevik campaign and make a non-aggression pact with me. Would you, dear enemy, nevertheless like to do so?” When the possibility of an Anglo-

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Franco-Soviet Pact disappeared, the U.S.S.R. was in fact confronted with a somewhat difficult position, although it was quite equal to dealing with it. Of the three possible situations that might emerge, in the then political position, one was that no agreement of any kind might be made with anybody; the U.S.S.R. had of course no duty to accept that situation if it could get a better one. The second one was that, before she knew where she was, she might find that Mr. Chamberlain had achieved his dearest wish and made an agreement with the Germans which in substance would be directed against the Soviet Union.\*

The third possible event, which actually came about, was that the U.S.S.R. would make a non-aggression pact with the Germans. It is surely obvious that the best way in which she could obtain a non-aggression pact with the Germans, if she preferred that to the remaining possibilities, was by getting it fixed up before the negotiations with the British and French should finally and openly break down and be called off. In just the same way, if the British were trying at the time to make any agreement with Hitler or Mussolini, or both of them, the last thing they would have done would have been to break off negotiations with Moscow before they had fixed up their agreement with the Fascists. And that is all that the U.S.S.R. has done. Let the nation which has never used any diplomatic finesse first cast a stone at her.

### CUI BONO?

We have seen that the allegations made in this country against the Soviet Union because it signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany turn out on examination to have little or no substance in them. But once past the first shock of surprise (a surprise largely due to the fact that the British public has been kept in the dark by those most responsible for keeping them enlightened), people began to ask what it brought to the parties concerned. It is useful to consider what

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\* Mr. A. J. Cummings, a well-informed writer, points out in the *News-Chronicle* that this non-aggression pact was concluded only when Stalin "had convinced himself not only that Poland and the two Western democracies did not want Russian co-operation on equal terms, but also that, if possible they would come to some settlement with Germany from which Russia would be excluded and left isolated and deserted."

benefit, if any, is derived from this agreement either directly by the U.S.S.R. or by Germany, or indirectly by the Western democracies.

Taking first the position of the U.S.S.R., it might be asked "What benefit can they obtain from promises by Hitler when he never keeps his word?" The answer to that is that they may well look for little or no benefit from relying on his word, but that the real advantage to them lies in what they have already obtained from the mere signature of the agreement. It has spread considerable dismay in Germany, where the Anti-Comintern Pact, the eternal fulminations against Bolshevism, and the cry that the Soviet was preparing to attack Germany, formed a large part of the whole propaganda machinery for keeping the people of Germany from revolting or disintegrating in their difficult economic position; in particular it is reported to have given a good deal of encouragement to Left Wing dements in Germany, who find themselves able for the first time for years to speak freely of the Soviet Union, and to develop propaganda among their fellow workmen much more openly than before. It has caused a certain amount of anger and dismay in Italy, and in particular must have had much to do with their decision to keep out of the present war for the time being; it has thus half dislodged Italy from the Axis, a thing which some British statesmen seem to have tried in vain to achieve over many years. It has equally kept Spain, the whole invasion of which by Germany and Italy was justified as part of the "crusade against Bolshevism," out of the war. It has done not a little to keep Hungary, who had been in danger of becoming a vassal of the Fascist Axis, neutral. It has dismayed, disillusioned and angered Japan, and by weakening her may well prove in the end of great benefit to China. It has in these ways wholly destroyed the anti-Comintern Pact, and has greatly diminished the risk of the U.S.S.R. having to fight on two fronts. It has at the same time postponed indefinitely, if not rendered impossible, the formation of any sort of Western bloc against the Soviet Union, whether for the purpose of presenting the Ukraine to Hitler under the thin disguise of the "Greater Ukraine" movement, which was designed, as Stalin forcibly put it, to "reunite" the "elephant" of the Soviet Ukraine to the "gnat" of the Carpathian Ukraine, or for any more general hostile project. And it has, perhaps the most important thing from the point of view of the U.S.S.R., greatly increased the prospect of her being able to remain neutral and at peace throughout the conflict. All these benefits, whether Hitler keeps his word or not, have been gained already by the Soviet Union and cannot easily be

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lost to her.

How has Germany fared? Her losses as a result of this agreement are the counterpart of the advantages to U.S.S.R. which I have just enumerated; but what are her gains? It is difficult to say that she has gained anything. At first blush, it might, of course, be said that she has kept U.S.S.R. out of the ranks of her enemies, and thus enabled herself to fight Poland at a great advantage; but this undoubted advantage to Germany was procured not by the signature of the German-Soviet pact but by the refusal of Great Britain, France and Poland to make a reality of the negotiations with the Soviet Union, to achieve a pact of mutual assistance, and thus to build up the Peace Front against German aggression. No doubt what Germany was seeking was to ensure for herself that the U.S.S.R. should remain neutral; but, although she did not fully realize this, it had in substance already been procured for her by the conduct of the Western democracies, and the U.S.S.R. was as a result completely disinterested in any idea of military alliance with any power, and desirous only of remaining at peace.

When one turns to consider what advantage Great Britain and France may in fact have gained, incidentally and undeservedly, from the making of this pact, one sees that the advantages to the U.S.S.R. mentioned above are almost all in equal degree advantages to Great Britain and France. The position in the Mediterranean, for example, where instead of having our sea communications imperilled by Italy and Spain, and the French army cut off from its African reinforcements, we have for the present substantial, if not too secure, command of the sea, and France is not compelled to detach large forces to guard either her Pyrenean or her Alpine frontier, presents an immense advantage. And from the more political angle, the destruction of the Anti-Comintern pact is of itself most valuable, as Sir Henry Page Croft pointed out in a recent speech.

It is not perhaps generally realised that the anti-Comintern Pact, which might seem to be directed really, as it is ostensibly, against the U.S.S.R. has chiefly been aimed against Britain and France, especially Britain. Nor is this a belated discovery. Three years ago, when this "Anti-Comintern" German-Japanese treaty was announced (November, 1936), *The Times*, which normally never neglects an opportunity of attacking the Communist International, on this occasion considered the new treaty as "regrettable and unnecessary." "There are," it added, "rumours, probably not without substance, that the agreement provides for the establishment of German and Japanese

spheres of economic—ultimately political—influence in the Dutch East Indies; a development which would certainly react on our position in Hong-Kong and Singapore.” When Mussolini in November, 1937, joined in, the “Anti-Comintern” treaty, or its geometrical alias the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis, became a really formidable challenge to the Western Powers, as was shown by their frequent unsuccessful attempts to bisect it. In short, as the Diplomatic Correspondent of *The Times* puts it, the pact “has greatly strengthened the political position of Great Britain.” The elimination of Japan from any idea of active support of Germany has also had the additional advantage for Great Britain, that it has relieved us, for the time being and to some extent, of the necessity to detach naval forces for dispatch to the Far East.

It may, of course, be suggested by the illogical that we have lost the assistance of the U.S.S.R. in helping the Poles to withstand Germany; but it has already been shown that it is the Poles, the British and the French, and *not* the Russians, who destroyed that possibility; it is not the making of the non-aggression pact, but the non-making of the Anglo-French-Soviet Pact that has produced that result—a result indeed which, if one is entitled to judge people by attributing to them the responsibility for their own acts, has been consciously desired and sought after by the English, the French and the Poles.

It is even suggested in some circles that the U.S.S.R. has brought about the war by entering into this non-aggression pact. It is a sad commentary on the state of our civilisation that it should be thought that a war is brought about by two States previously hostile to one another agreeing not to make war against one another; and it is indeed highly likely that Hitler, banking on his previous experience of Mr. Chamberlain, believed that the pact would enable him to avoid a war, for he probably thought that in the circumstances Great Britain and France would back out of their guarantee to Poland when they saw the position. The direct answer to any such suggestion, however, is that, if indeed the war could be said in any way to result from the U.S.S.R. making a non-aggression pact with Germany, no such pact would ever have been made if the British and French had really desired a pact with the Soviet Union, a pact which it is clear that they could easily have obtained.

### THE QUESTION OF SUPPLIES

I ought to mention the fear expressed in some quarters that the U.S.S.R. is likely to supply munitions or war material to Germany.

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

Reasoning on the basis of the known facts, one sees that all that the Soviet Union has so far done is what she has always been willing to do, and had done many times before, namely to make commercial agreements and non-aggression pacts with any country, however different from or hostile to her they may be in political structure or outlook. And, indeed, in this particular case, she had really only renewed such a pact, namely, the Treaty of Berlin, quoted at p. 12 above. There is nothing in the making of this new pact, or in its terms, to indicate any change of policy on the part of the U.S.S.R.; she has not changed her line, however much Hitler may have had to change his in order to sign.\*

In the light of those circumstances, what attitude is the U.S.S.R. likely to adopt to the question of supplying Germany? In international law, it should be remembered that, like any other neutral, she is free to supply Germany or not, as she chooses, just as she is free to supply Great Britain or France, and just as Britain and U.S.A. have supplied Japan and Germany with their war materials. It is not easy to imagine that Germany can pay for any substantial quantity of goods in cash (a method of payment which can really be regarded as obsolete in her foreign trade) and both in the commercial agreement of the 19th August, 1939, and the letters exchanged on the 29th September, the only undertaking given by the U.S.S.R. is to supply raw materials.

In deciding whether to give any particular supplies, the U.S.S.R. would no doubt in any case consider the political aspect of the matter and the whole international situation; and if, after the many things that have been done to shake her faith in our serious determination to resist Fascism, she could nevertheless be convinced of our earnestness in the matter, it can well be imagined that she would be ready to help us with supplies. Very much will depend, I think, on the altitude shown to democracy in the future by Great Britain and France.

In any event, if any of us feels anxiety as to whether, and if so how far, the U.S.S.R. is likely actively or passively to assist Germany, we must not in justice to her and to ourselves forget for one moment that the fact that she now appears to be standing nearer to Germany than to us is not merely consistent and logical on her part

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\* The change of front on Hitler's part is remarkable. It can best be illustrated by the passages from "Mein Kampf" in which he discusses the Soviet Union and the attitude of the Nazis to that country. They are set out in Appendix II, pp. 133-140.



## THE CHARGES EXAMINED

but is the fault of our Government, or rather of the three governments of Great Britain, France and Poland. They have forced her away from themselves and towards Germany. However much we may regret the strategic disadvantages from which we may (or may not) had ourselves to be suffering, we must in common honesty blame our own government for it, and not the U.S.S.R.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RED ARMY MARCHES

So far we have been dealing with the origins and causes of the war, with the clash of interests and policies which fatefully led to the outbreak of war in September.

The war has created a new world situation; a chapter of history has closed and another chapter has opened. The development of the war transformed the whole situation in Europe during the month of September, and the situation itself transformed the war. This situation is so complex and changes so rapidly that no recourse to history can supply an easy guide to the understanding. So much is obvious to everyone. You can hear the Man in the Blackout saying: "It's the queerest war I've ever heard of," and the queerest as well as the most pregnant happenings are perhaps three in number.

The first is the utter collapse of the Polish State and military power which is dealt with in more detail below. The second is the march of the Red Army across the Soviet frontiers on the 17th September, with the proclaimed object of protecting the lives and property of populations left defenceless. The third is the subsequent southward march of the Red Army so as to lock out the Nazi advance upon the Rumanian frontier. When these things happened there was not only surprise but considerable confusion in Britain. Those who had hurled accusations against the U.S.S.R. before now redoubled them, and many people were frankly puzzled. The reader who has followed the story and the arguments thus far will see for himself or herself the fallacy, if not the interested malice, behind some of the accusations. But there are some accusations, or at least, some questions which require an answer. With these I propose now to deal.

#### WAS IT "A STAB IN THE BACK"?

When one analyses the reaction of the British public to the entry and occupation of Polish territory by Soviet troops, one finds, I think, that there are really two main grounds of resentment or criticism, the first that, as it is alleged, the U.S.S.R. stepped in and dealt a blow from behind against a gallant people and army which was resisting its Western enemy, and could, but for this intervention on the East, have continued such resistance; and the second, that the U.S.S.R. had descended to the level of any ordinary capitalist power by stealing Polish territory for herself. The supposed breach of the non-

aggression pact with Poland also figures, no doubt, in the public mind as reprehensible, even in these days when international morality stands so low. It has also been suggested, as an aggravation of the alleged offence, that some agreement must have been made in advance between Germany and the U.S.S.R., as part of the Non-Aggression Pact, for handing over to the U.S.S.R. some part of Polish territory.

All these points, of course, deserve an answer. With regard to the first, we have to remind ourselves—as we have perpetually to remind ourselves in war time, if not in peace time, too—that we are living under the fog of censorship, we do not know all the facts, and especially do not learn them without considerable delay. We are, moreover, constantly bombarded with unfounded stories, both by German propaganda, designed to show the world in general and the German people in particular that the U.S.S.R. is helping Germany, and by British propaganda from the many interests, already mentioned, who are always anxious to vilify the Soviet Union; and most of us have not yet acquired the technique, in studying the press, of trying to make up our minds what is really happening by a process of “reading between the lies.” Truth, it is said, is the first casualty in every war; but do not let us treat her as missing or dead; she is only wounded, and we must give her the best possible treatment, and restore her to the fight. It is not, of course, easy; it is a difficult task to form, and particularly to form quickly, a correct appreciation of facts which we only learn gradually and imperfectly; and what most of us did not understand when we first heard of the entry of Soviet troops into Eastern Poland is now quite clear to everyone, as it was clear at the time to the better-informed military correspondents of newspapers, namely, that, so far from Poland and the Polish army being intact and able to fight on indefinitely if the U.S.S.R. had left them alone, the war in Poland as a war was at an end; the Polish Government had ceased to function and was in headlong flight, and the Polish army, save for a few groups still holding together and fighting gallantly if hopelessly, had disintegrated and was either in flight or surrendering. On the very day on which the Soviet troops entered Poland, *The Times* correspondent telegraphed from Zaleszczyki:

“The Polish military situation, which a week ago was described in this correspondence as an orderly retreat with the army intact, has now become the exact opposite. The

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Polish front has collapsed completely, and it is plain that little more remains for the Germans to do except mop up what is left of a gallant army of more than 1,500,000 men.”

And, two days later, *The Times* diplomatic correspondent wrote that “by the time that the Red Army entered Poland, Polish resistance, outside a few areas, had collapsed or was collapsing.” (I trust that, in thus stating the facts as they seem to be clearly established, I shall not be thought to be indifferent either to the courage or to the tragic fate of the people of Poland. I have full sympathy and fellow-feeling with them, but I have no illusions about, or affection for, their reactionary and semi-Fascist government, which had behaved (from a strategic point of view) with incredible levity in rejecting Soviet help in August, and had at the same time shown itself incapable of either preparing for war before it came or carrying it on when it did come. I see that even the right-wing Press in this country is now reminding its readers that the Polish Government was, after all, “semi-feudal.” This description is certainly not an understatement.) These facts are, I think, sufficient to show that the entry of the U.S.S.R. into Poland cannot have made any difference to the Polish resistance, and it has not even been suggested in any responsible quarter that the Poles in fact detached a single soldier from any other front to deal with the Soviet troops.

### NO PRIOR AGREEMENT

With regard to the suggestion that an agreement was made for the delivery of these territories to the U.S.S.R., it might well be thought, seeing that, as is more fully stated below, there were included in the eastern areas of Poland great territories which no consideration of justice or ethnography should ever have given to Poland, inhabited by “national minorities” who have been cruelly ill-treated by the Polish Government, that it would have been legitimate enough if the Soviet Government had stipulated at the time when this Pact was being made that, if and when Poland should be defeated in war, she should occupy these territories. But it seems more probable, on a view of all the circumstances, that there was no such agreement. In the first place, it is obvious that there would have been no real sense in such an agreement unless war was expected in the near future; and everything points to the view that Hitler expected to get all he was demanding—Danzig and the Corridor—without a war, and believed

that the Pact would help him to avoid war. Moreover, Molotov, in his speech to the Supreme Soviet, which has already been mentioned,\* denied that there was any secret agreement; and, looking at the matter from the lowest point of view, he could have no motive to deny it if it were true, and if he knew that war was coming and Soviet troops would almost certainly be marching into Poland in a few weeks. The diplomatic and military correspondents of the more reliable Conservative newspapers seem also to think that there was no such agreement in advance, and that what has happened has been a major and unexpected political and strategic defeat for Hitler. That the German Government and press should seek to suggest to its puzzled people that there was some previous arrangement is natural enough, for it is unusual to see a triumphant aggressor surrendering his spoils to neutrals, and in such circumstances every excuse that ingenuity could command has to be put forward. As the *Yorkshire Post* put it on the 25th September:

“The German official statement on frontier delimitation, which declares that no wider conquests were intended in Germany’s original plans, will be regarded in most countries as merely an attempt to make a virtue of necessity.... What is certain is that Hitler, after a long series of diplomatic triumphs, bloodlessly secured by a skilful use of threats and intrigue, has now endured a severe diplomatic defeat which he will find it hard to disguise even from his countrymen.”

It may be added that, when one considers the point of time at which the Soviet troops moved into Poland, one sees a remarkable proof of the sincerity of the U.S.S.R., and the baselessness of the suggestion that they were co-operating with Germany in pursuance of some previous arrangement. Had they gone in a few days earlier, it would have been of real help to the Germans (and had they arranged or desired to help the Germans, they would have gone in a few days earlier). Had they gone in even twenty-four hours later, Germany would have secured some, if not all, of these territories. They thus went in at the one and only point of time at which their doing so could not help and could only thwart the German aims.

The accusation of a breach of the non-aggression pact with Poland falls on the same ground; it may seem like a lawyer’s argument

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\* See page 64.

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to say that you cannot have a pact in existence with a State or a Government that has in substance disappeared—if it is a lawyer’s argument it is, like many other lawyer’s arguments, a good one—but it is plain common sense that you cannot be guilty of aggression against a state or a government that has ceased to exist, and has left its territories at the mercy of the invader who has defeated it and driven it out, or of anyone else who cares to step in. On this point, it is worthwhile quoting the observations of an impartial student of some eminence, Professor Berriedale Keith, in a letter which he wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* on the 18th September. It should not be forgotten, he writes, that—

“Poland herself seized the moment of the German aggression on Czechoslovakia to add herself to the enemies of that unfortunate State, and that her demands were only modified in some measure by Russian intervention. The Polish complaint that Russia has violated without warning the non-aggression pact of 1932 loses most of its value when it is remembered that on that occasion Russia warned Poland that it would consider the pact ended if aggression against Czechoslovakia were persisted in. Since then the pact can hardly be said to have had any reality....

“We should remember also, when we denounce those who violate treaties, that France in 1935 betrayed Ethiopia to Italy, that we ourselves allowed Germany to construct submarines in breach of the Treaty of Versailles, without the assent of France; that we abandoned sanctions and recognised the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in breach of a solemn obligation; and that, in conjunction with France, we abandoned Czechoslovakia, our Prime Minister assuring us, in the teeth of the League Covenant, that we had no treaty obligations to that State. We cannot, surely, expect a higher standard of international morality from others than we ourselves set.”

There remains the accusation that the U.S.S.R. has behaved like any capitalist state, and stolen territory for territory’s sake. One may be permitted to smile at those who, having for two decades called the Soviet Union all the names they could think of, are now indignantly surprised at their supposed discovery that she is not actually better than the rest; and one may smile again at the moral indignation

displayed against land-grabbing by the loyal citizens of an empire which has gathered to itself one-fifth of the habitable globe mainly by grabbing land. But one must not rest content with investigating the character or record of the accusers; one must answer the accusation. And to do that one has to examine it from three aspects; the first, what would have happened to these territories if the U.S.S.R. had not stepped in; the second, who inhabits these territories, and how they came to be part of the Polish State; and the third, what the position of the U.S.S.R. itself would have been if it had not stepped in.

### HITLER FOILED

On the first point, it is quite plain that the territories would, but for the action of the Soviet Union, have been seized by Hitler. As already mentioned, there is no evidence that any agreement had been made that Hitler should refrain from occupying any part of Poland he could seize and leave it instead to the U.S.S.R.; and the idea that, if he had made such an agreement, he would be likely to observe it if it suited him not to do so need scarcely be discussed. Once they were seized by Hitler, the fate of their inhabitants can be imagined. The Jews, who are numerous, would have been treated as this foul beast treats Jews; the non-Jews would have been treated as he treats the non-German races he colonises, and would have passed into the life of twilight and terror, of exploitation, transportation, and slavery, that has been the lot of Bohemia and Moravia since last March. Surely even a stranger would have a moral right to fend off such a fate from these innocent millions; and no one could have a better right than the Soviet Union, whose bitterest enemies would admit that in the treatment of minorities in general and Jews in particular she has shown the whole world an example.

Professor Berriedale Keith's letter may again be quoted:

“We must not shut our eyes to essential facts which afford much excuse for Russian action. We cold-shouldered in September, 1938, the offers of Russia to protect Czechoslovakia; we rejected the Russian proposal of March 18th, after Prague, for a conference of the Powers interested; we refused the proposals of Russia for assurances to her against aggression through the Baltic States; and we did not induce Poland to consent to ask her aid or to agree to admit Russian forces to her territory in case of attack. In these circumstances was

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Russia to allow Germany to become unquestioned mistress of Poland? It would have been most unwise of her to remain quiescent, and we should not hesitate to welcome her continued neutrality in the struggle.”

### THE NATIONAL MINORITIES

The second point tends to reinforce the moral basis of the first; but it is important on its own merits. These territories are inhabited by White-Russians and Ukrainians, with an unusually high proportion of Jews. Few Poles live in them; and the inhabitants are not closely related to the Poles, but are closely akin to the White-Russians and Ukrainians within the borders of U.S.S.R., and, more important in some ways than kinship, they had suffered so acutely from foreign government, misgovernment, brutality, pogroms, and the exactions of alien landlords, that they were ripe to accept an economic and social system which, whatever its other merits or demerits, recognised the fullest rights of national minorities, put an end to pogroms, and favoured methods of land tenure and cultivation which had no need of landlords and tended to raise substantially the agricultural standard of living. The territories were not desired or intended by the Allies at Versailles to become Polish; no consideration of fairness or justice, ethnology or self-determination, could have given them to Poland, who obtained them only as a result of a pretty unsavoury series of Imperialist scrambles; and there could certainly be no moral justification for letting her recover them at the end of the present war. Part of the territories were taken by Poland in warfare against the then “White” Ukrainian Government in 1919, against the will of the Western democracies, but with munitions supplied by them; but the bulk of them were taken in the course of the war carried on by the Poles against the Soviet Republic in 1920, a war not merely equipped but instigated\* by the Western democracies in the hope of destroying the

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\* The frankness with which our government and its Press spoke in those days of the “agent provocateur” game of egging on the Poles and others to wage war against the Soviet Republic, with which Great Britain throughout professed not to be at war, is illustrated by the following quotation from a despatch printed in *The Times* in January, 1920, from its Warsaw correspondent: —

“If Poland is going to be helped and encouraged by France and England to carry on the war with a view to upsetting the



Bolshevik regime, at a time when the Bolsheviks were willing to concede to Poland without fighting all the territories which the Supreme Council at Versailles thought Poland ought to have, so that there was no excuse for war at all (this, it may be remembered, was the war which was largely stopped by the refusal of British dockers to load the s.s. *Jolly George* with munitions for Poland, and by the active protests of the Labour Party, and threats of a general strike). That war ended with the Treaty of Riga in March, 1921, by which these territories were given to Poland in defiance of every principle of self-determination and justice. Moreover, during the eighteen years of Polish rule which followed, the inhabitants, under the reactionary rule of a semi-Fascist Polish Government, and the extortions of Polish landlords, have presented almost the most tragic example of the fate of "national minorities." Let me quote Mr. Lloyd George again. In "The Truth About the Peace Treaties," published in 1938, in the section of the book dealing with the ill-treatment of minorities generally, he wrote:

"Poland is one of the worst offenders. She actually repudiated the Minority Treaty at Geneva in 1934, by a unilateral declaration, in which her delegate laid it down that the provisions of the Treaty would no longer be regarded as applicable to Poland, so long as all the Powers, meaning the Great Powers, declined to make it applicable to themselves.

"One of her greatest breaches of faith relates to her treatment of the claim by the Ruthenes (or Ukrainians), to local autonomy, for at least Eastern Galicia. There are some 6½ millions of this race on her territory, of whom roughly half reside in Eastern Galicia, which even under the old Habsburg monarchy enjoyed a limited measure of Home Rule. In June, 1919, the Supreme Council authorised Poland to occupy the territory, and to establish a Civil Government, but only after having fixed with the Allied and Associated Powers an agreement, whose clauses shall guarantee as far as possible the autonomy of this territory, and the political, religious and personal liberties of the inhabitants. This agreement shall be

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Soviet regime, it is just as important to relieve the internal difficulties of the Poles as to supply them with military necessities."

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

based on the right of free disposition, which, in the last resort, the inhabitants of Eastern Galicia are to exercise regarding their political allegiance.’

“In March, 1923, the Conference of Ambassadors assigned Eastern Galicia to Poland in full sovereignty, this decision, however, being prefaced by a clause stating that it is recognised by Poland that, as regards the Eastern part of Galicia, the ethnographical conditions necessitate a regime of autonomy. By that time, it should be observed, Poland was also bound by the provisions of the Minority Treaty. Nevertheless, she has since had recourse to the most oppressive measures for Polonising the Ruthenes, the persecution in their case extending even to the religious domain. For the majority of the Ruthenes belong either to the Uniate Church or to the Orthodox, whereas the Poles are, of course, Roman Catholics. Needless to say, no attempt has ever been made by Poland to fulfil the pledge of local autonomy which conditioned the cession to her of Eastern Galicia. In 1930 the Polish persecution in Eastern Galicia took so violent a form that the problem of the so-called ‘pacification’ of that country was brought up before the League Council, owing to the pressure of British public opinion. But the Japanese rapporteur to the Council delayed consideration of the problem for over a year, when a supine resolution was passed, which left the situation in Eastern Galicia exactly where it was before, if not a little worsened.

### POLISH PERSECUTIONS

“Poland’s persecution of her Jewish minority was, down to the economic crisis of 1929, intermittent and comparatively mild. Since then, however, it has steadily grown until it has reached the point when the Polish Government openly declare at Geneva that they must get rid of at least 2½ million of the 3¼ million Jews now living within their borders. At the same time the Polish Government declare that they do not encourage, but repress, any violent attacks on the Jews. The truth is that, if not the Central Government, at any rate the local authorities, do tolerate if they do not incite Jew-baiting in varying degrees of violence. Nor can it be denied that there is now a wholesale discrimination against the

Jewish minority in every sphere, in flagrant breach of the Minority Treaty.”

The treatment of the Jews in this area by the Poles can also be illustrated by the following quotation from the *Daily Herald* of the 27th November, 1937:

“Alongside the drive for their forced emigration, the Jews of Poland have, since the death of Pilsudski in May, 1935, been undergoing an unceasing physical terror, as cruel as any in the long, tragic history of anti-Jewish persecution. There can be no other community so afraid and despairing as I have found the Polish Jews today....

“Hundreds of pogroms, large and small, have taken place during the past two and a half years. The chief attacks have been reserved for Jewish centres removed from the very large cities where the presence of foreigners acts as a deterrent. Since May, 1935, more than 150 Jews have been killed, and thousands injured in Jew-baiting attacks. Thousands have been beaten up in the streets and public places. Many hundreds of Jewish shops and stores have been destroyed, wrecked, bombed and pillaged. Hundreds of houses have been burned down. Many synagogues have been desecrated.... Scores of thousands have been reduced to starvation level through loss of business and homes.... The Polish Premier has admitted that in the province of Bialystok alone there took place last year no fewer than 348 attacks on Jews. These onslaughts included 21 large-scale pogroms.”

It would seem that these poor Jews were well rid of either Polish or German rule.

The *Manchester Guardian* of the 10th October, 1938, gives the following description:

“Another ‘pacification’ of the Polish Ukraine has been going on since the early spring. In the autumn of 1930 the Polish Ukraine was ‘pacified’ by detachments of Polish cavalry and mounted police who went from village to village arresting peasants and carrying out savage floggings and destroying property—the number of peasants who were flogged ran into many thousands. This time the ‘pacification’ is taking on other forms; a general assault on Ukrainian

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political educational and economic organisation has been going on almost without intermission.”

It may be noticed in passing that the U.S.S.R. loyally observed her non-aggression Pact with Poland, and took no steps to regain these territories directly or indirectly, until Poland collapsed and left them lying open and defenceless; but when that happened she had every moral right to step in, and step in swiftly before Hitler could seize them. If anyone should complain, it is Hitler, who has lost the chance of over-running these territories and of obtaining for the time a common frontier with Rumania, and direct access to the Black Sea and the Balkans.

### LAW OF SELF-PRESERVATION

The third point relates to the Soviet Union's own position in the matter. It might be enough—it would certainly throughout the history of international relations have been generally accepted as enough, let alone in a period like the present, when we are living in a world of “smash and grab” where every nation is following even more closely than usual the “law of necessity” in attempting to safeguard its own power position and its own views of civilisation—to point out by way of justification of her action that the vital interests of the Soviet State in the preservation of its own territories were best served by, and indeed could hardly be served without, her occupying the Western Ukraine and Western White-Russia before the German dictator, who is scarcely sane at the best of times, should appear in the intoxication of a great military victory directly on her very boundaries. She was rather in the position of one who sees his neighbour's house on fire and steps in to extinguish the fire lest it involve his own home; indeed, she could say that it was no longer even her neighbour's land, but a very real no-man's land.

Mr. Winston Churchill, broadcasting on the 1st October, 1939, put the matter fairly enough:

“We could have wished that the Russian armies should be standing on their present line as the friends and allies of Poland, instead of as invaders. But that the Russian armies should stand on this line was clearly necessary for the safety of Russia against the Nazi menace. At any rate the line is there, and an Eastern Front has been created which Nazi Germany does not dare assail. When Herr von Ribbentrop was

summoned to Moscow last week it was to learn the fact, and to accept the fact, that the Nazi designs upon the Baltic States and upon the Ukraine must come to a dead stop.”

And it must not be forgotten that the Soviet Ukraine, which Hitler was thus rapidly approaching, was the very territory which he has always coveted and which he earmarked in “Mein Kampf” as the land for his expansion, the territory, indeed, to which many active intriguers in Great Britain, including members of Parliament, have been trying for years to direct his attention and even to finance his invasion. There is, I think, no state in the world which would not in such circumstances claim the right to enter upon adjacent no-man’s land in order to halt the invader at a safe distance. As Mr. Boothby, a Conservative member, put it in the House of Commons on the 20th September:

“I think it is legitimate to suppose that this action on the part of the Soviet Government was taken in sheer self-interest, and from the point of view of self-preservation and self-defence.”

On all these grounds it is surely clear that the U.S.S.R. has ample justification in morals and in international law for what she did, and that not many months will pass before that is generally admitted.

That no harm was done to the Polish resistance I have already, I hope, demonstrated. Whether harm or benefit has been done to the cause of the British and French as against Hitler by the occupation of this territory (from which at the very least some supplies and some forced labour could have been extracted by the ruthless Nazi conqueror), by a powerful and disciplined army before Hitler himself could reach it, and by the serious shock administered to Hitler and the German people, in that he met for the first time a force which does not fear him, a force which he is not prepared to defy, and that as a result he has had to stop and surrender much of his gains and more of his ambitions, it is perhaps too early to judge; but I am comforted to observe that already the military correspondents are displaying a pretty clear conviction that our cause will derive great advantages from Hitler being thus halted and deprived of the Western Galician oilfields, and of a common frontier with Rumania, the land of wheat and oil, a benefit upon which the German Propaganda Ministry has been frequently dilating to the anxious people of the Reich. Indeed, I

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

hazard the guess that the occupation of the whole Polish-Rumanian frontier is exactly what the U.S.S.R. would have been asked to secure on behalf of the anti-Fascist front if the negotiations in Moscow had succeeded, and if war had nevertheless come in the end; and I guess, too, that this occupation will turn the whole scale against Germany in the struggle for the domination of the Balkans. We shall do well, of course, to wait a little while, and observe developments, not accepting too easily either encouraging news or pessimistic forecasts; but it may very likely turn out that once again the Western democracies will derive considerable benefit in their fight against Germany from the activities of the U.S.S.R., carried out, of course, naturally and properly not in our interests, but in their defence of the Soviet Union and in resistance to Fascism.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POWER OF A STRONG NEUTRAL

The position was not likely to remain static, and further developments were not long in coming. Little more than a week after the entry of the Red Army on the scene as the armed forces of a neutral power, von Ribbentrop hurried to Moscow, and on the 27th and 28th September negotiated with Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and the Commissar of Foreign Affairs; Stalin and the Soviet Ambassador to Germany and the German Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. also took part in the negotiations. In the early morning of Friday the 29th September, there was signed a German-Soviet treaty on Amity and the Frontier between the U.S.S.R. and Germany, and a declaration was made by the Soviet and German Governments; while on economic questions letters were exchanged by Molotov and von Ribbentrop. The commendable brevity of the treaty enables me to reproduce it here:

#### THE GERMAN-SOVIET TREATY ON AMITY AND THE FRONTIER BETWEEN THE U.S.S.R. AND GERMANY

After the dissolution of the former Polish State, the Government of the U.S.S.R. and the German Government regard it as their exclusive task to restore peace and order in that territory and to secure for the peoples residing there a peaceful existence in conformity with their national characteristics.

With this aim in view they arrived at agreement on the following:

ARTICLE I.—The Government of the U.S.S.R. and the German Government establish as the frontier between the interests of their respective States, on the territory of the former Polish State, the line which is drawn on the appended map, which will be described in more detail in a supplementary protocol.

ARTICLE 2.—Both parties recognise the frontier between the interests of their respective States established in Article 1 as final, and will eliminate any interference by third Powers with this decision.

ARTICLE 3.—The necessary state reorganisation of the territory west of the line indicated in Article 1 shall be

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

effected by the German Government, and on the territory east of this line by the Government of the U.S.S.R.

ARTICLE 4. —The Government of the U.S.S.R. and the German Government regard the reorganisation mentioned above as a reliable foundation for the further development of friendly relations between their peoples.

ARTICLE 5. —This treaty is subject to ratification. The exchange of ratification instruments shall be effected in Berlin as early as possible. The treaty comes into force as soon as it is signed.

It is to be noted that in the first publication in London the phrase “the frontier between the interests of their respective states” was mistranslated as “frontier between their imperial interests,” and this misinterpretation was presumably cabled to the various nations and colonial peoples in whom it might arouse distrust of the Soviet Union.\*

The actual line drawn on the map, while details are not yet to hand, appears to coincide nearly with the “Curzon line” which the Poles overstepped in 1920 when they made war on the Soviet Union and subjected the Western Ukraine and Western White-Russian populations. This means that practically all of the territory of (in the main) Polish speaking populations falls to the West of the line.

### “THE PEACE-THREAT”

The significance of this in relation to the present war is shown by an explicit declaration by the two Governments, described in London as “a peace threat.” It runs as follows:

#### THE DECLARATION OF THE SOVIET AND GERMAN GOVERNMENTS OF SEPTEMBER 28, 1939

The German Government and the Government of the U.S.S.R., by the treaty signed to-day, having finally settled questions that arose as a result of the dissolution of the Polish

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\* There is no reason to suppose that mere incompetence produced this mistranslation, which appears to be deliberate; for it is inconceivable that the Russian word for “imperial,” or the German word for it (“Kaiserreich”) would have been employed. Conversely there could be no warrant for translating the Russian word “Gosudarstvennie” by any other term than “state.”



## THE POWER OF A STRONG NEUTRAL

State, and having thereby created a firm foundation for a lasting peace in Eastern Europe, in mutual agreement express the opinion that the liquidation of the present war between Germany on the one hand and Great Britain on the other is in the interests of all nations.

Therefore both Governments will direct their common efforts, if necessary in accord with other friendly Powers, in order to attain this aim as early as possible.

If, however, these efforts of both Governments remain futile, it will be established thereby that Great Britain and France bear the responsibility for the continuation of war, and in the event of the continuation of war, the Governments of Germany and the U.S.S.R. will consult each other on the necessary measures.

Perhaps the only comment which need be made is that this declaration at any rate is completely consistent with Molotov's speech to the Supreme Soviet of the 31st August, already quoted,\* in which he said:

“The chief importance of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact lies in the fact that the two largest States of Europe have agreed to put an end to enmity between them, eliminate the menace of war and live at peace one with the other, making narrower thereby the zone of possible military conflicts in Europe. Even if military conflicts in Europe should prove unavoidable, the scope of hostilities will now be restricted. Only the instigators of general European war can be displeased by this state of affairs—those who, under the mask of pacifism, would like to ignite a general conflagration in Europe.”

The letter from Molotov to von Ribbentrop of the 29th September dealt with the development of economic relations and trade turnover between the two countries (“on the basis and in the spirit of the general political agreement reached by us”). It ran:

“HERR REICHSMINISTER,

“Referring to our conversations we have the honour to confirm to you that, on the basis and in the spirit of the

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\* See p. 64.

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

general political agreement reached by us, the Government of the U. S.S.R. is filled with the desire to do everything to develop economic relations and the trade turnover between the U.S.S.R. and Germany.

“With this aim in view both parties will draw up an economic programme in accordance with which the Soviet Union will supply Germany with raw materials which Germany will, in her turn, compensate by deliveries of industrial goods to be effected in the course of a lengthy period.

“Both countries will draft this economic programme in such a way that the volume of the German-Soviet trade turnover should again reach the highest level attained in the past.

“Both Governments will immediately issue the necessary instructions for the realisation of the above measures, and will see to it that negotiations should be begun and brought to a conclusion as soon as possible.”

The answering letter from von Ribbentrop confirmed this.

### PROBLEMS OF FRONTIERS

It is plain that, especially in times of war and tension, many points of danger arise in the relations between two powerful states who become contiguous, and must be settled, lest they lead to war, and it may be inevitable, and from the Soviet Union's point of view highly desirable, that some such agreements as those just quoted should be made; but they led, nevertheless, to another crop of accusations. Most of the accusations were of the type which have been fully discussed above, but others came from those who, in a natural anxiety for their own country's interests, jumped to the conclusion (for which there is surely no foundation) that a military alliance must be involved. Here the hopes embodied in Berlin propaganda served to stimulate British fears. The better-informed newspapers, however, were not cast down; indeed, ever since the march of the Red Army, and increasingly from the beginning of October, it was possible to notice two treatments in those same newspapers; firstly, the editorial propaganda, in a high moral tone, directed against the U.S.S.R., and secondly sober estimates of the relation of forces in Eastern Europe which in the main concluded that the actions of the Soviet Union were more favourable to Britain than to Germany. It is early yet, in a situation capable of very rapid and fundamental changes, to attempt a full

## THE POWER OF A STRONG NEUTRAL

study of the relation of forces, or to decide how far the Soviet Union, objectively and without any love for Britain, may have worked to the advantage not only of the people of the U.S.S.R., but both now and in the long run, of all the Anti-Fascist forces throughout the world. But if one embarks, as dispassionately as one can in war-time, upon a provisional consideration of the situation, a number of points of great importance appear to be pretty well established. First, there is the fact that a universal world war has been avoided for the present, and that peace has been maintained for the 170 millions of the U.S.S.R. at least. Secondly, there is the remarkable feature, already mentioned, of the liberation of the people of Western White Russia and the Western Ukraine, not only from the horrors of Nazi warfare and domination, but also from their oppression by the Polish bureaucracy and landlords. It is natural, if not admirable, that this should be largely ignored in the Conservative press, but it is surprising that this astonishing liberation and transformation of the lives of millions of people should have been made so little of in certain newspapers of the Left.\*

Thirdly, there is the barrier to the forceful expansion of Nazi Germany in the Balkans and towards the Black Sea.

The truth is that a strong neutral power is in a better position to limit the Nazi expansion than a belligerent. In the case of the belligerent the issue depends on the outcome of the struggle, for which the National Government has informed us we may have to wait three years. The powerful neutral, on the other hand, can effect momentous results all the time. We have already seen the remarkable changes that have been effected by the action of the U.S.S.R. in less than a fortnight, and there is no reason to think either that her activity will injure the democratic cause or that the situation will become static.

The initiative in European, if not in world affairs, has passed to the U.S.S.R. When the initiative is in the hands of a vigorous state—and it does not long remain in the hands of any other—movement is inevitable, and developments must always be expected.

Finally, it remains to be seen what effect this great neutral Power will make (“if necessary in accord with other friendly Powers”) in her proclaimed object of seeking to bring about an early peace.

It may well be asked, why the U.S.S.R. should demand that the

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\* Shakespeare again: “‘Zounds, sir,” says Iago, “you are one that will not serve God if the devil bid you.”

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

Western democracies should bring the war to an end, or should assert that the war has no further object. Once one looks at the matter from the Soviet angle, it is easy (without necessarily agreeing with her point of view) to understand why she adopts this attitude. So far as the war aims of the Western democracies have been stated, they are to implement the guarantee to Poland by “restoring” her, and to put an end to Hitlerism. What view must the Soviet Union take of those two aims? So far as Poland is concerned, she no doubt regards that state as having been a reactionary state, oppressing both its national minorities and its own workers and peasants; she feels that the territories which she herself has already occupied—to the obvious delight of the majority of the inhabitants—should certainly not be given back to Poland at all, and that the purely Polish-inhabited areas should not be given to any Polish government resembling that which has just fled to Rumania. (No doubt she would prefer to see those areas governing themselves democratically, although no one would expect her to embark on a knight-errant’s war to bring that about.)

In those circumstances, she will not contemplate with any enthusiasm the prolongation of the war for the purpose of restoring any part of Poland to its old government, or to any government which she thinks (whether rightly or wrongly), is likely to be set up by the Western democracies if they are under the control of governments such as those which have led or misled them through the Spanish War, the rapes of Austria and of Czechoslovakia, and the other activities described above.

With regard to the proclaimed aim of the Western democracies to end Hitlerism, the U.S.S.R. would certainly like to see the end of Hitlerism, and as we have seen has spent months and indeed years in patient negotiation with the Western democracies in the hope of assisting to bring about that end; but when she hears the Western democracies, with their recent record, talking of ending Hitlerism, she may be pardoned for wondering (wrongly no doubt), whether they can be trusted to make an end of it, and above all what exactly they mean by ending Hitlerism, i.e., what sort of a Germany they propose and desire to bring about “after Hitler.” If she suspects that they will seek at all costs to secure a continuance of the capitalist structure of Germany, she may think that such a Germany will be little better than Hitler Germany, that it may be used in the future by the Western democracies as a spearhead against herself, and that in any event such a reconstruction of Europe would bear the seeds of future war in it as

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surely as did Versailles. She may, rightly or wrongly, think that she is better served—and the world too—by bringing such a war to an end, and leaving Hitlerism to be brought to a real end by the establishment of a Socialist Germany which—perhaps she believes—is not far off.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would add this. Thinking back over all the facts which I have marshalled above, one sees only too clearly that the British Government comes out of the investigation with a very unsatisfactory record. They have to bear the major blame for the failure of the negotiations in Moscow, success in which would probably have kept the peace of the world and would certainly have brought Fascism to the ground. And they have to bear this blame not so much because they have been guilty of bungling or error, but rather because the guiding lines of their policy, and their very instincts, led them not to desire either an end of Fascism or a genuine reciprocal pact with the U.S.S.R. Their policy, their instincts, and the interests of their class, alike lead them to oppose Fascism only when it clashes with their own wide financial and imperialist interests, and to prefer it at all times to Socialism. Whenever squarely confronted with the alternative of conciliating Fascism at the peril of their own imperialist interests or of resisting it at the cost of thereby advancing the cause of Socialism, they must in the end always choose the Fascist side.

Unless this war be soon brought to a close, the harvest which this policy has already sown must now be reaped in blood and sweat by the people of Britain and France. But, we, who prophesied this fatal result of the Government's policy as inevitable, can still seek to avoid further tragedy. And here we are confronted with a very serious state of facts. We still have in substance the same Government that we have had all through these fateful years. With their composition, their outlook, their characteristics, their history, are they a fit and proper Government either to carry on war against Fascism or to make the peace or even to formulate the aims for which we are fighting? Will they not at every crucial moment, consciously or unconsciously, still suffer from the defects inherent in their history, still be scheming to save the capitalist structure of Germany, thus—alas!—preserving all the old clashes, contradictions and rivalries, and keeping alive the spirit of Fascism, of Hitler? Will the outlook or conduct of such a Government ever be in any sense democratic? Will they deal, either in the prosecution of the war, or in the formulation of war aims, with the vital problems of our relations to British India, or to the Colonial peoples, or to the U.S.S.R., in such a way as to avoid planting the seeds of a new and infinitely more terrible war in, say, 1965? I doubt it very earnestly, and very unhappily. I feel that, in their hands, the

## CONCLUSION

war is in danger, and the peace in far greater danger.

All these things are of tremendous importance to ourselves, and still more to our children. Let us face them, consider them calmly, make up our minds, and act.

## DIARY OF EVENTS (MARCH TO AUGUST, 1939)

1939.

- March 9th-13th. British Government's Press campaign of "Golden Age" propaganda.
- March 15th. Hitler enters Prague and annexes Czechoslovakia.
- March 16th. Mr. Chamberlain "deprecates charges of breach of faith" against Hitler.
- March 17th. Mr. Chamberlain's speech to the Birmingham Unionists, criticising seizure of Czechoslovakia.
- March 18th. The Soviet Government proposes a Conference of Britain, France, U.S.S.R., Rumania, Turkey.
- March 19th. British Government replies that the Conference proposal is "premature" and suggests instead that U.S.S.R. should join in a declaration of Great Britain, France and Poland against aggression. To this the Soviet Government agrees. (No result.)
- March 22nd. Hitler seizes Memel.
- March 23rd. Mr. Chamberlain declares in Parliament that he is not anxious to set up blocs of countries with different ideas about their forms of internal administration.
- March 31st. Mr. Chamberlain, without previous consultation with the Soviet Union, announces the British guarantee to Poland.
- April 1st. Leader in *The Times*.
- April 7th. Mussolini seizes Albania.
- April 13th. British guarantee to Rumania and Greece announced, without previous consultation with the Soviet Union.
- April 15th. British proposal that the Soviet Government make a unilateral guarantee of Poland and Rumania.
- April 17th. The Soviet Government replies with a programme of a triple defensive alliance of France, Britain and the U.S.S.R., a military convention, and a guarantee to all States from the Baltic to the Black Sea.
- April 18th. Leader in *The Times*.
- April 24th. The British Ambassador, previously withdrawn,



- is sent back to Berlin.
- April 26th. Denunciation by Germany of the Anglo-German Naval Treaty and of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact.
- May 3rd. "Rushcliffe" letter in *The Times*.
- May 5th. Mr. Chamberlain in Parliament sneeringly refuses the suggestion that he make personal contact with Stalin.
- May 9th. After making no reply to the Soviet programme for three weeks, the British Government repeats its former proposal slightly altered.
- May 14th. Soviet Government repeats proposal of 17th April, in simplified form.
- May 19th. Mr. Chamberlain states in Parliament that there are governments other than that of the U.S.S.R. to be considered.
- May 27th. British Government accepts the principle of the Triple Pact of Mutual assistance and the military convention, but wishes the guarantees to cover only Poland and Rumania, and proposes League of Nations machinery.
- May 31st. Molotov's speech to the Third Session of the Supreme Soviet.
- June 2nd. Reply from the Soviet Government on the basis of reciprocity for extension of the guarantee to the Baltic States and the simultaneous completion of the Triple Pact and the military convention.
- June 8th. Lord Halifax's speech in Parliament.
- June 12th. Lord Davies' speech in Parliament.
- June 12th. Mr. Strang departs for Moscow.
- Mid-June. Lord Halifax invited to visit Moscow,
- June 25th. Lord Halifax's speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- June 29th. Zhdanov's significant article appears in *Pravda*.
- Third week of July. The Wohltat—Hudson conversations become known.
- July 23rd. The Soviet Government suggest immediate staff talks.
- July 25th. British and French Governments agree to send military delegations to Moscow.
- July 29th. Mr. Lloyd George's bye-election speech.
- August 5th. The military missions leave by boat and train for

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

	Moscow.
August 9th.	Lord Kemsley's visit to Germany.
August 11th.	Arrival of the military missions in Moscow.
August 12th.	The three delegations begin conversations.
August 13th- 17th.	Meetings of the military missions, divergence of opinion regarding Polish refusal to allow Soviet troops on Polish territory. Conversations cease.
August 19th.	Soviet-German Commercial Agreement.
August 20th.	Lord Kemsley advocates a Four Power Western Pact.
August 23rd.	Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact.
August 26th.	The military missions leave Moscow.
August 31st.	M. Molotov's speech to the Supreme Soviet.

## THE U.S.S.R. AND FINLAND

(Being the major part of one of the chapters in the "Penguin Special," "THE DRIFT TOWARDS WORLD WAR IN 1940," to be published in January, 1940.)

There is no doubt that the advance of the Red Army into Finland, which began on the 30th November, 1939, has disturbed a great many people who have neither the time nor the opportunity to make a sufficient study of the matter. All the superficial appearances, especially as reported in the Press, tend against the U.S.S.R., and it is not easy to arrive at a full understanding of a complicated situation. This lays upon those who are in a position to examine the facts, and who seek either to preserve the hope of Socialist development in Europe or to stop an extension of the world war, the duty of doing all they can to make the situation clear to themselves and to others.

This Finnish problem is not the whole subject matter of this book\*, (which was indeed undertaken and planned before the 30th November), and is a problem that should be studied in its proper historical setting, as elaborated in other sections of this book, and in particular in the light of past and present relations between the U.S.S.R. and Britain and between those two countries and Finland. Nevertheless, since the Finnish problem is occupying many minds to such an extent as to obscure the main problem, and as some of the arguments and criticisms that have been put forward upon it are immaterial to the central thesis of this book—the thesis, that is, that there exists a well-defined and already pretty mature scheme to "switch" the war into a combination of all the great capitalist powers to destroy the socialist state of the U.S.S.R.—I think that it will be useful if at this stage I set out all the main arguments and criticisms that have been advanced against the Soviet Union on this topic, and answer them one by one; I can do this without unduly interrupting the thread of the story.

The arguments and criticisms vary in importance, in point of view, and in interest; but I would like to deal with all of them. They are, I think, seven in number, as follows:—

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\* References to "this book" or to other chapters here refer not to "Light on Moscow," but to the forthcoming book of which this chapter will form a part.

## LIGHT ON MOSCOW

1. That aggression by one state against another is always wrong;
2. That in this case aggression is particularly inexcusable, because Finland could not entertain any idea of attacking the U.S.S.R., she is a peace-loving and democratic country, and she is above all a small country;
3. That Finland only desired to keep her own independence and her own territories, and had a perfect right to do so;
4. That the U.S.S.R. has shown herself by her conduct to be an Imperialist state.
5. That the U.S.S.R. should have continued to negotiate, instead of attacking;
6. That the U.S.S.R. has sacrificed the good will of the progressive elements in all countries, and rendered it easier for the capitalist powers to rally their public opinion to support a general attack upon herself.
7. That the Finnish Democratic Republic is a puppet government, having no real existence.

Let me deal with these various points in the order in which I have stated them, beginning with the charge of aggression.

On this, we should first examine the attitude of International Law to aggression. I may usefully quote once again from Lawrence's *Principles of International Law*, explaining that that author uses the word "intervention" to describe what is now popularly known as "aggression." He writes:—

"We now turn to interventions, which are technical violations of the right of independence. Therefore no strict legality can be claimed for them, yet in certain circumstances international law may excuse or even approve of them."

He then proceeds to describe three grounds on which aggression is not only justified but even approved by international law.

The first is when it is done in self-defence:

"The right of self-preservation is even more sacred than the duty of respecting the independence of others. If the two clash a state naturally acts upon the former."

If there is any substance in the arguments set out elsewhere in this book to demonstrate the intention of the great powers to attack

the U.S.S.R., and to show how eminently suitable the territories and the present government of Finland are for use to that end, the Soviet Union was plainly more than justified under this canon of international law in all that she has done.

It is of interest perhaps to examine one or two occasions when Britain and other states have applied this doctrine. In view of the present circumstances one example is particularly apposite, for it involved an attack by Britain upon a neutral Scandinavian power in order to anticipate an anticipated violation of that power's neutrality by the coalition then at war with Britain. It occurred in 1807, during the Napoleonic Wars, when Denmark was strictly neutral. Her southern frontier, however, adjoined territory occupied by the enemy. Upon this ground, and upon certain "secret information" whose source and extent is still one of the mysteries of history, the British Government came to the conclusion that the enemy, at that time Napoleon, might at any time invade Denmark and so cut off Danish supplies to Britain. The obvious way, the British Government considered, to avert a Napoleonic invasion of Denmark was to secure from the Danes an offensive and defensive alliance. At this point the parallel between the Soviet action of 1939 and that of Britain in 1807, so far fairly close, breaks down, for the British did not institute negotiations. Regarding the matter as urgent, they immediately despatched an overwhelmingly large squadron to Copenhagen, and presented the Danish Regent with an ultimatum; either he must accept an alliance, or the British fleet would bombard the Danish capital. The Regent maintained his claim to preserve absolute neutrality. Without further ado the British fleet opened fire on Copenhagen. The town was wrecked and set on fire. Large numbers of civilians perished, and after three days' attacks the Danish fleet surrendered and was carried off to England.

Defending the Government's action in the House of Commons, the Tory Foreign Secretary, Canning, said (3rd February, 1808):

"Was it contended that in a moment of imminent danger and impending necessity we should have abstained (from taking action) in order to meet and divert these calamities which threatened our security and existence, because if we sank under pressure we should have the consolation of having Puffendorff (an authority on international law) to plead. But the conduct that has been adopted on this occasion was

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not without precedent. For example, in the year 1801 the Island of Madeira had been taken possession of by the British Government for fear it should fall into the hands of the French. Yet Portugal was a neutral nation and had always by way of pre-eminence been styled the old and ancient ally of England.”

Lord Palmerston, later to become the leader of numerous Liberal ministries in which Mr. Gladstone was to **serve** as Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported Canning. “The present state of Europe,” he said, “and the degradation and vassalage of its sovereigns offered most unfortunately too ready and solid a reason for the adoption of such a measure (the attack upon Copenhagen). The power of France would have been exerted to compel the Regent of Denmark to enter into a confederacy against us, and yet he would not listen to any overture from this country for his security and protection. On this ground, therefore, namely the weakness of Denmark, and the power of France to force her to become instrumental against Great Britain, I shall give my vote and support for the Ministers on the present question.”

I am not, of course, citing wrong conduct on the part of Britain to help two blacks to make a white. I am illustrating the principle of international law which recognises and approves aggression in certain cases. The essence of the arguments quoted above from Canning and Palmerston is this: that in a general war there can be no neutrals, and when all states are mobilised and fighting by means of blockade (as Napoleon at that time was attempting to do), a state which proclaims absolute neutrality but has not the force to maintain that neutrality is bound sooner or later to fall a victim to one or other of the contesting Powers. Once a war situation has arisen, a belligerent nation is justified in taking steps against a neutral which in time of peace would, as Canning implied, constitute aggression\*. And Britain has in fact in every war in which she has been engaged maintained the principle that, since small States cannot themselves preserve their

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\* This attitude is amusingly if unconsciously illustrated by M. Reynaud, in his budget speech in Paris on the 28th December, 1939. Speaking of the importance of the time element, he said, “Time is a neutral whom we must annex.” A neutral, to a statesman, is something to annex, just as to an English county gentleman, a pheasant is something to kill.

neutrality, Britain was justified in occupying strategic points in their territory, if necessary against their will; to anticipate the enemy.

A typical case of this arose during the war of 1914-18, when Britain occupied Salonika as a base for operations designed to assist Serbia against the Germans and Austrians.

In 1915 Britain found herself in exactly the same difficulty as regards Greece as Germany had found herself in 1914 as regards Belgium. In the same way as it was strategically necessary for the Germans to advance through Belgian territory in order to attack France, so it was necessary for Britain and France to utilize Greek territory in order to aid Serbia; but Greece, like Belgium, was neutral. In 1915, the British government succeeded in securing from the pro-Ally Venizelos, whose Cretan revolt the Allies had assisted in 1900 and who was at that time Prime Minister in Greece, a promise that Allied troops might land at Salonika. All seemed plain sailing; but unfortunately Venizelos' government fell and the new government would not recognize the promise. Nevertheless, despite continued protests from Greece, the Allies landed at Salonika, where they established themselves. The sequence of events in 1916 is thus described in the Annual Register:

“The beginning of the year found Greece... still maintaining an attitude of neutrality, but with a portion of her land occupied by a Franco-British army... General Sarrail (the Allied Commander) was perpetually taking over more and more of the work of administration in the district occupied by his troops. These encroachments gave intense annoyance to many Greeks, and anger was also caused when the Allies seized the Island of Corfu.... The next step was taken in April. The French and British Governments informed (the Greek Prime Minister) that they were obliged to create naval bases at various points in the Ionian Isles and in Aegean Isles.”

This was striking enough, but much stronger measures were to come. In June 1916, though Greece was still a neutral power, and Britain was fighting to preserve the integrity of small nations and the principles of self-determination, necessity drove the Allied Ministers to present an ultimatum in Athens, in which the Greek Government was accused of being unneutral and undemocratic.

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“Its attitude,” the ultimatum ran, “towards them (the Allies) is not in accordance with its repeated engagements or even with the principles of a loyal neutrality. It has too often favoured the activities of certain foreigners who have been openly working to mislead the Greek people and who create on Greek territory hostile organisations contrary to the neutrality of the country and tending to compromise the security of the naval and military forces of the Allies.... The Greek constitution has been ignored, the free exercise of universal suffrage prevented ... the whole country subjected to a regime of police oppression and tyranny and led towards ruin without attention being paid to the justifiable observation of the Powers.”

One of the signatories to this remarkable plea for a free democracy in Greece was the Tsarist Minister in Athens. The ultimatum went on to demand, firstly, complete demobilisation of the Greek army; secondly the resignation of the Greek cabinet; thirdly, the dissolution of the Greek parliament and the holding of new elections; and, fourthly, the dismissal of officials who were considered to be unfriendly to the Allies,

This ultimatum was supported by naval blockade and Greece capitulated. Nevertheless, two months later a second ultimatum was presented, this time demanding control by the Allies of the Greek postal and telegraph system.

At the same time a rival government to that of King Constantine in Athens was set up in the Salonika area occupied by the Allies. The *Times*, which has so vigorously attacked the setting up of the Finnish Democratic Republican Government at Terijoki, took quite a different view of the formation of the Greek revolutionary committee. “The Committee,” wrote the *Times* in an editorial, “call upon King Constantine’s soldiers to disobey orders from Athens.,. but no part of this action is incompatible with the maintenance of Greek integrity or with adherence to constitutional principles.”

Venizelos himself left Athens and became head of the revolutionary government, which was then recognised by the Allies. Finally the British and French Ministers were withdrawn from Athens and an Allied High- Commissioner put in their place.

First, French marines were landed in the Greek capital, though the Allies were not at war with Greece; and finally the High



Commissioner demanded the abdication of King Constantine. Unable to stand out against the overwhelming force of the British and French naval strength, the King left his dominions, and his son was installed in his place under Allied supervision, with Venizelos as his Prime Minister. This whole operation was carried out without Great Britain ever having technically gone to war with Greece and was justified upon the basis that Great Britain had a duty to preserve a democratic government in Greece. However in the House of Commons Mr. Bailout, then foreign secretary, did give a hint that the Allied action was not entirely disinterested:

“The policy of the Powers in pressing for the King’s resignation must not however be judged on purely technical grounds, but on broad considerations of policy.”

From the point of view of policy it was certainly successful, for Greece which had hitherto been neutral and if anything inclined towards Germany now entered the war on the Allied side.

The second right of “intervention” which is generally conceded by international law arises as Lawrence says: “On the grounds of humanity.” Under this head attacks on other states are justified when the object of the attack is, for example, to restore political liberty. This is a point of less certain application, but, the reader who will have studied my account of Finnish history of the last twenty years may perhaps think that, contrary to the story put forward in the Press, the Finnish people are entitled to receive assistance in recovering their freedom from a virtually Fascist government.

In order to illustrate the theory of intervention to restore political liberty, I cannot do better than quote from a speech made by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, father of the present Prime Minister, in the House of Commons at the time of the Boer War. An Irish member of the House of Commons had attacked British policy in the Boer War, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, in reply, cited the example of the Spanish-American War, in which the United States compelled the Spanish Government to renounce their authority over the Island of Cuba. “Was he indignant,” said Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, referring to the Irish Member, “because the United States Government was attacking a Power which was infinitely less able to defend itself than the Transvaal has shown itself to be.... The contention of the United States Government—their right of interference—arose from the fact that at some distance from their own territory oppression, not of American

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citizens, but those of another race and people was going on, and that justified in the minds ... of most Englishmen and Irishmen the intervention of the United States.”

Finally, Lawrence points out that foreign intervention has since the sixteenth century been regarded as justified when it was made in order to preserve “The Balance of Power.” So firmly enshrined in British eighteenth and nineteenth century legal ideas was the moral justification for the balance of power that the preamble to the annual Mutiny Act (the forerunner of the modern Army Act) gave it express mention. I quote from the preamble to the 1818 Act:

“Whereas the raising or keeping a standing army within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in time of peace unless it be with the consent of Parliament is against law; and whereas it is judged necessary by his Majesty and this present parliament that a body of forces should be continued for the safety of the United Kingdom, the defence of the possessions of His Majesty’s Crown, and the preservation of the balance of power in Europe...”

This will, I think, appear to most people as far less justifiable than the ground of self-defence, but it is well established. The doctrine of the balance of power, put crudely, is that it is a legitimate and indeed essential part of policy to manoeuvre and intrigue, and if necessary to foment and even to take part in warfare for the purpose of preventing any one state on the Continent of Europe from becoming substantially stronger than the next strongest. Any such war might well be wholly unconnected with any particular grievance or injustice, and some excuse for going to war would have to be put forward to justify it in the public mind; the real reason would be to prevent some European power growing strong enough to threaten Britain’s own position in the world. The reference in the preamble to the Act makes it plain that it was then British policy not merely to serve this principle but to maintain a standing army to fight in disputes fomented for such motives as that.

I do not suppose that the U.S.S.R. would care to rely on the doctrine of the balance of power to justify itself; but there is little doubt that it could make out a good case on those lines if it desired.

Turning from the statement of the law to an examination of the facts, one is sorely tempted to point out that Britain, Italy, and Franco-Spain, perhaps the most prominent of the countries levelling

this particular charge against the U.S.S.R., are more deeply implicated than any other states in recent years either in aggression on their own behalf or in condoning aggression on the part of other states; but that point, although important enough in considering whether Britain is scheming to bring about a war against the U.S.S.R., is not strictly material to the question whether the Soviet advance into Finland is justified. If it is not justified on a consideration of its own circumstances, it will not be rendered excusable because the prosecuting counsel ought also to be in the dock. So, let us see what the justification is. I start with the assertion that the U.S.S.R., on its past record and present constitution, is entitled to claim a good character, and not to be lightly condemned as an unjustified aggressor. It has always stood against aggression; it has always genuinely advocated and offered disarmament; it has made more efforts for and contributions to the cause of peace than any other country; it has no motive for war and every motive for peace; there is no one in the U.S.S.R. who can make a profit out of war or war preparations, and no one who is not a little poorer in material wealth (if richer in security) every time human effort in his country is applied to the production of armaments instead of to the improvement of housing or some other peace-time advantage. The circumstances that build up the justification—not merely a compliance with international law but a real justification—seem to me to be these. As I have already shown, frontiers are fluid, not immutable; the necessity for peaceful change of frontiers is well recognised, and attempts were made in the Covenant of the League of Nations to provide for such changes, and it is not the fault of the Soviet Union if the provisions in question never worked well. A change of frontier not being in itself necessarily wrong, we have still to satisfy ourselves that the wish of the U.S.S.R. for the particular change sought in this case was reasonable, and that there was no other way to achieve it than the one adopted. On the question of reasonableness there cannot be much doubt. If one may translate the principal points into terms of the defence of London, it can be put in this way: conceive of a Socialist England, with one-quarter of its industrial production in Greater London; imagine that the North Sea is mainly dry land, with the Thames flowing down a wide estuary to a landlocked sea in Northern France; carry the Belgian frontier up to the Eastern suburbs of London, within artillery range of Whitehall, and think of Belgium (if the Belgians will forgive me) as a small and weak country, likely to be used as a cat's paw or a jumping-off ground to a

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hostile Germany, and in any event full herself of enmity towards England and with a long history of quarrels with England; conceive finally of the Thames estuary being commanded by a powerfully fortified point of land belonging to this imaginary Belgium, rendering it impossible for any ship to enter or leave the port of London (England's only port for hundreds of miles) except with Belgium's leave. Surely England would call for the alteration of such a frontier, on some reasonable terms, the moment there was any fair hope of achieving it. And the terms offered by the U.S.S.R. were not unreasonable. From the public statements of the Soviet Union and the Finnish Government, including the Finnish White Paper, which in spite of what we have seen of its inaccuracy and omissions in connexion with the history of Finland must bear some relation to the truth in respect of the negotiations, it is easy to arrive at a fair approximation of the terms offered by the Soviet Union and of the Finnish acceptance and refusal.

The Soviet Union required the Soviet-Finnish frontier, at present only 20 miles from Leningrad, to be moved back some miles, to get the town out of range of artillery fire. She also desired a lease of the port of Hangö for a naval base, with the right to station a fixed number of troops there; if she holds Hangö, she can prevent a hostile fleet approaching Leningrad, but if any great power, with or without the assent of the Finnish government, lands there—as the Germans did in 1918—it can both seal up the port of Leningrad, and proceed overland to attack the frontier north-west of the city. The Soviet also wanted certain small islands near Leningrad and some territory in the Rybachi (or Fishermen's) peninsula which overlooked the port of Petsamo, which might otherwise be used, as has happened in the past, as a hostile submarine base, threatening Murmansk.

In return, the Soviet Union offered territorial compensation in Soviet Karelia, to which Finnish nationalists make some sentimental claim, consisting of an area twice as large as that which she was demanding. She also offered a mutual assistance pact, which would be of immense value to the Finnish government if it were not some other power's "client" state; but the Finnish government refused this.

It is difficult to see that any of the territories demanded, except the port of Hangö, were of any appreciable value to Finland, however important to the U.S.S.R.; and even of Hangö it may be said that it was of no great importance to Finland, if no aggressive activities were intended to be carried on by anyone from her territory.

It is extremely significant that the Soviet Union did not ask for the Aaland Islands. These islands, of immense strategic importance, enable any great power who can hold and fortify them to dominate the whole Baltic. That the Soviet Union did not even ask for them may provide an acid test of her sincerity; if she wanted to dominate the Baltic, she would ask for them, but if on the other hand she only wanted to make the port of Leningrad safe from attack she would ask only for just what she did ask. She was apparently perfectly willing to leave these islands in Finnish hands, although Germany might at any moment suddenly seize them, with or without the assent of Finland. She even agreed to their being fortified, so long as Finland alone fortified them; it was no doubt a risk in these days of power politics to assent to the fortification, to which she had previously refused to assent as she had a Treaty right to do, and there was nothing unreasonable in the stipulation that Finland alone should fortify them, since previous suggestions for their fortification had been of German inspiration and origin, and it is beyond doubt that in the event of war between Germany and the U.S.S.R. the former would immediately attempt to seize them.

Now, as I have mentioned, these demands were communicated to the Finnish representatives at Moscow on the 12th October, and—as we are told by the Finnish White Paper—were conveyed to the Finnish cabinet on the same day, and “far-reaching and exacting as they were, received the earnest consideration of the Finnish cabinet.” Although it is not mentioned in the Finnish White Paper, it is a fact that Mr. Kajander, the Prime Minister, broadcast to the Finnish people on the 13th October to the effect that the Soviet demands did not affect the integrity of Finland.

Negotiations continued, the Finnish government refusing to agree to lease Hangö, suggesting—as appears from the Finnish White Paper—that to do so would be inconsistent with Finland’s integrity. The negotiations were, it says, of an entirely quiet and amicable nature.

The Finnish delegates left Moscow for the last time on the 13th November; it is stated in the Finnish White Paper that “At that moment a deadlock had been reached, and that they were willing to accede to almost all the Russian proposals,”\* but not to allow a naval

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\* Without being ungracious, one may point out that to give up everything that was asked except Hangö was really to give up nothing of

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base at Hangö “which would have meant the complete strategic dominance of Finland, and in turn the loss of Finnish independence.” It seems clear that the terms of the request for the base at Hangö were not increased in any way by the Soviet Union between the 13th October, when the Prime Minister of Finland described them as not affecting her integrity, and the 13th November, when they are given this description. Throughout this time, the Finnish parliament was not summoned, and it did not in fact meet until the 1st December; and a newspaper which suggested that the terms offered by the U.S.S.R. were reasonable was promptly suppressed (“The Press is entirely free,” says the White Paper).

We may have to wait some time to learn exactly why the Finnish government changed its views; it may have been that some promise of assistance encouraged it to resist; but at any rate it seems clear that the negotiations broke down over the question of Hangö.

It may also be some time before we know why the Soviet Government felt no sufficiently urgent pressure to act in the seventeen days that elapsed between the deadlock of the 13th November and the advance of the 30th. It may be said, at any rate, that to let seventeen days elapse in the late autumn of Northern Europe was certainly inconsistent with an intention to commit aggression. (Corroboration of the view that the U. S.S.R. had no intention of attacking—so that some new event or information must have supervened to lead her to do so at the end of November, is forthcoming in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* of the 1st January, 1940, by its military correspondent, in which he says: “Nor does it seem probable that stocks have been increased for a premeditated attack on Finland, and certainly not for an attack which has developed on such an unexpectedly large scale.”)

It was during those seventeen days, or to be more precise, in the last week of November, that serious frontier incidents were said by the U.S.S.R. to have taken place. It is difficult for the outsider to know the truth, when both sides tell their own version and deny that of the other party; and British readers, who have no home land frontiers, are apt to ignore incidents, and to discount their importance. But there are certain considerations in the present case which cannot be ignored. In the first place, the incident asserted by the Soviet

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any importance to Finland—unless this suggestion in the Finnish White Paper that it includes the Mannerheim line is correct; on the facts as at present known, this does not seem to be the case.

Government was similar to a number of such incidents which have been deliberately provoked by Mannerheim and Wallenius against Soviet territory in 1921-22 and again in 1931, as described above, in Chapter V. In the second, it must be remembered that such incidents are often deliberately created by a government which for one reason or another wants a war and is seeking a means for inflaming its population into support of the war, a thing which may well happen in a country with on the one hand a government and on the other hand a people such as I have already described. And, lastly, it must be remembered that prestige counts for a good deal in some countries, and that if the U.S.S.R. were to ignore or submit to a frontier incident it would make it far more difficult for her to achieve any diplomatic success in negotiations with any other states. If the Finnish army created a frontier incident, and did not immediately disclaim it, it was making it difficult for the U.S.S.R. to avoid war.

Assuming that it was reasonable for the Soviet Union to ask for this frontier change, including the naval base at Hangö, the next question is, whether there was some way of securing it without resort to force. Some machinery for appealing to the League of Nations or to some other international authority for consideration of such matters would obviously be the best; it is only too clear that no such machinery is available, and it is certainly not the U.S.S.R. that is to be blamed for its non-existence. Mr. Chamberlain, when broadcasting on the 26th November, 1939, showed his consciousness of the lack of such machinery in the following reference to the "new Europe" which he hopes will somehow come out of a victorious war: "In such a Europe... such adjustments of boundaries as would be necessary would be thrashed out between neighbours sitting on equal terms round a table, with the help of disinterested third parties if it were so desired."

There remain, then, only two methods of achieving such a change, negotiation or force. It would obviously be wrong to resort to force without negotiation unless there was some imperative reason, why time for negotiation could not be afforded, as was or was claimed to be the case with Denmark in 1807; and the U.S.S.R. accordingly negotiated with Finland for some weeks, without any apparent haste or pressure, at a time when there was at any rate this important corroboration of its bona fides, that each day that elapses in a Northern Autumn brings one into a season much less favourable to military activity. The negotiations in the end broke down; whilst we do not know the whole story, the declarations of the Soviet

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Government and the statements in the Finnish White Paper make it certain that the negotiations were conducted without pressure and in a friendly spirit; and I think that in the light of all the facts set out above the responsibility (once one has realised what is really a commonplace of international law and international relations, although it is strange to many ordinary citizens, namely, that such demands for changes of frontier and cession of bases are usual enough and in proper circumstances legitimate enough) can fairly be said to lie upon the Finnish Government—or rather on the larger states that must have been encouraging that government to resist—and not upon the Soviet Government. It is significant here to recall Mr. Kajander's broadcast statement that the proposals did not affect Finland's integrity.

It is perhaps at this point that one must pause to consider what influences were at work, and from what sources, to encourage the Finnish Government to stand firm. Both sides seem to have been confronted quite clearly with a deadlock. The Soviet Government could see that they would not have Hangö, and so could not have any security for their one Baltic port and for their great industrial centre, unless they were prepared to fight (or unless the Finnish Government gave way at the last moment). The Finnish Government could see clearly that if they gave up Hangö they would have peace, and the good will of the Soviet Union; and that if they did not they would have to face the horrors of either a long war or a short one.

From what I have already written it is clear that they must have decided to resist on encouragements or promises of help, presumably from the British Government; and a terrible responsibility rests on those who have thus led the Finns to resist, if that was not the most reasonable thing to do in an imperfect world. Those who have read so far will not need to be told that major states do frequently use minor states as pawns in the game of power politics, at a terrible cost to their populations. What had the major powers to gain by thus encouraging Finland not to follow the example of the three other Baltic republics? Finland could not win in the end, except possibly if the hostilities on her territories grew and grew until they constituted an extension of the main theatre of war, with hundreds of thousands of foreign troops on each side. But, even if she lost, her bleeding to death might be very useful to the amoral interests of other combatants. The British Government might well calculate that to involve the U.S.S.R. in such a conflict for even a few months would enable British



influence to gain ground in Turkey and the Balkans, or (as the Germans are now suggesting as the real ground for the encouragement) would prevent the U.S.S.R. being able to give supplies to Germany. Those who fear Soviet influence in Iran or elsewhere in the middle East would also be delighted to create mischief in this fashion.

It becomes easier to understand, in this situation why the British Government has been willing to allow important armament supplies to go to Finland both in the uneasy peace that preceded this war and during the war itself. That the result may be a terrible disaster for the Finnish people, that the promised help may be insufficient, or too late, would not make our government advise the Finns to draw back, if it suited supposed British interests not to do so. Such promises are often but imperfectly kept. It is useful to recall that Sir Francis Lindley, the former British Ambassador to Tokyo, pointed out, in December, 1935, in a letter to *The Times* on the question of giving aid to Abyssinia, that sometimes British offers of assistance fail to materialise when the crisis arises: "Let enthusiasts beware," he wrote, "of continuing to treat the Abyssinians as their fellows treated the Danes, the Armenians, the Greeks and many more in the past. Humanitarian sentiments are laudable and gratifying to self-esteem, but they are not appreciated abroad when they merely encourage others in a course of action which leads them to destruction."

Returning to the position when the deadlock arose, I may suggest that it is at such points as this that the "previous good character" of the U.S.S.R. may come in to help our judgment; but whatever the exact position it is plain that the U.S.S.R. was in the end confronted with the alternative of accepting diplomatic defeat and continuing in an impossible strategic position, or of resorting to force. One can imagine that for innumerable reasons she was reluctant to resort to force; but the other alternative was also most unattractive. It is suggested by many critics, even would-be friendly critics, that she owed a duty to conscience and morals to accept the position, however unfavourable, rather than turn to force. This has a pleasant sound, but one must see to what it leads; it is equivalent to saying to the U.S.S.R.: "You are in a position where any capitalist country would resort to force without a moment's hesitation; such countries are ruthless and amoral, and in a world where every rule of decency has now disappeared they can derive great advantage from ruthlessness and amorality. But *you* mustn't act in that way; you have a higher moral code to keep. If you tell me that, on the information before you, you

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are convinced that if you do not move now you may be attacked before you can secure your frontier, and that such an attack will be at once more likely to happen and more difficult to repel unless you do move now, I still insist that you must not move. If you tell me that you think your whole future depends on now reinforcing your safety, and that you regard your future and the future of your civilisation as worth every sacrifice to preserve, I still insist that you must not do what international law says you may, and what every other state in the world would do without hesitation. If you tell me that, the moment it is known that should negotiations break down you will not fight, no one will ever concede anything to you in negotiation again, I remain unmoved."

Now, this sort of argument, in the imperfect world of to-day, is not argument—it is just cloud-cuckoo-land; it is equivalent to telling a man setting out through a wood which he believes to be infested with dacoits that he must fight according to the Queensberry rules. But unless it is correct the case for condemning the aggression goes. I for one am not prepared to condemn this new state for not imperilling its whole future, its whole chance of ever establishing a better moral code, rather than adopt for the moment the ordinary rules of international law.

Accordingly, if the U.S.S.R. had grounds for thinking that it really was essential for her to move at once, lest she be too late, her conduct in the matter seems to be fully justified; and it is difficult to imagine that she would have launched a campaign over difficult country in the Far North, seventeen days after the breakdown of negotiations and only three weeks before the longest night, at a time when public opinion in the outer world, under censorship conditions, could be swung against her with the greatest of ease, if she had not been quite sure that some serious action against her was pending, or that some other imperative reason was present. We are not likely to learn for some time yet what evidence she had, but it is at any rate perfectly clear that large supplies of aircraft and other military equipment had been ordered by the already heavily armed Finland from Italy, Germany and Britain, and perhaps other countries, some time before hostilities began. Having regard to present-day difficulties of supply and demand of anything connected with sudden death, it is probable that the British "Blenheim" bombers delivered at Finland in November, 1939, had been ordered at least a year before. It is noticeable that two years earlier, on the 1st December, 1937, our

Government admitted in the House of Commons that the export of such bombers to Finland was in contemplation. This admission is all the more remarkable when it is recalled that at the end of 1937 there was an acute shortage of modern aircraft in the Royal Air Force, and that the normal practice of the British Government is not to allow the sale of war aeroplanes to foreign powers until the design has been in use for two years in England and is no longer secret (a condition which the Blenheim bomber did not of course fulfil in 1937). Supplies to Finland on the scale and of the nature recently disclosed are not consistent with anything but an intention to prepare for the use of Finnish territory by some larger power as a jumping-off ground.

It has to be remembered, also, that if the U.S.S.R. had passively accepted the position, it would have been ten times as easy for Italy or Germany to rally most of the Balkan countries into an anti-Soviet group, and thus to render her position more difficult in the South West as well as in the North West. Prestige still has importance, especially with smaller states, and an announcement that the refusal of Finland to make the concessions demanded was being simply accepted without reaction would have been equivalent to a declaration of bankruptcy in prestige. The occurrence of serious "frontier incidents," a point already discussed above, is also of far more "prestige" importance than the ordinary English reader realises.

The second point is a composite one, but it can be answered more shortly. That Finland could not entertain any idea of attacking the U.S.S.R. of her own motion is no doubt true, in spite of the history of such attacks in the past; but her whole history, her dependence on larger states, and the general European situation, as explained in other chapters of this book, leave no doubt that the employment in the not remote future of her territory as a base for attack on the Soviet Union is likely, is in accordance with precedent and practice, and would be actually welcome to her governing class. That she is a peace-loving and democratic country is unhappily, as already explained, only true in the sense that her people are largely peace-loving and democratic; their government is better than the government of a major fascist country only in that it is on a smaller scale.

It is of course highly significant that Finland should be put forward in the present propaganda campaign with such insistence as a thoroughly democratic state. I have already shown that as at present constituted she can lay no claim to such a description, and I can imagine that Baron Mannerheim, at any rate in private, would reject

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such an idea with horror. The story is plainly put forward to appeal to the sympathy of the British public, in order more effectively to build up a war mentality.

That Finland is a small country is no doubt true, and makes a strong appeal to sentiment, although she has obviously been very strongly armed, and the exuberance of the British press in December, 1939, gave the rough impression that she was more powerful than the U.S.S.R.; but that small powers have no protection in international law is not to be blamed on the U.S.S.R., which has tried hard through the years to secure that force alone shall not rule; and the smallness of Finland cannot after all make any difference to the conduct of the U.S.S.R., which was either right or wrong (I have not heard it suggested that, if the countries had been more equal in size, the same conduct on the part of the U.S.S.R. would have been praiseworthy, but that as things are it is wrong).

The third point can also be shortly answered. Finland in one sense naturally and properly desired to keep her independence, but as I have explained earlier the small states are not in any true sense independent. Whatever degree of independence Finland has had, if we may believe Mr. Kajander, it was not in any case menaced. It seems obvious on a little thought that, if anything could imperil what independence Finland had, it must have been her own refusal of concessions to the U.S.S.R., with the knowledge that hostilities were bound to ensue. The Finnish government that took this course must either have relied very strongly on outside aid from Britain or some other great power, or have acted unwisely. It is noticeable that, as early as the 17th October, 1939, the special correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, writing on the subject of the then forthcoming "three kings' conference" at Stockholm, stated: "If President Kallio... can obtain a definite assurance of military as well as moral and financial aid Finland may stand firm." If we are entitled to hope that one day the really secret documents concerning these incidents will be published, one may look forward to some very interesting reading of the reasons why he did adopt this attitude.

That Finland desired to keep her own territories intact is, again, natural enough; but, if one considers the special nature and position of those territories as described in my answer to the first point, one can see that if ever there was a case for departure from the old attitude of the English landlord: "Not an inch of my land will I ever give up," it was this case.

The fourth point is that the U.S.S.R. is said to have shown herself to be an Imperialist state. An Imperialist state, I suppose, is one that seeks to subject another and inferior people to its rule, and then to exploit that people for its own profit. Without enquiring into the Imperialist pedigrees of the accusers, I can answer that there is at present no evidence whatever that the U.S.S.R. has the remotest intention of doing either of these things, let alone both. She has respected the territories of the small Republics that lie around her on the Baltic during a period when one can feel pretty certain that no Capitalist country similarly situated would have been likely to do so; as the *Times* said in a leading article on the 5th July, 1939, referring to the Baltic States, "The smaller countries must admit that during the last twenty years Russia if she had so minded might with considerable hope of success have attempted to overrun them, but has made no attempt whatever to do so."

Further, her record up to now for freeing the former colonial victims of Tsarist Imperialism and putting them on an equality with the other races of her vast territories is unsurpassed; and she has published her treaty, made with the Finnish Democratic Republic, indicating her intention to ask no more from Finland than she has already demanded—and indeed to give additional territory. She would indeed be running against the dictates of common sense, as well as against all Socialist principles, if she sought to incorporate any country in the Union unless and until that country desires to become a Socialist Soviet State. She wishes, of course, to see the Finnish Democratic Republic firmly established, and the provisional government of this Republic, which has declared that it does not seek to establish a Soviet state, could not hope to succeed for one moment in gaining the support of the Finnish people if the U.S.S.R. were to take any measures that compromised the independence of Finland. Even the most sceptical of us should be willing to accept the view that this government believes that, under the reorganised government which it contemplates, Finland will be as independent as any small state can be. It has declared that immediately on its arrival in Helsinki "it will be reorganised and its composition enlarged by the inclusion of representatives of the Government parties and groups participating in the People's Front of the workers. The final composition of the People's Government, its powers and actions, are to be sanctioned by a Diet, elected on a basis of universal, equal, direct, suffrage, with a secret ballot." And there is nothing unreasonable in the terms of the treaty

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made between the Soviet Union and this provisional government.

The fifth objection is that the U.S.S.R. should have continued to negotiate, instead of attacking. That, I suppose, could always be said. If one month produces no result, negotiate for two; if two are fruitless, try four. At some stage it must become clear that no agreement is possible, and further discussion fruitless, and, as I said above, we must wait to know the full facts; and the actual conduct of the negotiations seem to have been free of reproach. There was nothing resembling the Berchtesgaden technique by which first an Austrian and, later, a British Prime Minister were presented in threatening tones with conditions that must be accepted at once, on pain of military action. On the contrary, the Finnish delegates themselves acknowledged the friendly and quiet tone of the negotiations, as is admitted by *The Times*. Meanwhile there is nothing in the record of the U.S.S.R. to make it probable that she would want to act too soon.

The sixth objection falls into two sections, the first of which is that the U.S.S.R. has sacrificed the good will of the progressive elements in all countries. There is no doubt that many people now think worse of her than they did. As I pointed out in "Light on Moscow," difficulties of mutual understanding and the extremely imperfect reporting of Soviet activities in the British Press constantly produce the phenomenon that thousands of people hold up their hands in horror at something the Soviet Union is reported to have done, only to realise in a few weeks or months that she could not well have done anything else; and in due course I have no doubt that the same thing will happen in this case, too. But the U.S.S.R. might retort that, whilst giving weight to the good will of progressive people in other states, she must judge of her own interests in the light of her own knowledge.

The second part of this objection, that the U.S.S.R. by her alienation of progressive opinion had actually rendered it easier for the capitalist powers to induce their public to support an attack upon her, in a sense provides its own answer. For, if we attribute a little intelligence to the Soviet Government, we shall probably guess that it knew that the capitalist powers were scheming against it, and that this opportunity for violent propaganda against it would be exploited to the full, with a view to preparing public opinion for "switching" the war against it; and that it nevertheless judged (rightly or wrongly) that on the balance of advantage and disadvantage, knowing the facts better than we do, it was bound to act as it did.

The seventh objection is that the Finnish Democratic Republic

established by Kuusinen is a puppet government, Again, one need not enquire into the record of the accusers in the matter of establishing puppet governments; the important thing is to deal with the charge. The British Press has in the main just mentioned this government once, sneered at it, and then left it alone; and the impression may well have been created in the minds of those who do not know the history of Finland that the government has no real existence. But, if one has read the history set out in the earlier part of this book, one has no difficulty in realising that a very large part of the population is of left-wing sympathies, and would prefer to be governed by this new government than by the present Helsinki government, tactfully described in the British Press as a "government of bankers and business men," and ruling by extra-parliamentary methods on the basis of an enormous para-military force of Fascist "Civil Guards." This view is confirmed by many indications filtering through in the news, such as the descriptions of large-scale arrests of civilians, and of the Finnish army in retreat burning all the Finnish villages and taking the inhabitants along with them, as if they fear the results of the slightest contact between the population and either the Soviet army or the army of the new Finnish Republic. It is very dangerous to prophesy, but it is easy to imagine that in a few months' time this government will be effectively the only government in Finland, that it will have arranged with the Soviet Union to hand over exactly what she demanded, that is. what is set out in her treaty with the new government, and that any suggestion that this government is a puppet will have disappeared, as will the suggestion that the U.S.S.R. is conquering or colonising Finland.

All our sympathies are unreservedly due to the mass of the Finnish people, who have to bear the brunt of another war. Whether the real blame for this is to lie at the door of the Soviet Union, or of the Finnish Government which apparently preferred war to a concession which it had declared did not affect the integrity of the country, or of the government of some other and larger state which may have urged it to "stand firm" with promises of help which may materialise too late or not at all, instead of encouraging it to compromise, it is too early to judge; and we can only hope that the Finnish people will be rewarded in the near future by getting a government that really is of their own choice. I may quote Mr, Bernard Shaw in the *Daily Mail* of the 2nd December, 1939, when he said:

“I think the explanation is perfectly simple.

“Finland has been misled by a very foolish Government. She should have accepted Russia’s offer for a readjustment of territory. She should have been a sensible neighbour.

“Finland would probably not have refused the Russian offer had she been acting on her own or in her own interests, but Russia believes that Finland thinks she has the backing of America and the Western Powers.

“No Power can tolerate a frontier from which a town such as Leningrad could be shelled, when she knows that the Power on the other side of that frontier, however small or weak it may be, is being made by a foolish Government to act in the interests of other and greater Powers menacing her security.

“Is America supporting Finland?”

“Well, Finland obviously believes so, or she would not have behaved as she has against a country so much stronger than herself. America has shown a great interest in Finland’s case recently.

“Poland’s case was utterly different. She was led into a war by promises and agreements which could not be implemented. That is not so with Finland.

“It is not at all a question of Russia, a Great Power, attempting to subject Finland, which is a small Power. It is a question of Russia seeing to her own security, and it was very foolish of Finland not to accept Russia’s offer for an exchange of territories....

“In Russia’s view, Finland can have no defensible objection to carrying out the exchange of territories which Russia has asked of her, unless she is allowing herself to be used by America or the Western Powers.

“There can be no possibility of Finland planning any attack on Russia by herself, nor would any of the territories which Russia asked her to transfer enable her alone to defend herself effectively against Russia.

“Russia, therefore, concludes that this foolish refusal to act in a neighbourly manner must be based on Finland’s belief that she has the support of the Western Powers. Russia’s position is difficult, and, quite naturally, she is determined to secure herself.”



At this stage, I ought to write a few words about the military position. I am not of course in any sense a military expert, but I can read a newspaper and form some notion as to whether its reports are trustworthy, and how much care has been devoted to sifting the reports before printing them. It seems clear to me, in the case of the present hostilities, that it is in fact extremely difficult to get accurate and reliable reports; and it is equally clear that nine-tenths of the Press is taking no trouble to give any consideration to the reliability of reports before printing them. No rumour is too wild for it to reproduce, no atrocity or hero story too many centuries old to be confidently rebrushed and put in the window. A substantial number of our newspapers do not in truth like prostituting themselves as far as they have done lately, and I am sure that they would not do it if it were not thought necessary to work up feeling by any and every means.

As to what is the actual degree of success or failure attending the Red Army, it is probably impossible for most military experts, and is certainly impossible for me, to form any reliable view. When more facts are known, we shall be able to tell whether the campaign has demonstrated the incompetence of the Red Army, or on the other hand its high efficiency in carrying on hostilities in a very difficult Northern theatre of war in December and January, a feat which has apparently hitherto been regarded as impossible.

It is worth noticing, too, that the Soviet military experts do not subscribe to the theory of Blitzkrieg. I may quote the following passages from leading Soviet experts, culled from "The Military Strength of the Powers," by Max Werner:—

"Modern warfare is not like a boxing match in which the better man knocks out his opponent suddenly with one blow. In war an uninterrupted blow of strength and energy is necessary in order to beat the enemy to his knees."

"Resistance has a tendency to increase, and it reaches its culminating point at the strategic zenith when the attacker is nearing his object and is compelled to stake everything on his offensive.... The weakening of an offensive is usually due more to the increasing strength of the defence than to the exhaustion of the attacker. The greatest expenditure of energy and the approach of the crisis must be expected towards the end. The genius and the firmness of operative leadership demonstrates itself by foreseeing this decisive moment and

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seizing on it with a new wave of operative efforts and in full possession of all the forces and material required to complete the operation successfully.”

“Withdrawing to his own strategic base the enemy has more time to rally and concentrate his forces, and in the upshot he may prove stronger than the first wave of the attacking forces unless the latter have drawn on their reserves.”

APPENDIX I  
EXTRACTS  
from the speech of  
JOSEPH STALIN  
to the Eighteenth Congress of the  
COMMUNIST PARTY  
of the  
SOVIET UNION  
10th March, 1939

Comrades, five years have elapsed since the Seventeenth Party Congress. No small period, as you see. During this period the world has undergone considerable changes. States and countries, and their mutual relations, are now in many respects totally altered.

What changes exactly have taken place in the international situation in this period? In what way exactly have the foreign and internal affairs of our country changed?

For the capitalist countries this period was one of very profound perturbations in both the economic and political spheres. In the economic sphere, these were years of depression, followed, from the beginning of the latter half of 1937, by a period of new economic crisis, of a new decline of industry in the United States, Great Britain and France; consequently these were years of new economic complications. In the political sphere they were years of serious political conflicts and perturbations. A new imperialist war is already in its second year, a war waged over a huge territory stretching from Shanghai to Gibraltar and involving over 500,000,000. The map of Europe, Africa and Asia is being forcibly redrawn. The entire post-war system, the so-called regime of peace, has been shaken to its foundations.

For the Soviet Union, on the contrary, these were years of growth and prosperity, of further economic and cultural progress, of further development of political and military might, of struggle for the preservation of peace throughout the world. Such is the general picture.

Let us now examine the concrete data illustrating the changes in the international situation.

1. *New economic crisis in the capitalist countries.*

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*Intensification of the struggle for markets and sources of raw material, and for a new redivision of the world.*

The economic crisis which broke out in the capitalist countries in the latter half of 1929 lasted until the end of 1933. After that the crisis passed into a depression, and was then followed by a certain revival, a certain upward trend of industry. But this upward trend of industry did not develop into a boom, as is usually the case in a period of revival. On the contrary, in the latter half of 1937 a new economic crisis began which seized the United States first of all and then England, France and a number of other countries.

The capitalist countries thus found themselves faced with a new economic crisis before they had even recovered from the ravages of the recent one....

The present crisis has broken out not in time of peace, but at a time when a second imperialist war has already begun; at a time when Japan, already in the second year of her war with China, is disorganizing the immense Chinese market and is rendering it almost inaccessible to the goods of other countries; when Italy and Germany have already placed their national economy on a war footing, squandering their reserves of raw material and foreign currency for this purpose; and when all the other big capitalist powers are beginning to reorganise themselves on a war footing. This means that capitalism will have far less resources at its disposal for a normal way out of the present crisis than during the preceding crisis....

In Italy and Japan, who placed their national economy on a war footing earlier than Germany, the downward course of industry already began in 1938....

There can be no doubt that unless something unforeseen occurs, German industry must enter on the same downward path as Japan and Italy have already taken. For what does placing the economy of a country on a war footing mean? It means giving industry a one-sided, war direction; developing to the utmost the production of goods necessary for war and not for consumption by the population; restricting to the utmost the production and, especially, the sale of articles of general consumption—and, consequently, reducing consumption by the population and confronting the country with an economic crisis.

Such is the concrete picture of the trend of the new economic crisis in the capitalist countries.

Naturally, such an unfavourable turn of economic affairs could

not but aggravate relations between the powers. The preceding crisis had already mixed the cards and intensified the struggle for markets and sources of raw materials. The seizure of Manchuria and North China by Japan, the seizure of Abyssinia by Italy—all this reflected the acuteness of the struggle among the powers. The new economic crisis must lead, and is actually leading, to a further sharpening of the imperialist struggle. It is no longer a question of competition in the markets, of a commercial war, of dumping. These methods of struggle have long been recognised as inadequate. It is now a question of a new redivision of the world, of spheres of influence and colonies by military action.

Japan tried to justify her aggressive actions by the argument that she had been cheated when the Nine-Power Pact was concluded, and had not been allowed to extend her territory at the expense of China, whereas Britain and France possess enormous colonies. Italy recalled that she had been cheated during the division of the spoils after the first imperialist war and that she must recompense herself at the expense of the spheres of influence of Britain and France. Germany, who had suffered severely as a result of the first imperialist war and the Peace of Versailles, joined forces with Japan and Italy, and demanded an extension of her territory in Europe and the return of the colonies of which the victors in the first imperialist war had deprived her.

Thus the bloc of three aggressor States came to be formed.

A new redivision of the world by means of war became imminent.

*2. Aggravation of the international political situation.  
Collapse of the post-war system of peace treaties. Beginning  
of a new imperialist war.*

Here is a list of the most important events during the period under review which mark the beginning of the new imperialist war. In 1935 Italy attacked and seized Abyssinia. In the summer of 1936 Germany and Italy organised military intervention in Spain, Germany entrenching herself in the north of Spain and in Spanish Morocco, and Italy in the south of Spain and in the Balearic Islands. Having seized Manchuria, Japan in 1937 invaded North and Central China, occupied Peking, Tientsin and Shanghai, and began to oust her foreign competitors from the occupied zone. In the beginning of 1938 Germany seized Austria, and in the autumn of 1938 the Sudeten region

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of Czechoslovakia. At the end of 1938 Japan seized Canton, and at the beginning of 1939 the Island of Hainan.

Thus the war, which has stolen so imperceptibly upon the nations, has drawn over 500,000,000 people into its orbit and has extended its sphere of action over a vast territory, stretching from Tientsin, Shanghai and Canton, through Abyssinia, to Gibraltar.

After the first imperialist war the victor States, primarily Britain, France and the United States, had set up a new regime in the relations between countries, the post-war regime of peace. The main props of this regime were the Nine-Power Pact in the Far East, and the Versailles Treaty and a number of other treaties in Europe. The League of Nations was set up to regulate relations between countries within the framework of this regime on the basis of a united front of States, of collective defence of the security of States. However, three aggressive States and the new imperialist war launched by them, have upset the entire system of this post-war regime. Japan tore up the Nine-Power Pact, and Germany and Italy the Versailles Treaty. In order to have their hands free, these three States withdrew from the League of Nations.

The new imperialist war became a fact.

It is not so easy in our day suddenly to break loose and plunge straight into war without regard for treaties of any kind or for public opinion. Bourgeois politicians know this very well, so do the Fascist rulers. That is why the Fascist rulers decided, before plunging into war, to frame public opinion to suit their ends, that is, to mislead it, to deceive it.

A military bloc of Germany and Italy against the interests of England and France in Europe? Bless us, do you call that a bloc! "We" have no military bloc. All "we" have is an innocuous "Berlin-Rome axis"; this is, just a geometrical equation for an axis. (*Laughter.*)

A military bloc of Germany, Italy and Japan against the interests of the United States, Great Britain and France in the Far East? Nothing of the kind! "We" have no military bloc. All "we" have is an innocuous "Berlin-Rome-Tokio triangle"; that is, a slight penchant for geometry. (*General laughter.*)

A war against the interests of England, France, the United States? Nonsense! "We" are waging war on the Comintern, not on these States. If you don't believe it, read the "anti-Comintern pact" concluded between Italy, Germany and Japan.

That is how Messieurs the aggressors thought of framing public

opinion, although it was not hard to see how preposterous this whole clumsy game of camouflage was....

But war is inexorable. It cannot be hidden under any guise. For no “axes,” “triangles” or “anti-Comintern pacts” can hide the fact that in this period Japan has seized a vast stretch of territory in China, that Italy has seized Abyssinia, that Germany has seized Austria and the Sudeten region, that Germany and Italy together have seized Spain—and all this in defiance of the interests of the non-aggressive States. The war remains a war, the military bloc of aggressors remains a military bloc; and the aggressors remain aggressors.

It is a distinguishing feature of the new imperialist war that it has not yet become universal, a world war. The war is being waged by aggressor States, who in every way infringe the interests of the non-aggressive States, primarily England, France and U.S.A., while the latter draw back and retreat, making concession after concession to the aggressors.

Thus we are witnessing an open redivision of the world and spheres of influence at the expense of the non-aggressive States, without the least attempt at resistance, and even with a certain amount of connivance, on the part of the latter.

Incredible, but true.

To what are we to attribute this one-sided and strange character of the new imperialist war?

How is it that the non-aggressive countries, which possess such vast opportunities, have so easily, and without any resistance, abandoned their positions and their obligations to please the aggressors?

Is it to be attributed to the weakness of the non-aggressive States? Of course not! Combined, the non-aggressive, democratic States are unquestionably stronger than the Fascist States, both economically and militarily.

To what then are we to attribute the systematic concessions made by these States to the aggressors?

It might be attributed, for example, to the fear that a revolution might break out if the non-aggressive States were to go to war and the war to assume world-wide proportions. The bourgeois politicians know, of course, that the first imperialist world war led to the victory of the revolution in one of the largest countries. They are afraid that the second imperialist world war may also lead to the victory of the revolution in one or several countries. But at present this is not the sole or even the chief reason. The chief reason is that the majority of

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the non-aggressive countries, particularly England and France, have rejected the policy of collective security, the policy of collective resistance to the aggressors, and have taken up a position of non-intervention, a position of "neutrality." Formally speaking, the policy of non-intervention might be defined as follows: "Let each country defend itself from the aggressors as it likes and as best it can. That is not our affair. We shall trade both with the aggressors and with their victims." But actually speaking, the policy of non-intervention means conniving at aggression, giving free rein to war, and consequently transforming the war into a world war. The policy of non-intervention reveals an eagerness, a desire, not to hinder the aggressors in their nefarious work, not to hinder Japan, say, from embroiling herself in a war with China, or, better still, with the Soviet Union; not to hinder Germany, say, from enmeshing herself in European affairs, from embroiling herself in a war with the Soviet Union; to allow all the belligerents to sink deep into the mire of war, to encourage them surreptitiously in this; to allow them to weaken and exhaust one another; and then, when they have become weak enough, to appear on the scene with fresh strength, to appear, of course, "in the interests of peace" and to dictate conditions to the enfeebled belligerents.

Cheap and easy!

Take Japan, for instance. It is characteristic that before Japan invaded North China all the influential French and British newspapers shouted about China's weakness and her inability to offer resistance, and declared that Japan with her army could subjugate China in two or three months. Then the European and American politicians began to watch and wait. And then, when Japan started military operations, they let her have Shanghai, the vital centre of foreign capital in China; they let her have Canton, a centre of Britain's monopoly influence in South China; they let her have Hainan, and they allowed her to surround Houg Kong. Does not this look very much like encouraging the aggressor? It is as though they were saying: "Embroid yourself deeper in war; then we shall see."

Or take Germany, for instance. They let her have Austria, despite the undertaking to defend her independence; they let her have the Sudeten region; they abandoned Czechoslovakia to her fate, thereby violating all their obligations; and then they began to lie vociferously in the Press about "the weakness of the Russian army," "the demoralisation of the Russian air force," and "riots" in the Soviet Union, egging the Germans on to march farther east, promising them easy



pickings, and prompting them: “Just start war on Bolsheviks, and everything will be all right.” It must be admitted that this, too, looks very much like egging on and encouraging the aggressor.

The hullabaloo raised by the British, French and American Press over the Soviet Ukraine is characteristic. The gentry of the Press there shouted until they were hoarse that the Germans were marching on Soviet Ukraine, that they now had what is called the Carpathian Ukraine with a population of some 700,000, and that not later than this spring the Germans would annex the Soviet Ukraine, which has a population of over 30,000,000, to this so-called Carpathian Ukraine. It looks as if the object of this suspicious hullabaloo was to incense the Soviet Union against Germany, to poison the atmosphere and to provoke a conflict with Germany without any visible grounds.

It is quite possible, of course, that there are madmen in Germany who dream of annexing the elephant, that is, the Soviet Ukraine, to the gnat, namely, the so-called Carpathian Ukraine. If there really are such lunatics in Germany, rest assured that we shall find enough straight-jackets for them in our country. (*Thunderous applause.*) But if we ignore the madmen and turn to normal\* people, is it not clearly absurd and foolish to talk seriously of annexing the Soviet Ukraine to this so-called Carpathian Ukraine? Imagine: The gnat comes to the elephant and says perkily, “Ah! brother, how sorry I am for you... Here you are without any landlords, without any capitalists, with no national oppression, without any Fascist bosses. Is that a way to live?... As I look at you I can’t help thinking that there is no hope for you unless you annex yourself to me... {*General laughter*} Well, so be it; I allow you to annex your tiny domain to my vast territories...” (*General laughter and applause.*)

Even more characteristic is the fact that certain European and American politicians and pressmen, having lost patience waiting for “the march on the Soviet Ukraine,” are themselves beginning to disclose what is really behind the policy of non-intervention. They are saying quite openly, putting it down in black on white, that the Germans have cruelly “disappointed” them, for instead of marching farther east, against the Soviet Union, they have turned, you see, to the west and are demanding colonies. One might think that the districts of Czechoslovakia were yielded to Germany as the price of an

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\* By “normal people,” the speaker is probably referring to the Anti-Soviet elements in Great Britain and France.

undertaking to launch war on the Soviet Union, but that now the Germans are refusing to meet their bills and are sending them to Hades.

Far be it from me to moralise on the policy of non-intervention, to talk of treason, treachery and so on. It would be naive to preach morals to people who recognise no human morality. Politics is politics, as the old, case-hardened bourgeois diplomats say. It must be remarked, however, that the big and dangerous political game started by the supporters of the policy of non-intervention may end in a serious fiasco for them.

Such is the true face of the prevailing policy of non-intervention. Such is the political situation in the capitalist countries.

### *3. The Soviet Union and the capitalist countries.*

The war has created a new situation with regard to the relations between countries. It has enveloped them in an atmosphere of alarm and uncertainty. By undermining the post-war peace regime and overriding the elementary principles of international law, it has cast doubt on the value of international treaties and obligations. Pacifism and disarmament schemes are dead and buried. Feverish arming has taken their place. Everybody is arming, small States and big States, including primarily those which practise the policy of non-intervention. Nobody believes any longer in the unctuous speeches which claim that the Munich concessions to the aggressors and the Munich agreement opened a new era of "appeasement." They are disbelieved even by the signatories to the Munich Agreement, Britain and France, who are increasing their armaments no less than other countries.

Naturally, the U.S.S.R. could not ignore these ominous events. There is no doubt that any war, however small, started by the aggressors in any remote corner of the world constitutes a danger to the peaceable countries. All the more serious then is the danger arising from the new imperialist war, which has already drawn into its orbit over 500.000.000 people in Asia, Africa and Europe. In view of this, while our country is unswervingly pursuing a policy of preserving peace, it is, at the same time, doing a great deal to increase the preparedness of our Red Army and our Red Navy.

At the same time, in order to strengthen its international position, the Soviet Union decided to take certain other steps. At the end of 1934 our country joined the League of Nations, considering that despite its weakness the League might, nevertheless, serve as a place where aggressors can be exposed, and as a certain instrument of

peace, however feeble, that might hinder the outbreak of war. The Soviet Union considers that in alarming times like these even so weak an international organisation as the League of Nations should not be ignored. In May, 1935, a treaty of mutual assistance against possible attack by aggressors was signed between France and the Soviet Union. A similar treaty was simultaneously concluded with Czechoslovakia. In March, 1936, the Soviet Union concluded a treaty of mutual assistance with the Mongolian People’s Republic. In August, 1937, the Soviet Union concluded a pact of non-aggression with the Chinese Republic.

It was in such difficult international conditions that the Soviet Union pursued its foreign policy of upholding the cause of peace.

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union is clear and explicit:

1. We stand for peace and the strengthening of business relations with all countries. That is our position; and we shall adhere to this position as long as these countries maintain like relations with the Soviet Union, and as long as they make no attempt to trespass on the interests of our country.

2. We stand for peaceful, close and friendly relations with all the neighbouring countries which have common frontiers with the U.S.S.R. That is our position, and we shall adhere to this position so long as these countries maintain like relations with the Soviet Union, and so long as they make no attempt to trespass, directly or indirectly, on the integrity and inviolability of the frontiers of the Soviet State.

3. We stand for the support of nations which are the victims of aggression and are fighting for the independence of their country.

4. We are not afraid of the threats of aggressors, and are ready to deal two blows for every blow delivered by instigators of war who attempt to violate the Soviet borders.

Such is the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. (*Loud and prolonged applause*).

In its foreign policy the Soviet Union relies upon:

1. Its growing economic, political and cultural might;
2. The moral and political unity of our Soviet society;
3. The mutual friendship of the nations of our country;
4. Its Red Army and Red Navy;

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5. Its policy of peace;
6. The moral support of the working people of all countries, who are vitally concerned in the preservation of peace;
7. The good sense of the countries which for one reason or another have no interest in the violation of peace.

The tasks of the Party in the sphere of foreign policy are:

1. To continue-the policy of peace and of strengthening business relations with all countries;
2. To be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them;
3. To strengthen the might of our Red Army and Red Navy to the utmost.
4. To strengthen the international bonds of friendship with the working people of all countries who are interested in peace and friendship among nations.

## APPENDIX II

### TRANSLATION OF CERTAIN PASSAGES IN HITLER'S "MEIN KAMPF"

"The demand for the restoration of the boundaries of 1914 is political stupidity on such a scale and with such results that it must be described as a crime. Moreover, the boundaries of 1914 were anything but logical; they were in actual fact neither complete in the inclusion of people of German nationality, nor sensible in their strategic potentialities. They were not the product of considered political activity, but the mere momentarily fixed boundaries of a political struggle which was in no way concluded; indeed they were in part arrived at by chance....

"The frontiers of 1914 mean absolutely nothing for the future of the German nation. In them lay no protection of our past nor any strength for the future. Through them the German nation will not preserve its integrity, nor will its nourishment be ensured; nor do these boundaries from a military point of view appear useful or even satisfactory; nor lastly can they improve the relations in which we stand at the present time to the other World Powers, or better expressed, the real World Powers. Our disparity with England would not be reduced, we should not reach the size of the U.S.A., and not even France would experience any substantial lessening of her importance in world politics....

"In contrast to that, it is the duty of us National Socialists to hold steadfast to the aims of our foreign policy, which are to ensure to the German nation the land which is due to it on this earth. And this action is the only one which can justify before God and our German posterity the risk of further lives. Before God, because we were sent into the world to eternal struggle for daily bread, as beings to whom nothing would be given and who owe their position as masters of the earth only to that genius and courage with which they can fight for and guard it; before our German posterity, because we shed the blood of no citizen without giving a thousand more to posterity. The land on which one day German peasants will be able to rear powerful sons will approve risking the lives of those sons, and in time to come will acquit the statesmen responsible from the charge of bloodguilt and the sacrifice of the people, even though they be persecuted for it now.

"I have most resolutely to oppose those 'national' quill-drivers who pretend to see in such acquisition of territory a 'transgression of the sacred rights of humanity' and accordingly oppose it with their

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scribblings. One never knows who is behind such fellows. The one thing that is certain is that the confusion they can cause is just what the enemies of our nation wish for and find most useful. By such an attitude they wantonly help to weaken and destroy from within our people's determination to stand up in the only correct way for the necessities of its existence. For no nation possesses on this earth even a square metre of land and soil by superior will or by superior right. Just as Germany's frontiers are chance frontiers, frontiers of the moment in the passing political struggles of the time, so are those of the 'living space' of other nations.

"And it is only to the thoughtless ninny that the form of our earth's surface appears to be as unchangeable as granite; in reality it merely presents at any particular time a moment of apparent repose in a continual process of development, formed in progressive creation by the mighty forces of Nature, perhaps to-morrow to experience destruction or change by greater forces—so also appear the 'frontiers of nations.'

"State frontiers are made by men and changed by men. The mere fact that the excessive acquisition of territory by a nation is successful creates no particular duty of permanent recognition of the fact. It demonstrates at most the strength of the conquerors and the weakness of the sufferers. And it is in this strength alone that right resides....

"Just as our forefathers did not have the land on which we live to-day given to them by heaven, but had to fight for it with their lives, so will no national grace give us land and the life that depends on it, but only the power of a victorious sword....

"Thus we National Socialists consciously draw a line under our pre-war Foreign Policy. We begin where we left off, six hundred years ago. We put an end to the everlasting movement of Germans to the south and west and turn our eyes to the land in the east. We put an end, at last, to the colonial and commercial policy of pre-war times and proceed to the territorial policy of the future.

"If we speak of new land in Europe to-day, it is primarily only of Russia and its subject border states that we can be thinking....

"Fate here seems to wish to point out the way to us. In delivering up Russia to Bolshevism it robbed the Russian nation of the intelligentsia which had hitherto established and guaranteed its existence as a state. For the organisation of a Russian State was not the result of the political capabilities of the Slavs in Russia, but is rather a wonderful example of the effectiveness of the German element in creating

## APPENDIX II – FROM HITLER’S “MEIN KAMPF”

a State in a race of lesser worth. Many mighty empires on this earth have been created in this way. Inferior nations with Germanic organisers and leaders have more than once risen to be mighty State organisations and have continued to exist as long as the racial nucleus of the creative race is preserved. For centuries Russia fed on this Germanic nucleus of its upper, administrating classes. To-day it can be regarded as almost entirely eradicated and wiped out, and the Jew has taken its place. Just as the Russian is incapable of shaking off the yoke of the Jew by his own strength, so it is equally impossible for the Jew in the long run to maintain the mighty empire. He himself is no element of organisation but a ferment of decomposition. The gigantic empire in the east is ripe for collapse. The end of Jewish domination in Russia will also be the end of Russia as a state. We are chosen by fate to be witnesses of a catastrophe which will be the most powerful testimony to the correctness of the nationalist ‘Theory of Race’....

“As a nationalist, estimating the value of humanity on a racial basis, I cannot link up the destiny of my own people with that of these so-called ‘oppressed nations,’ since I recognise their racial inferiority.

“The same attitude must be adopted with regard to Russia which, divested of its German upper-class, would be no proper ally in the German fight for freedom, quite apart from all considerations of the intentions of its new masters.

“Considered from a purely military standpoint, the situation in the event of a war between Germany allied with Russia, and Western Europe, or probably the rest of the world, would be catastrophic. The struggle would be fought not on Russian but on German soil, and Germany would not be able to receive the smallest real support from Russia. The forces of the present-day\* German Reich are so miserable, so impossibly inadequate for a struggle against a foreign enemy, that we could not even provide protection for our own frontiers against the rest of Western Europe, including England, and the German industrial region would be left defenceless to the concentrated attack of our opponents. To this must be added the fact that between Germany and Russia lies the whole of the French-controlled Polish State. In the event of a war of Germany and Russia against Western Europe, Russia would have to overthrow Poland before she could

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\* Written in 1924-25.

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bring even one soldier to the German front; but in any case the demand would be not so much for soldiers as for technical equipment.

“In this respect the conditions of the world war would be repeated in a much aggravated form. Just as then German industry was tapped for our glorious allies and Germany had to carry on the technical side of the war almost alone, in this new struggle, Russia as a technical factor would be completely eliminated....

“Such a struggle would still be of the nature of mere butchery. Germany’s youth would be bled even more than before, for the burden of the struggle would fall upon us as always, and the result would be inevitable defeat.

“ But even if a miracle happened, and such a fight did not end in the complete destruction of Germany, the final result would be merely that the German people, bled white, would remain surrounded as before by great military states, and its real position would not be altered in the least.

“It may be suggested that alliance with Russia would not necessarily involve war, or that even if it did, thorough preparation could be made for such a war. No, an alliance the object of which does not include the intention of making war, is senseless and worthless. Alliances are concluded only for the purpose of war. However remote the crystallisation of a conflict may be at the moment of concluding the alliance, the prospect of war complications ensuing is none the less the real cause of the alliance. And let no one believe that any Power would understand such an alliance in any other sense. Either an alliance of Germany and Russia would remain on paper alone, and therefore quite purposeless and worthless for us, or it would be translated from the letter of the Treaty into actuality—and the rest of the world would be warned. How naive it is to think that in such a case France and England would wait a decade until the Germano-Russian alliance had completed its technical preparations for the struggle. No, the storm would break with lightning speed over Germany.

“The mere fact of the conclusion of such an alliance with Russia would be the signal for the next war, the end of which would be the end of Germany.

“One must also consider the following:

“1. The present rulers of Russia have no intention of concluding or keeping an alliance in an honourable manner.

“One must not forget that the rulers of present-day Russia are common blood-bespattered criminals, that we are here concerned



with a scum of humanity which, favoured by conditions at a tragic moment, overran a great State, strangled and rooted out millions of its leading intellectual classes in wild thirst for blood, and for nearly ten years now has been carrying on the cruellest regime of tyranny of all times. And one must not forget that those in power belong to a people which combines in a rare mixture bestial cruelty with unbelievable skill in lying, and to-day more than ever believes itself called to lay its burden of bloody oppression on the whole world.\* One must not forget that the international Jew, who to-day rules Russia entirely, sees in Germany not an ally but a State destined to the same fate. One does not conclude treaties with a partner whose one interest is annihilation of oneself. Above all, one does not conclude treaties with people who would hold no treaty sacred, since they do not live on earth as representatives of honour and truthfulness but as representatives of lying, deceit, theft, plunder, robbery.† If anyone believes it possible to enter into treaties with parasites, this resembles the attempt of a tree to come to an advantageous agreement with the mistletoe.

“2. The danger to which Russia succumbed is ever present for Germany. Only the bourgeois simpleton is capable of deluding himself that Bolshevism has been exorcised. In his superficial way of thinking he does not see that he is faced with a driving force, that is, the striving of the Jewish nation for world dominance, a thing just as natural as the Anglo-Saxon urge, on his part, to make himself master of the earth. And just as the Anglo-Saxon follows this road in his own way and fights this battle with his own weapons, so also does the Jew. He goes his way—the way of insinuating himself into nations and undermining them from within, and he fights with his own weapons, with lying and slander, poisoning and corruption, carrying on the struggle until he achieves the bloody extermination of his hated enemy. In Russian Bolshevism we see the twentieth-century attempt of Jewry‡ to achieve the mastery of the world, just as in other periods it has striven for the same goal by other though inwardly related

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\* It is astonishing how often in “Mein Kampf” Hitler gives descriptions of his enemies which most people would think highly appropriate to himself.

† See note above.

‡ There are not and never have been more than a small proportion of Jews in high office in the U.S.S.R.

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actions....

“Germany is to-day the next objective in the struggle of Bolshevism. All the inspired strength of a new idea is needed to rouse our nation again, to release it from the toils of the international serpent, and to put a stop to the poisoning of our blood from within, so that the forces of our people, thus released, may be turned to making our nation safe, and thus to postponing to the remotest future a repetition of the last catastrophe. If one pursues this objective, it is to folly to ally oneself with a Power the master of which is the mortal enemy of our own future. How are we to liberate our nation from the fetters of this poisonous embrace if we give ourselves up to it? How can one make clear to German workers the nature of Bolshevism as an accursed crime against humanity if we ally ourselves with this abortion of hell, and thereby recognise it? With what justice can we condemn the member of the broad masses for his sympathy with a world philosophy, when the leaders of the state themselves choose the representatives of this ideology for allies?

“The struggle against the Jewish Bolshevisation of the world requires a clear attitude to Soviet Russia. One cannot drive out the devil with Beelzebub. If even Nationalist circles enthuse over an alliance with Russia, then let them but look around in Germany and be aware of the support they have at the beginning of their activity. Or do the Nationalists now regard as beneficial to the German nation transactions which are recommended and encouraged by the international Marxist press? Since when have Nationalists fought with armour which the Jew himself bears against us?...

“But in spite of that there was always the second course open before the war: we could have obtained the support of Russia in order to turn against England.

“But to-day conditions are different. If before the war we could have swallowed our feelings and resentment and gone with Russia, we could not do this to-day. The hand of the world clock has moved on since then and in great strokes announces the hour in which the fate of our nation must be settled one way or another. The consolidation of the great states of the earth at the moment is the last warning signal for us, to call a halt to bring our people back from dreamland to hard actuality, and to point the way which alone in the future can lead the old Reich to new greatness.

“If the National Socialist Movement, faced with this great and most important task, rids itself of all illusions and takes reason as its

leader, the catastrophe of 1918 can still be a boundless blessing for the future of our nation. Out of this collapse our nation may arrive at a completely new orientation of its Foreign Policy and moreover, strengthened inwardly by its new ideology, may achieve a complete stabilisation of its policy abroad. It may then end by gaining what England possesses already, what Russia once possessed, and what has led France again and again to make the right decisions for her own interests: a political tradition.

“The political code or tradition of the German nation with respect to its foreign affairs must be as follows:

“Never suffer the rise of two continental powers in Europe. See in every attempt to organise a second military power on the German frontiers, even if it is only by way of forming a state capable of becoming a military power, an attack against Germany, and see in this not only the right but the duty to prevent the rise of such a state by all means, even to the use of force, or if it has already arisen, to destroy it again. Take care that the strength of our nation is founded not in colonies, but in the soil of the homeland in Europe. Never consider the Reich secure if it cannot, give for hundreds of years to come, to every scion of our nation his own piece of land. Never forget that the most sacred right in the world is the right to have land to cultivate for oneself, and the most sacred sacrifice is the blood shed for this land.

“I would not like to conclude these observations without referring once more to the only possibility of an alliance which we have at present in Europe. I have already pointed out, in the previous chapter dealing with the German problem of alliances, that England and Italy are the only two states with whom any close relations would be worth while seeking, or would offer us any prospects of success. At this point I wish shortly to touch upon the military importance of such an alliance.

“The military consequences of the conclusion of this alliance would be the opposite to those of an alliance with Russia. The most important thing is that a rapprochement to England and Italy would in no way create a danger of war. The only power that might be opposed to the alliance, France, would not be in a position to make war. But the alliance would give Germany the possibility of carrying out in peace those preparations which must in some way be made within the framework of such an alliance with a view to settling accounts with France. For the important feature of such an alliance lies in the fact that, if it were concluded, Germany would not suddenly be

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sacrificed to a foreign invasion, but that the offensive alliance itself would break up, the Entente to which we owe so much misfortune would dissolve of itself, and thus the mortal enemy of our nation, France, would be isolated. Even if this success had at first moral results only, it would be sufficient to give Germany a degree of freedom of movement which to-day is hardly imaginable. For the initiative would then be in the hands of the new European Anglo-German-Italian alliance and no longer in those of France.

“A further result would be that Germany would be freed at one stroke from its unfavourable strategical position. A most powerful flank protection on one hand, and the full security of supplies of food and raw materials on the other would be the most beneficial effect of this new ranging of States.”