

The State Department and the Cold War

A commentary on its publication,

"NAZI-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1939-1941"

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author of *Twelve Studies of Soviet Russia*,
At the Moscow Trial, *Light on Moscow*,
Must the War Spread?, etc.



INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

While it is no credit to the Bevin Government nor to Mr. Winston Churchill, the fact is that nothing like the war hysteria that has seized America has been seen in England. For one thing, the British people have not forgotten to whom they owe the quiet nights that came after the long horror of Nazi bombing. For another, there are far more people in public life in England who are intelligently informed about the Soviet Union than is the case in our country—and who are not considered unBritish because they advocate a policy of friendship with the U.S.S.R. There are, indeed, many Americans who have made important contributions to an understanding of the Soviet Union and who continue today to seek better American-Soviet relations although branded as cold-war traitors for doing so. But it is still to such people as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury, Maurice Dobb, and D. N. Pritt, K.C., M.P. that we owe much of our knowledge of Soviet socialism and the best books that have been written about it.

D. N. Pritt, known throughout Europe as one of the most brilliant trial lawyers on the Continent, has been a King's Counsel since 1927, and Labor M.P. from North Hammsmith since 1935. A left-wing Socialist, an ardent anti-fascist, he was in the forefront of those in England who saw from the beginning the dangers of appeasing Hitlerism, and advocated a policy of collective security. In 1933 he was the president of the Reichstag Fire inquiry held in London, which exposed the monstrous frame-up engineered by Goering as the pretext for outlawing the Communists and bringing fascism to Germany.

Mr. Pritt's knowledge of the steps by which fascism came to Germany makes his opinions of special value in helping to awaken the American people to the dangerous parallels existing in our country today. In his analysis of the State Depart-

ment's use of the Nazi-Soviet documents as an instrument in the cold war against the Soviet Union, Mr. Pritt shows how the anti-Soviet drive has its domestic counterpart in the attack on the workers represented by the Taft-Hartley Act—and in the attempt to foist on the American people the Mundt police state bill, in itself a gigantic frame-up to outlaw the Communist Party and all progressive movements.

In 1932, Mr. Pritt made the first of several trips to the U.S.S.R., studying the legal system, and putting his findings into a book, *Twelve Studies of Soviet Russia*. In 1936 he attended the Treason Trial in Moscow and, on his return, convinced of the guilt of the accused and the complete fairness of the judicial procedure, wrote a pamphlet, published in this country under the title *At the Moscow Trial*, answering fully all the charges about the trials made by the anti-Sovieteers.

In October, 1939, just after the outbreak of World War II, Mr. Pritt brought out his *Light on Moscow*, analyzing the background of the Nazi-Soviet pact, tracing the disastrous course of British policy between two wars and laying squarely on the Chamberlain Government the major blame for the failure of the negotiations in Moscow in the summer of 1939. He pointed out at that time that the pact was no alliance, that, as a strong neutral power, the Soviet Union was in a good position to limit Nazi expansion and that there was no doubt of Soviet desire to see the end of Hitlerism. This immensely valuable book was followed just two months later by another, *Must the War Spread*, dealing with the Soviet-Finnish war, the Baltic policy of the U.S.S.R., and the attempts in that period to turn the world war into war against the Soviet Union. These two little books, written with clarity and force, are indispensable to any student of the history of our times. It is on this material that Mr. Pritt has drawn in the searching analysis here presented of the background of the events which our State Department sought so flagrantly to distort in its publication of the Nazi-Soviet documents.

Mr. Pritt has written numerous other books, pamphlets, and articles on the U.S.S.R., and on many other subjects. Since before the war he has been chairman of the British Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R., an organization

which has enlisted the interest of Britishers prominent in many fields and which carries on active interchange with the Soviet Union. In these activities he is joined by Mrs. Pritt; theirs is a partnership like the Webbs. Since the war, Mr. Pritt has been one of the leaders of the opposition to the Bevin foreign policy.

In the autumn of 1947, when the illness of the Dean of Canterbury prevented his fulfilling a speaking tour for the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Mr. Pritt, on twenty-four hours notice, interrupted a heavy parliamentary and legal schedule to fly to this country to take over some of the Dean's engagements.

Those of us who had the privilege of meeting him personally while he was here found him as richly endowed in endearing qualities of friendliness and human warmth as in intellectual gifts. He has a delightful wit and the kind of simplicity and modesty that go with true greatness of soul. An indefatigable worker in the leadership of the forward movement of mankind, he has always fought staunchly, courageously, and uncompromisingly for the cause of the people, for the coming of socialism, and for peace. His inspiring speech on "The Alternative to Getting Tough with Russia" at St. Nicholas Arena in New York at the 1947 meeting in celebration of the anniversary of the establishment of the Soviet government will not be forgotten by any who heard or read it. He ended it with these words:

"We cannot let misunderstanding and misrepresentation lead to hostility against the Soviet Union. We are not dismayed by the temporary swelling of the tide of reaction. We know it will end. If we keep fighting unflinchingly—it takes courage but what worthwhile job doesn't take courage—for the cause of peace and friendship, all the difficulties and all the problems will shrink. Lincoln Steffens saw the future; we are living on its threshold. The future is with the progressive peoples. Let us never cease working for it. If we keep the peace, our children will be the happiest people in history."

As these words should serve as an inspiration, so the material

in this booklet should serve as a practical guide in our work in this country for American-Soviet friendship and peace. Here is the historical truth with which to refute the State Department's attempt to pin on our great ally the guilt for World War II and so justify its own drive for World War III. That drive can and must be stopped. Mr. Pritt has set forth the record of the unceasing efforts of the Soviet Union to find a way for the capitalist and socialist systems to live together in peace. The Smith-Molotov and Wallace-Stalin exchanges have demonstrated anew the readiness of the U.S.S.R. to reach a peaceful settlement. Our future, indeed, lies with the progressive peoples of the world.

JESSICA SMITH
Editor, *Soviet Russia Today*

I. INTRODUCTION

On January 21, 1948, the State Department at Washington, which is the "opposite number" of the British Foreign Office and has a very similar political outlook, published under the title of *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941*, a selection of "Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office, edited by R. J. Sontag and J. S. Beddie."

The documents selected present some part of the Nazi versions—and only of the Nazi versions—of communications and negotiations between the Nazi Government and the Government of the U.S.S.R. between April 17, 1939, and June 22, 1941, and nothing else.

It will be interesting, although far less interesting than most anti-Soviet bloodhounds will hope—those in search of "scandalous revelations" will do far better to turn to their favorite Sunday newspaper—to examine some of these documents, and still more the incidents to which they relate; but before doing so the student is naturally prompted to ask: Why has this selection of documents been published, why has it been published just at this time, how has the selection been made, and why has it been so made?

Various people answer these questions in various ways. Let us begin by seeing what light the State Department itself has to throw on them. In a preface to the book, it explains:

"In 1945 the American and British armies captured the archives of the German Foreign Office which had been evacuated from Berlin. Use of the archives for intelligence purposes began immediately. Later, it became evident that the documents concerning the aims and methods of German foreign policy should be published for the enlightenment of world opinion, including German opinion.

"In June 1946 the Department of State and the British Foreign Office agreed to sponsor jointly the publication of approximately twenty volumes of documents illustrative of German foreign policy from 1918 to 1945. The French Government subsequently became a party to this agreement. The documents were to be printed in the original German, and the more important were also to be printed in English translation. It was agreed that the selection and editing were to be performed on the basis of the highest scholarly objectivity and that, to secure an authoritative and scholarly documentary record of German foreign policy, the services of private scholars should be enlisted, as well as the services of scholars in government service. Each government reserved the right to publish separately any portion of the documents.

"The Department of State has decided to publish separately the most significant documents bearing on German-Soviet relations during 1939-1941. This collection has been made by the Washington editors of the documents, Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie, assisted by Jean Brownell Dulaney."

So we know at any rate, as one reason, that the State Department has decided that this selection constitutes the "most significant" documents bearing on the topic of German-Soviet relations in 1939-1941. Most significant for what purposes, and why so significant now, the Department does not tell us.

The editors themselves tell us a little more in a foreword, in which they say that they "have selected for publication at this time all documents essential to an understanding of the political relations between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union from the first efforts to reach an agreement in the spring of 1939 to the outbreak of war in June 1941," and that they "have had complete independence in their work and final responsibility for the selection of relevant documents."

This carries us a little further, for it in effect tells us that what the State Department hopes is that the American public—and other people too—will be particularly interested in the history of the Soviet-German Pact of August 23, 1939, and of the relations between Germany and the U.S.S.R. that followed upon it.

Since these two editors and their assistant have made the selection themselves, and the reader of the book will often be puzzled as to why certain documents have been selected, and still more as to why other documents which must exist, dealing with many events of interest in the period in question, have been omitted, the background of the editors becomes relevant, for their general political orientation will of necessity have influenced their selection. Nothing is known of Mr. Beddie or Miss Dulaney, but Mr. Sontag is a professor of history at the University of California, formerly at Princeton; his writings show that he opposed a boycott of Japan in 1938, and in the same year published a study *Germany and England*, in which his attitude to Hitler appeared to be by no means hostile. Moreover, in reviews which he wrote in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in 1938 and 1939, he expressed himself against collective security in language reminiscent of many British Tories; and again the tone was not unfavorable to the Nazis.

WHAT MR. MARSHALL SAYS

Mr. Marshall himself, the Secretary of State, explained shortly after the publication that the volume had been ready for publication for some time, but was not issued earlier lest it complicate the proceedings of the Conference of Foreign Ministers in London in December, 1947, and that "once the conference ended in failure he saw no reason to further delay."

Where does the British government come in? It was made clear by Mr. Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, in the House of Commons on February 4, 1948, that our government had agreed to the publication of *Nazi-Soviet Relations*—however strongly it may have felt that the repercussions would revive memories of a previous government, of whose wicked foreign policy its own policy is really a continuation. But Mr. Bevin did add the very fair criticism that "I understood this matter was going to be dealt with in relation to the other Allies as a comprehensive historical statement, and I had no idea it was going to be published out of its context."

Mr. Bevin may well have been worried, for the publication

in this form does far more harm to Britain than to the U.S.S.R. But when one recalls that the Soviet Government made proposals in the summer of 1945 for the joint study of captured Nazi documents, which were rejected as "premature" by the American and British governments (whose anti-Soviet attitude had already developed pretty far), one realizes what an opportunity for a real contribution to history was sacrificed to anti-Soviet bias; and one sees more clearly than ever what a gulf separates this partisan publication from genuine historical work.

Apart from official documents, there is of course the press. What do we find there?

The London *Daily Telegraph* on February 5, 1948, asserted that the documents, which of course had been in American possession for over two years, had for some time prior to their publication been "deliberately withheld," since it was thought that their publication would make for increased tension between Russia and the Western Allies," a neat way of disposing the reader's mind in advance to give the most unfavorable interpretation to any ambiguous phrases in the documents—"and the decision has now been taken to release the documents in full" (a pretty empty fullness) "in view of the present trend of Russian foreign policy," the view of the State Department being that "an undue consideration for Russian susceptibilities is now neither necessary nor desirable." (This is certainly no exaggeration of the tone of the State Department!)

And the January 30, 1948, issue of the *Foreign Policy Bulletin* published by the Foreign Policy Association, Inc., of New York, regarded the publication as "a direct answer to Moscow's charges of Western 'imperialism' and 'aggression.' Mrs. Vera Micheles Dean, in that *Bulletin*, makes some interesting comments. She points out that unusual publicity had accompanied the publication both in the U.S.A. and abroad, conveying "the impression that the Nazi documents reveal sensational information previously unknown to the Western powers."

She adds:

"Except for some highly interesting details, however, the basic facts concerning the German-Russian under-

standing of 1939 and its subsequent evolution in the course of the first two years of war were known at the time to American students of International Affairs, and must have been learned, as the events unfolded, in the foreign offices of London, Paris and Washington.

"Publication of the Nazi-Soviet documents, without any attempt to give the context of other events of the inter-war years, gives a distorted picture of that period. It also constitutes an invitation to the Soviet Government to publish, in turn, such official information as it possesses concerning the record of the Western powers and of some Eastern European countries.

"This record, already familiar to Western historians, could include the role played by the Western powers in the Spanish civil war; the negotiations initiated by Hitler in the early years of his regime with the then strongly anti-Russian government of Poland, intended to enlist Polish support for an eventual German invasion of Russia; German solicitation of anti-Russian aid by the Baltic states and Finland; anti-Russian activities of various kinds by the pre-war Governments of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. It would include, too, repeated attempts by Britain to achieve a *modus vivendi* with Hitler, even when this involved acquiescence in Hitler's occupation of Austria and the surrender by Britain and France of Czech territory at Munich in 1938; failure on the part of Britain, France, and the United States to prevent Germany's eastward expansion in 1938-1939, and the frequently expressed hope in the West that nazism and communism would destroy each other, leaving the Western world unscathed. The Russian record might point out that the United States continued to ship materials useful for war purposes to Japan, then engaged in fighting China—which was no worse, but hardly better, than Russian shipment of raw materials to Germany in 1939-41. It could bring its account to a climax by recalling the abortive attempts half-heartedly undertaken by Britain and France in the spring of 1939 to reach a military agreement with Russia only after Hitler's absorption of Bohemia and Moravia, but even then without political

commitments on the part of the Western powers; and the lack of any assistance by the United States to Poland when that country was finally invaded by Germany in September 1939. The Soviet Government might also counter the American charge that Russia did not oppose Germany until it was itself attacked on June 22, 1941, by pointing out that, except for lend-lease aid to Britain, the United States did not oppose Germany in Europe, and entered World War II actively only after it had been attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941."

Other American press comment was even less kind. The able and by no means pro-Soviet commentator, Mr. Walter Lippmann, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune* on February 12, described the book as "a classic example of bad propaganda . . . bound to backfire, doing more injury to ourselves and to our friends than to the Russians against whom it was aimed."

He continued:

"That the State Department book was the work of propagandists and not of scholars is self-evident on the face of it. It contained only Nazi documents, and no self-respecting historian would dream of basing his judgment on the documents of only one side of a great historical event. Moreover, only those Nazi documents were selected for publication which bore on Nazi-Soviet relations after April, 1939. That was after the Ethiopian war, after the seizure of Austria, and after the Munich settlement in which Czechoslovakia was dismembered. To embarrass our Western allies and ourselves by inviting the publication of documents for the period up to the Munich appeasement is not astute—indeed it is altogether incompetent—propaganda."

The comment of the lively New York newspaper *PM* is also worth quoting. This paper asked whether "the Talleyrands and the Machiavellis of the State Department" realized that they were starting a diplomatic war in which the United States and the other Western powers would be in a very vulnerable position. If the publication were typical of the mentality of the statesmen whose salaries the American citizens

were paying, it added, the taxpayers would perhaps do better to ask for their money back.

WHAT'S IN THE BOOK?

A perusal of the book tends to confirm that conclusion. What does the book contain? It is an apparently haphazard but no doubt systematic selection of:

1. Internal communications between the Nazi Foreign Office and the Nazi Embassy in Moscow, reports of that Embassy purporting to give accounts of conversations with high officials of the Soviet Government, memoranda of that Foreign Office, and similar documents.
2. Copies of communications said to have passed between the Nazi Embassy in Moscow and the People's Commissariat (as it was then called) of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R.
3. Copies of the texts of various pacts.

The selected documents are set out in chronological order. Beyond a two-page list of the "principal persons" involved, and an "Analytical list of documents," nineteen pages in length, which here and there betrays in its description an almost vicious anti-Soviet "slant," there is no line of commentary or explanation. The book thus sins against every canon of history:

1. It ignores the whole historical background; the sell-out at Munich, the offer of the U.S.S.R. to defend Czechoslovakia even if she fought alone, the endless struggle of the Soviet Union in the League of Nations to make a reality of collective security, and many other vital topics.
2. It starts much too late in point of time.
3. As a result either of the method of selection of the documents, or because there would be no need in such communications as these to deal expressly with such matters, it passes over almost in silence some of the most important events of the period which it does cover; the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-40, the colossal military sweeps of the Nazi armies in the spring of 1940, and the collapse of France, for example, are only to be recalled by casual clues here and there. The seizure

of Prague in March 1939 is of course too early in date to come in at all, while the crime of Munich lies in the dim past, six months back.

4. It gives nothing but the unchecked, unexamined, uncriticized version of only one of the various countries involved, and that one—naturally, admittedly, and indeed boastfully—the greatest and most unscrupulous liar in the world.

MARSHALL QUOTING RIBBENTROP

There is something fundamentally indecent in the government of one of the countries recently allied in a fight to destroy Nazism thus drawing exclusively on Nazi documents; to give an example, what must one think of the American Chief of Staff of World War II, in his new post as Secretary of State, invoking as a witness against his allies of that war the testimony of such a despicable figure among the leaders of the common Nazi enemies as the liar Ribbentrop. It must be obvious that, if any of the Nazi *criminis personae* had wanted to report any incident honestly, objectively, and without "slant"—a highly unlikely event—he would have been in the difficulty that, in the cesspit of corruption and intrigue in which he lived, he would fear for his job if he said anything of which his superiors might disapprove. One can really say confidently of this book that it would be unsafe to rely on the accuracy of any document in it, with the exception of the actual text of pacts and—probably—of direct written communications between the Nazi Ambassador and the Soviet Government.

In all the circumstances, it is safe to answer the questions which I put on page 11 as follows:

The selection has been published because the State Department hopes thereby to exacerbate American—and perhaps British—public opinion against the U.S.S.R., by suggesting that that country was a willing and friendly ally of the Nazis, ready to betray the Western countries by making an alliance with them; it has been published at this particular moment because the State Department either thinks that this is a good moment at which to strike a new blow in the "cold war," or fears that its anti-Soviet campaign has not been

meeting with the desired success and requires a new injection of poison; the selection has been made in the way it has—starting only in April, 1939, using only Nazi documents, giving no explanations—because that is the best way of avoiding awkward memories about Munich, Prague, and other such points, and, still more, of preventing the reader from seeing the historical background in which the Soviet Union was driven to make the pact of August 23, 1939.

The book—thus circumscribed in date—does avoid the mention of some awkward memories for the ruling class of Great Britain, but it inevitably recalls a good many that are awkward enough. This may serve as a reminder to the British that Washington and Wall Street have no particular affection for them, and that if in order to kick the Soviet Union they find it convenient to tread on British toes, they will not trouble much where they put their feet.

If one looks at the matter for a moment from a wider political point of view, one sees it in a setting of one of the most formidable and unscrupulous barrages of propaganda that have occurred for a long time. The main source of this barrage is the United States, but there are collaborators in Britain.

The campaign has, probably, many motives. One is, no doubt, to reconcile ordinary decent American citizens to the colossal and ever mounting expenditure of their government on "defence," an expenditure which is not merely extremely profitable to certain powerful manufacturers, but also useful in delaying the slump, keeping up employment, and thus helping the vote at the forthcoming Presidential election—one of the workings of "true" democracy which the simpler democrats of Eastern Europe do not at first sight recognize.

Another motive is, probably, to create an atmosphere in which it may prove more easy to put the Marshall Plan over on the ordinary American citizen who knows he has to pay and doesn't quite see what return he gets for something which serves the big business interests who control the destinies of America. The scheme is necessary to those interests for two reasons; the first that unless loans are pumped into Western Europe the coming slump in the U.S.A. will be catastrophic for want of effective export markets; and the second, that they believe that their whole existence and power depend on

thwarting and weakening the Soviet Union, which they cannot attempt unless they can turn Western Europe into an American financial colony.

It is pretty disgusting to the ordinary British or American citizen to see this sort of restrained "cold war" being carried on—to the point of danger—against the Soviet people who fought so magnificently in the war. But it is no surprise to those of us who study politics, and who know that, when it comes to defending a threatened and moribund system, the holders in whom is concentrated the great if insecure power that such systems still possess have no scruple of any kind. I myself observed as early as 1944 that the more reactionary elements in Britain—by then convinced that the war could not well be lost, and that their hypocritical pretences of affection for the Soviet peoples, who were bleeding almost to death to save their skins for them, need no longer be quite so fully maintained—were beginning to express hostility openly again; the same process began in the U.S.A. somewhat earlier, but only really became manifest at the San Francisco Conference. But even I was astonished when a shrewd observer in the autumn of 1944 prophesied to me that within two years of the end of the war there would be a howl for war against the U.S.S.R. But there is now no doubt that that observer was right; and it serves at any rate to remind us how baseless is the often heard suggestion that the rulers of America and Britain "really want to be friends with the Russians, but the Russians make it impossible. It's all their fault."

RED-BAITERS ARE ALWAYS THE SAME

I do not think that I am overstating the case, or oversimplifying it, when I assert that at almost every stage of history since 1917 there has been a stream of abuse and a series of accusations poured out from the West against the Soviet Republics; and that most concrete accusations are discovered within six months, or at most a year, to have been completely unfounded. This will not deter the accusers; but it ought to deter the public from believing much of what they write. And all who believe in the working class, in trade unions, in socialism, in democracy, may reflect, and strengthen themselves

in the reflection, that most of those who now lead the way in the howl against the Soviet Union, and bleat about democracy, are in fact and always have been the enemies of the working class, the enemies of socialism and democracy, and the enemies of trade unions. It is no coincidence that the same forces in the U.S.A. which are leading the anti-Soviet howl are at the same time also driving forward the Marshall Plan, with its many strings, and bringing into force the infamous anti-trade union legislation called the Taft-Hartley Act.

The general impressions which I feel an impartial reader must gain from reading the book, with a reasonable knowledge of the background, are:

1. That the Soviet negotiators were much the intellectual superiors of the Germans;
2. That a deep underlying hatred and suspicion existed between Germany and the Soviet Union, never appreciably abating;
3. That Britain, France, Germany, and the U.S.S.R. were intensely suspicious of one another, and were bargaining hard for great stakes, playing off one against another to achieve the best terms possible;
4. That the British Government threw away or neglected one opportunity after another in a manner which—unless it were simply incredible folly—was based upon a determination not merely to make friends with Germany if they could, but (far more) to serve their hostility to the Soviet Union and their desire to weaken or destroy that country at no matter what cost to their own people, their own power, or the world in general.

What effect is the publication producing? In Britain, the accusations which the publication is plainly intended to make—by calling in the "evidence" of the lying enemies of humanity—fall to some extent flat, because the accusations were made, canvassed, and refuted so fully in 1939 itself, and in succeeding years.

THE LIGHT STILL SHINES

I recall that, when the pact of August 23, 1939, was made, British Government and press outbursts against the Soviet Union were widespread and hysterical. It occurred immediately to at least two people that the whole topic merited full treatment in book form. The first of those people was Mr. Chamberlain's Government; the second was myself. His Foreign Office prepared a long book, and the date of publication was announced in the press; but it has not published it to this day. I wrote, and my publishers published with great rapidity, my book, under the title of *Light on Moscow*, which has remained ever since, I think, almost the only reliable account of the events leading up to the pact.

It should not ever have become necessary to return to the matter; but this *Nazi-Soviet Relations* does call for an answer. The eight and a half years that have passed since *Light on Moscow* was published have brought a certain amount of additional information, and I propose with the help of that information to take up once again the task of explaining and refuting the accusations against the Soviet Union which are implied in *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, and have been recently repeated in Britain as a result of its publication.*

Some part of the answer has to be made directly to documents quoted in the book, but still more of it deals with general accusations not referable to any specific document. I will take them both in their place.

GOOD ANTI-FASCIST RECORD

Before I come to enumerate, in order to answer them, the accusations that are made, there are a few general points that should be dealt with.

Firstly, it ought to be, but unfortunately is not, unnecessary to mention that the peoples and Government of the U.S.S.R. were always anti-fascist and anti-Nazi. No sensible person can

* I am grateful to the publishers of *Light on Moscow* (Penguin Books, Ltd.) for permission to draw on that book, the copyright in which belongs to them.

deny that. Socialism or communism were always the complete antithesis of fascism. The latter rested on a concentration of capitalist power in a narrow section of monopolist industry; Soviet socialism eliminated all private ownership of means of production and rested power in the working masses. Fascism preached and sought to practice racial superiorities and subjections, and brutal ill-treatment of selected racial minorities, such as Jews. Soviet socialism eliminated all questions of racial inequality or subjection, developed the culture of national minorities, and ended Jew-baiting. Fascism put women in an inferior position. Soviet socialism brought them full equality. Fascism destroyed trade unions and all other working-class organizations. Soviet socialism has developed them in unprecedented strength and fullness. Fascism hated education, burned books, and "reached for its revolver" when it heard the word culture. Soviet socialism has developed education with a mighty passion, increased the production of books a thousandfold, and spread culture among the masses in a manner never hitherto known.

It is the height of stupidity—or dishonesty—to suggest any affinity between the fascism which so many powerful people in Britain encouraged for so long—while they hated the Soviet Union—and the Soviet socialism which was always the enemy of fascism, and was only driven into making a pact with it by the hostility of Britain, under circumstances which I shall relate below.

The Soviet Union could not but have regarded Nazi Germany as the most deadly and direct of the enemies by whom—at every stage from 1933 to 1941—she expected to be attacked. Hitler had preached aggression against the Soviet Union in *Mein Kampf* (published in 1924) and ever since. Nazism was essentially and inevitably aggressive—as the Soviet peoples understood more clearly than others. Hitler was, moreover, constantly being cajoled, encouraged, and exhorted from the West to direct his inevitably coming war eastwards to the Soviet Union. He had immensely powerful armies, and the Soviet Union had long land frontiers. The only doubt possible for the sober and sensible leaders of the Soviet peoples was not whether the Nazis would attack them, but whether, when the Nazis came to attack, any other major power would join in.

HOW THEY HELPED

Yes, the Soviet Union had always to be anti-Nazi, unless it was prepared to surrender to Hitler and become a vassal state. That it was not prepared to surrender was proved in blood every day from June 22, 1941, to May, 1945. I must not enlarge on this glorious piece of history in this book; but it is useful to remind oneself now and then of what the Soviet Union did in the war. I will allow myself one short incident, not so well-known as some.

Towards the end of December, 1944, when most people confidently believed that no major offensive from the German side was any longer possible, the Nazis launched a formidable one in the Ardennes, broke through the front, and placed many of the American and British troops in Belgium in a difficult and even dangerous situation. Their ambition was to reach Antwerp; for a time it looked as if they would achieve it; and if they had done this they would have prolonged the war considerably and greatly increased the losses and hardship of the American and British armies and people.

In this somewhat anxious position, Mr. Winston Churchill, who bears his share of the responsibility for having kept the Soviet peoples waiting—with incredible sacrifices—almost three years for the Second Front, turned naturally and properly to Stalin for help. On January 6, 1945, he sent a message to Stalin, which I may quote:

"The battle in the West is very heavy and, at any time, large decisions may be called for from the Supreme Command. You know yourself from your own experience how very anxious the position is when a very broad front has to be defended after temporary loss of the initiative. It is General Eisenhower's great desire and need to know in outline what you plan to do, as this obviously affects all his and our major decisions. I shall be grateful if you can tell me whether we can count on a major Russian offensive on the Vistula front, or elsewhere, during January, with any other points you may care to mention."

Stalin replied *on the following day*, January 7:

"I received your message of January 6, 1945, in the evening of January 7. . . .

"It is very important to make use of our superiority over the Germans in artillery and air force. For this we need clear weather for the air force and an absence of low mists which prevent the artillery from conducting aimed fire. We are preparing an offensive, but at present the weather does not favor our offensive. However, in view of the position of our Allies on the Western front, Headquarters of the Supreme Command has decided to complete the preparations at a forced pace and, disregarding the weather, to launch wide-scale offensive operations against the Germans all along the Central front not later than the second half of January. You need not doubt but that we shall do everything that can possibly be done to render help to the glorious troops of our Allies."

In his reply to this message Mr. Churchill wrote to Stalin on January 9: "I am most grateful to you for your thrilling message. May all good fortune rest upon your noble venture."

It is worth while just following out the results of this appeal of Mr. Churchill, and of the Soviet response to it, at this time when Mr. Churchill and others are feeding a campaign of hysterical abuse against the Soviet Union.

The offensive against the Germans on the Soviet-Carpathian front, planned for January 20, was advanced to the 12th. On that day, a great offensive was launched by the Soviet forces on a wide front from the Baltic Sea to the Carpathians. One hundred and fifty Soviet divisions, supported by a large quantity of artillery and aircraft, broke through the German front and threw the German troops back many miles. Five or six days later, German troops on the Western front, among them the 5th and 6th Panzer Armies, had to be withdrawn from the front and transferred to the East to meet the attacking Soviet troops. The German offensive in the West was thus frustrated.

On January 17, Mr. Churchill wrote to Stalin:

"On behalf of His Majesty's Government and from the bottom of my heart, I offer you our thanks and congratu-

lations on the immense assault you have launched upon the Eastern front."

The general public could not, of course, be told at the time of the arrangements that were being made for this Soviet offensive—that would have assisted the Nazis—but the results were communicated in a Soviet Order of the Day in February, 1945, in which, after an account of the great success of the Red Army offensive just mentioned, it was announced:

"The first consequence of the successes of our winter offensive was that they thwarted the Germans' winter offensive in the West, which aimed at the seizure of Belgium and Alsace, and enabled the armies of our Allies in their turn to launch an offensive against the Germans and thus link their offensive operations in the West with the offensive operations of the Red Army in the East."

II. BACKGROUND

Two results follow from the historical faults of *Nazi-Soviet Relations* already mentioned and from the fact that the Nazi version (or distortions) that it contains cover in the main only events which were reported pretty fully when they happened eight or nine years ago. The first is that most of the hostile criticisms to which its publication and its contents have given rise are merely repetitions of old criticisms; and the second is that much of the book does not lend itself to examination and answer item by item.

It follows that, both to answer the old resurrected criticisms and to examine such parts of the book as do bring something new, it is necessary first to give a connected narrative of events. To this I will now turn.

To deal quite briefly with 1938, one may say that in that year, both before and after Hitler's seizure of Austria in March, the Soviet Union—as it had done in earlier years—made many efforts to persuade the British and French to maintain collective security, and in particular to carry out their undertakings to defend Czechoslovakia against aggression. All these efforts failed, and the British and French refusals of course culminated at Munich, where the Soviet Union—and for that matter the Czechs themselves, until they were called in to have the result forced on them—were excluded from the discussions between Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler, and Mussolini, by which Czechoslovakia was in effect handed over to Hitler under circumstances which should make it impossible for any British politician ever again to mention Munich and Czechoslovakia in the same breath.

The Soviet Union, it is now known, was not merely willing to join with France in the defense of Czechoslovakia if France would keep her word, but was ready to defend Czechoslovakia

alone even if France held aloof; but the Munich negotiators ordered the Czechs not to resist.

MUNICH

The direct significance of Munich was pointed out by Mr. Walter Lippmann as follows:

"The real significance of Munich lay in the fact that Britain and France agreed to exclude Russia from a settlement which had the highest strategic consequences in Eastern Europe. The annexation of the Sudetenland by Hitler destroyed the outer bastion of the Russian defense system, and the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia was really a sacrifice of an alliance with Russia."

The whole Munich episode was, inevitably, regarded by the Soviet Union not as an occasional piece of folly, cowardice, or treason, but as a definite attempt, entirely consistent with the rest of British policy, to build up the Four-Power Pact of Britain, France, and the two major fascist powers against herself; and she interpreted the concessions to Hitler at that time as in effect payment in advance for the attack which they hoped he would make on the Soviet Union, and particularly upon the Ukraine.

The whole history of the foreign relations of the governments of Baldwin and Chamberlain and of the French Government at that period really prove quite definitely—as I propose to show—the following points: that they were not in earnest in seeking the friendship or 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 Hitler and Mussolini, to save them from internal collapse, to keep on friendly terms with them, and to make a Four-Power Pact with them; and that they were also pursuing more or less consistently a policy of diverting the aggressiveness of Hitler eastwards against the Soviet Union, in the hope of saving themselves from his aggression in the West.

HALIFAX AND HITLER

If, with all due caution as to the unreliability of Nazi documents, we turn for a moment to see what record such documents contain of the attitude of the British Government to Hitler, we find in the archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs the "Record of the Conversations between Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, and Hitler, at Obersalzberg on November 19, 1937," which ran in part thus:

"He [Lord Halifax] and the other members of the British Government were fully aware that the Fuehrer had attained a great deal not only inside Germany herself but that, having destroyed Communism in his country, he had barred the road of the latter to Western Europe, and that Germany, therefore, was entitled to be regarded as the bulwark of the West against Bolshevism.

"Halifax pointed out that there was every possibility of finding a solution even of the difficult problems, if Germany and Britain could reach an agreement with France and Italy too.

"He said that: 'there shouldn't be the impression that the Berlin-Rome Axis, or the good relations between London and Paris, would suffer as the result of the Anglo-American rapprochement. After the ground is prepared by the Anglo-German rapprochement, the four great West-European Powers must jointly set up the foundation for a lasting peace in Europe. Under no conditions should any of the four powers remain outside this co-operation, or else there would be no end to the present unstable situation.

(In other words, Halifax, as far back as 1937, was proposing to Hitler, on behalf of the British Government, that Britain, and France too, should join the "Berlin-Rome Axis.")

"To this proposal, Hitler replied to the effect that such an agreement among the four powers seemed to him very easy to arrange if good will and kind attitude prevail, but that it would prove more difficult if Germany were not regarded 'as a state which no longer carried the moral and material stigma of the Treaty of Versailles.'"

In reply to this, Halifax, according to the record, said:

"Britishers are realists and perhaps more than others are convinced that the errors of the Versailles Dictat must be rectified. Britain always exercised her influence in this realistic sense in the past. He pointed to Britain's role with regard to the evacuation of the Rhineland ahead of the fixed time, the settlement of the reparations problem, and the reoccupation of the Rhineland."

From the further record of Hitler's conversation with Halifax it is evident that the British Government viewed favorably Hitler's plans for the "acquisition" of Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Having discussed with Hitler the questions of disarmament and the League of Nations, and having noted that further discussion was needed, Halifax stated:

"All other questions can be characterized as relating to changes in the European order, changes that sooner or later will probably take place. To these questions belong Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. England is only interested that these changes should be effected by peaceful evolution so as to avoid methods which may cause further convulsions undesired either by the Fuehrer or by the other countries."

BRITISH SUPPORT OF NAZISM

The evidence I have thus given, and much more which it would take too long to set out, establishes clearly that the British Government, faced with the choice of building up fascism against socialism at the risk of their own destruction, or of making friends with the U.S.S.R. at the risk of encouraging the growth of socialism in Western Europe, had at the latest, by March, 1939, chosen the former course; and that, if they were in the near future to seek co-operation with the Soviet Union or to oppose the fascist states, they would be led to do so not by any opposition to fascism as such, but merely because they could no longer tolerate fascist domination over themselves in Europe. That their support of fascism in general and of Hitler fascism in particular would aid in

building up Germany's strength—already largely recreated by colossal loans from America and not unsubstantial loans from British sources—and at the same time would convince Hitler that they would always give way to threats of aggression, thus making war inevitable when his demands in the end should go too far, must have been present to the minds of Baldwin and Chamberlain, and they were certainly warned of it incessantly by the Opposition (and by Mr. Winston Churchill, then excluded by them from office and from all influence in the Conservative Party); but in their fear and hatred of socialism they always behaved as if they had never thought of that danger. In truth, faithful to their class-war flag, they preferred even that danger to any growth of socialism.

One would have expected that this tragic story would have sufficed to convince the government of the Soviet Union that any hope of co-operation with the West was illusory, but as can be seen from *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, and from the subsequent parts of this book, Moscow did not in fact give up hope until August 23. It is only because political memories are short that it is necessary to remind ourselves that to think of the British Government as in any sense anti-fascist at any time before the "phony war" which began in September, 1939, to the accompaniment of British airplanes dropping pamphlets rather than bombs on Germany, merged into a real and very terrible war in the spring of 1940, would be quite wrong. To approach the consideration of the events covered by *Nazi-Soviet Relations* with the idea that the U.S.S.R. ought to have thought of Britain and France as willing or reliable anti-fascists, or even as anti-fascists at all, would be to start from wholly wrong premises. And we should consider the events in question not merely with that recollection clearly in mind, but also with a realization that the U.S.S.R., at that desperate moment of history, had to look at things from her own point of view, and not from Britain's.

She was naturally determined to survive in a pretty hostile world. She was confronted by a powerful and unscrupulous fascist aggressor, subsequently revealed by six years of added horror—and by the judgment of Nürnberg—as the vilest thing that history has known. She was willing enough to combine with Britain and France to show a united front against that

vile aggressor, but as a study of the events will show she was unable to persuade those countries to join in such a front. She was by her whole nature and understanding plainly imbued (as indeed can be seen from the documents set out in *Nazi-Soviet Relations*) with a fundamental and irrevocable hatred of fascism. In all those circumstances, she had to take whatever steps were possible to ensure that she, at any rate, kept alive. She thought of herself as owing a duty to her people, to socialism, and to the working classes of the world; she thought that by defending herself, she was defending all three; if Britain and France would not co-operate with her, she could only fulfill her triple duty by keeping alive; and this she did. If we study the negotiations of 1939 in the light of those considerations, we shall understand the position, and the weapon of the "cold war" marked *Nazi-Soviet Relations* will fall from the hands of the cold aggressors in the State Department and Wall Street.

III. MARCH TO SEPTEMBER, 1939

With that much of the background, one can turn to enumerate the accusations that have been and are made against the Soviet Union on the basis of *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, or of the incidents with which it deals, and to recall the events of March-September, 1939, which lie at the root of them.

We can gather the accusations from press and other comments made at the time the document was published and subsequently; they are indeed largely echoes of the charges made—and answered as they were made—in 1939 and 1940.

They can be listed as follows:

1. That, by making the pact with Germany, the U.S.S.R. had betrayed the Western democracies (as Britain and France were called), indeed had betrayed democracy and destroyed the peace front; and that she had thereby also unleashed, or even *caused*, the war;
2. That, by negotiating with Germany while she was also negotiating with Britain, France, and Poland, she was guilty of treachery and double-dealing;
3. That, by occupying certain of the Eastern areas of Poland, she was betraying that country, and stabbing it in the back;
4. That she was just a land-grabber and an imperialist state, and was joining Germany in an imperialist carving-up of Europe; and
5. That she helped Germany in the war with supplies.

Since the first of these accusations, in all its parts, really rests on the fact that the pact was made, it is well to begin by examining why the pact was made, and what choice or option the Soviet Union really had as to whether it would make this pact, or some other pact with some other country, or no pact. For this, one must follow the course of the negotiations carried on between Great Britain, France, Poland, and the Soviet

Union for the real or ostensible purpose of forming an anti-aggression front in the spring and summer of 1939. It is not necessary to go back further than March 15, 1939, the day on which Hitler marched into Prague and brought the existence of Czechoslovakia to an end for a period which in the result lasted until May, 1945.

That outrage brought no flush to Mr. Chamberlain's cheek. On the day after it happened, when announcing it to the House of Commons, he expressed scarcely a single word of regret, 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 Düsseldorf a commercial agreement with the Reichsgruppe Industrie, the corresponding organization of German industry, amounting 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 the Birmingham Jewellers on March 17, he sought to remove the bad impression he had made by condemning the annexation of Czechoslovakia, and announcing that the British Ambassador in Berlin was being withdrawn to London for consultation. The Federation of British Industries' negotiations at Düsseldorf were not repudiated, however, nor indeed were they even "suspended" until a good many days had elapsed.

Shortly afterwards, the British Ambassador in Moscow asked the Soviet Government what its attitude was to the threat which Hitler was developing to Romania.

The Soviet answer was to propose an immediate conference of Britain, France, the U.S.S.R., Poland, Romania, and Turkey, to devise means of resistance to further aggression. To this excellent and practical suggestion, which might have set our feet on the road to saving Europe from the second World War—or at least to making that war shorter and less destructive—the British Government replied quickly that it was "pre-

mature." Premature, indeed! We had just lost to Hitler the bastion of Europe, with immense military equipment, airplanes, and artillery, and two of the largest armament factories in the world. In truth, there was not a moment to lose.

The rejection of this proposal, on that ludicrous ground, may well have been one of the gravest blows delivered against the prospect of an Anglo-French-Russian pact against aggression. Mr. Boothby in his recent book, *I Fight to Live*, relates—and it seems almost certainly right—that the Soviet Ambassador in London, Maisky, regarded it as "the final smashing blow at the policy of collective security." Mr. Boothby also expresses the view that it made World War II a certainty. There is at the least a great deal of truth in that.

STALIN'S WARNINGS

Stalin gave a grave warning, of course scarcely noticed in the British press, in his speech to the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, on March 10, 1939, five days before Hitler entered Prague. It is useful to quote some passages here:

"... 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. . . .

"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 in the military sense.

"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 were 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 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. . . .

"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 demoralization 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."

To return to the narrative, the British Government's rejection of the offer of a conference as "premature" was accompanied by a request to the U.S.S.R. to join with itself, France, and Poland in a declaration against aggression, to the

effect that, in case of aggression or threat of aggression, the four powers should immediately consult one another as to what they should do! Moscow replied that this was not very satisfactory, but nevertheless agreed, and suggested that the declaration should be signed by the four Prime Ministers, and not merely by the Foreign Secretaries.

This proposal, for what little it was worth, was rendered abortive by the Polish Government of the time refusing to sign any document with the U.S.S.R., and the British Government did not persuade—indeed, so far as one can tell, did not attempt to persuade—the Polish Government to adopt a more reasonable attitude.

THE POLES PREVAIL

It is indeed remarkable what a tragically important part Poland, or rather the British Government's deference to Poland, played in bedeviling and finally rendering abortive all the hopes and negotiations for an anti-aggression pact at this period. This is made clear in the recent book by Professor Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-39*. He recalls a report from American diplomatic sources of a talk between Mr. Kennedy, the U.S. Ambassador in London, and Lord Halifax, as early as March 24, 1939 (*How War Came; Extracts from the Hull File*), running thus:

"Lord Halifax believed that Poland was of more value to the democratic tie-up than Russia because his information showed the Russian air force 'to be very weak, old and short-ranged,' the army 'poor,' and its industrial background 'frightful.' . . . The most that could be expected from Russia, assuming that Russia wanted to be of help, would be 'some ammunition to Poland in the event of trouble,' and Lord Halifax thought it possible that Rumania might join with Poland in a fight against Germany."

Professor Namier also mentions, from the Polish *Documents on the Origin of the War*, that "Count Raczynski, Polish Ambassador in London, reported in his dispatch of March 29th that Kennedy had told him 'that the British Government

attach greater importance to collaboration with Poland than with Russia, and anyhow they treat that collaboration as the pivot for further possible action.' "

It is not surprising, if that was the attitude of the British Government, that they let the matter drop after receiving the Soviet Government's suggestion. In fact they did not even consult the Soviet Government again until the middle of April; and meanwhile Mr. Chamberlain, on April 23, in an answer in the House of Commons, stated that the government was not "anxious to set up in Europe opposing blocs of countries with different ideas about the forms of their internal administration." This answer was of a kind which Mr. Chamberlain had often given, and was generally understood to mean that Mr. Chamberlain did not want to join any anti-Nazi or anti-fascist bloc.

Meanwhile, Hitler seized Memel on March 22, and it was growing clearer every day that he meant to seize Danzig in the near future.

CHAMBERLAIN GUARANTEES POLAND

Mr. Chamberlain was now alarmed, and within nine days he was to sign the famous unilateral guarantee of Poland. The events of the few days that led up to this should be stated shortly. Colonel Beck, the comic-opera Foreign Secretary of the rotten half-feudal, half-fascist government of Poland—so sadly unworthy of its fine people—was due to come to London on a visit, and his arrival was placidly awaited while precious days slipped by, any idea of negotiating with the U.S.S.R. being shelved meanwhile. Professor Namier reminds us how the British press described the position:

"'The ironic situation was reached yesterday,' wrote the *Observer* on March 26, 'that the discussion of the proposal for immediate action is postponed for ten days.'

"'Growing importance is attached to the forthcoming visit of Colonel Beck, . . .' wrote the *Manchester Guardian* on March 29. 'The Anglo-Russian discussions have been interrupted not because there is any hitch . . . but because . . . matters of more immediate urgency have to take

precedence. Discussions between London, Paris, and Warsaw are, it is held here, at the moment all-important.' "

And the *Daily Mail*, on the same day:

"It is quite clear that at this stage Soviet Russia is not being sought as a partner in the contemplated alliance. Apparently the British Government will be content to obtain complete Anglo-French cooperation as a first step, followed, it is hoped, by a new defensive alliance between Poland and Rumania that will jointly resist German aggression if either is attacked. If Poland and Rumania agree to this course, there will be a far-reaching Four-Power anti-aggression pact which Soviet Russia and others may be invited to join at a later stage."

On March 31, however, without further awaiting the arrival of Colonel Beck, the British Government suddenly made him a present of the guarantee. Mr. Chamberlain took this precipitate step without seeking the co-operation of the Soviet Union, or even consulting her, although it was clear that she was the only country who could possibly render Poland any immediate or short-term aid in the event of German aggression.

The position was rendered more grotesque—and of course more dangerous than ever—by the determination of the Polish Government, subsequently announced but always held, not even to allow the Red Army on its soil.

It can well be imagined that there was some indignation at all this in Moscow, where the danger of a war being started in which the U.S.S.R. would be involved, with no allies to help her, was never absent from the mind; but even then *Izvestia* stated that a policy of collective security "could still count on the full support of the only country which bears no responsibility for Munich."

Professor Namier's comments in the introduction to his book are well justified. He sums up the position, after mentioning that the Poles greatly overrated their own strength and underrated that of the Soviet Union, as follows:

"Similar miscalculations were made in London, where even in responsible quarters, Poland was considered a more important, as well as a more congenial, ally than the Soviet Union. The idea of a joint front with Russia, dis-

cussed immediately after Prague, was shelved when it proved unwelcome to Poland, a bilateral agreement was concluded with Warsaw, and a guarantee was given to Romania before negotiations were resumed with Moscow; and then it was done as if Russia ought to have deemed it a favor to herself that the 'Polish-Romanian wall' had been raised between her and Germany, and a privilege if she was allowed to make her contribution by reinforcing it. But in fact, Poland would not have her do so."

He added:

"A close co-operation of the Western Powers either with the Axis or with Russia would have been dangerous to Poland. She watched the negotiations for a new Triple Entente with comparative equanimity, being convinced that they would fail—and she certainly had neither the wish nor any reason to try to make them succeed."

MORE EMPTY GUARANTEES

Things were moving more swiftly at this period, for on April 7 Mussolini seized Albania, and Great Britain, reacting to this as it had done to the menace to Poland, gave similar guarantees to Greece and Romania on April 13, 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 April 15, resumed communications by asking through our Ambassador in Moscow if the U.S.S.R. would make a declaration of unilateral guarantee to Poland and Romania. This proposal is not put in any very favorable light by what Mr. Chamberlain told the House of Commons on October 3, 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. Moscow replied to this proposal on April 17, suggesting a triple pact of Britain, France, and the 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 emphasized 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 April 18, the *Times* (London), which at this period was in extremely close relations with the Chamberlain Government, printed a leading article—the second such article in three weeks—encouraging Hitler with suggestions of appeasement. A few days later, a very bad effect was produced by the decision taken on April 24, to send the British Ambassador, who had been withdrawn shortly after the seizure of Prague, back to Berlin. 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."

MORE APPEASEMENT

On April 26, the British Government, which had still made no reply to the important communication from Moscow of April 17, was further alarmed by Germany's sudden denunciation of the Anglo-German naval treaty and of the German-Polish non-aggression pact; but it still put forward no proposal to the U.S.S.R., and on May 3 there appeared in the *Times* a letter from Lord Rushcliffe which was understood to have been prepared in collaboration with Sir Horace Wilson, a distinguished civil servant with a minimum of experience in foreign affairs, who was very closely associated with Mr. Chamberlain. In this letter, Lord Rushcliffe, who

was a close friend of Mr. Chamberlain, put forward a strong plea for further "appeasement" of Germany, having the air of a new installment of "Munich."

On May 5, 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."

This was an odd piece of offensiveness for the head of a government which had very frequent changes, a man moreover, destined to be removed himself—all too late—within a year, to use toward a man who had held his position at the head of a very stable government and country for fifteen years and was likely to hold it for many years to come.

Finally, on May 9, the British Government answered Moscow's proposal of April 17; but the reply proved to be no more than a reiteration of the previous proposal of April 15, 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 was still put in 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 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 fulfillment of obligations."

CHESTNUT HOPES

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 tragic events to come in September were to make it plain to the world, as it had always been pretty clear to the well-

informed statesmen in Moscow, that the whole military weight of Germany would be flung against Poland, and 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 British sincerity; but there were only too many people in important positions in Britain who would have been delighted to see the Soviet Union placed in that position.

Moscow was naturally unwilling to be employed to pick the chestnuts out of the fire for the Western democracies in this fashion, and replied on May 14, 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.

It should be noticed in passing that it was revealed on May 23 that the British Government had allowed £6,000,000 in gold, lying on deposit in London on behalf of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia in the name of the Bank for International Settlement, to be handed to the Germans, although as late as May 19 Mr. Chamberlain had characterized as a "mare's nest" the report that this was to be done. (After all, if Hitler stole Czechoslovakia, let him have its money too; he will be that much richer for the coming war.)

On that very May 19, Mr. Chamberlain gave a number of answers in the House of Commons which received a good deal of notoriety at the time; it was difficult to read them as meaning anything but that he was reluctant to make any agreement with the U.S.S.R. for fear of offending some other power, which was then thought to be Italy, but now seems likely to have been Poland!

At last, on May 27, 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 neighbors of the 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 May 31, 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 in 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 endeavor 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 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 combatting 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 different 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 favor. 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 Romania, 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 northwestern 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 recognized. 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 northwestern 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 northwestern 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 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 neighborly 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.”

This speech of Molotov made very plain both the attitude of the Soviet Union in the negotiations, and the suspicions entertained in 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 was 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 brings 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 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 May 27, was a somewhat surprising speech made in the House of Lords, on June 8, 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 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. In the same debate as that in which Lord Halifax made this speech, Lord Davies, who was not without experience and study of foreign affairs, speaking on June 12 (the debate having been adjourned to that date), 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."

On the very day that Lord Halifax was making this speech in the House of Lords, a British ex-diplomat, Sir Francis Lindley, addressing the Conservative Party's Foreign Affairs Committee, stated—according to the *Manchester Guardian*—"that British prestige would suffer less if negotiations with Russia failed than if they succeeded, because in the latter case it would be considered abroad that we had been driven to accept an alliance on the Russian terms."

(Such is prestige. How many people died for that example of it?)

The Soviet Government might have been forgiven for almost any unfavorable reaction to this renewed line of appeasement on Lord Halifax' part, but in fact what they did was to suggest that he 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. If he had gone to Moscow, the negotiations would probably have had a smooth course to success.

HALIFAX: APPEASER

He did not go. On the contrary, he returned to his line of appeasement. In an important speech on June 29 to the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) he spoke of the "essential unity of Christian Civilization"—a common theme, almost a "signature tune" of those who think of Christian civilization, Western democracy, and monopoly capitalism as really one and the same thing—and went on:

"If we could once be satisfied that the intentions of others were the same as our own, and that we all wanted a peaceful solution—then, I say here definitely, we could discuss the problems that are today causing the world anxiety. In such a new atmosphere, we could examine the colonial problem, the problem of raw materials, trade barriers, the issue of *Lebensraum*, the limitation of armaments, and any other issue that affects the lives of all European citizens."

In the light of all the events leading up to this speech, of the observations (already cited) of Lord Halifax on *Lebensraum* in the House of Lords on June 8, and of the substantial evidence quoted below on page 71 as to negotiations for giving Hitler a colonial empire, there seems no doubt that in the passage set out above, Lord Halifax, in spite of warnings expressed in the earlier parts of his speech, was making the Germans an offer of colonies, of an extension of

Lebensraum eastwards, in the U.S.S.R. and in Poland, and of something very like alliance. If it be read in conjunction with what—as the German Government at any rate was told—was passing between Herr Wohltat, Mr. Hudson and Sir Horace Wilson at this time it must have encouraged Hitler greatly; and if a tithe of it were known in Moscow, their suspicions must have been strongly confirmed.

Meanwhile, negotiations with the U.S.S.R. were continuing in a somewhat dilatory fashion, the only notable incident for some time being that Mr. Strang (now Sir W. Strang) went out to Moscow, arriving there on June 14, 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 he had constantly to refer back to London for instructions. To send a minor official, at such a time, was not really a step forward; indeed, it was a major diplomatic discourtesy.

The negotiations still dragged on, and on June 29, Andrei Zhdanov, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet Parliament and 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, while the French and British had taken fifty-nine days; and he 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 continued to drag, 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 of negotiations, as will be seen, is clearly established, and is unconnected with any difficulties of definition or formulae.

WOHLTAT SEEKS A BILLION

In the third week of July, it became known in London that Dr. Hellmuth Wohltat, economic adviser to Hitler and Commissioner for his "Four-Year Plan," had been in London, and had been negotiating with Mr. R. S. Hudson, then parliamentary secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade, and Sir Horace Wilson. The discussions turned on a loan of £1,000,000,000 which the British Government was apparently willing to make to Hitler, "to insure German stability." Mr. Chamberlain, when questioned about the negotiations in the House of Commons, gave an evasive reply and displayed some annoyance at their having leaked out. (Ironically enough, it was at about the same time that the British Government was raising difficulties about the conditions on which it might lend £8,000,000 to its half-protégé and "guaranteed" friend, the Polish Government, with which to buy arms to defend itself.)

Once again, if it be possible to look with all proper reserves at the Nazi accounts of incidents, the main lines of which are known to be true, they relate that Wohltat had been in London in June, and had carried on conversations with Mr. Hudson and Sir Horace Wilson. What transpired then has not yet become known, but captured German documents show that, on Wohltat's second visit in July, Mr. Hudson and Sir Horace Wilson suggested to him, and later to the German Ambassador in London, Dircksen, to start secret negotiations for a broad agreement, which was to include an agreement for the division of spheres of influence on a world-wide scale, and for the elimination of "deadly competition in the general markets." It was envisaged that Germany would be allowed predominating influence in

Southeastern Europe. In a report to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated July 21, 1939, Dirksen pointed out that the program discussed by Wohltat and Wilson comprised political, military, and economic issues. Among the political issues a special place, along with a pact of non-aggression, was assigned to a pact of non-intervention, which was to provide for a "delimitation of *Lebensraum* between the great powers, particularly between Britain and Germany."

According to the captured documents, during the discussion of the questions involved in these two pacts the British representatives promised that, if the pacts were signed, Britain would renounce the guarantees she had just given Poland, and that, if an Anglo-German agreement was signed, the British were prepared to let the Germans settle the problems of Danzig and the Polish Corridor with Poland alone, undertaking not to interfere in the settlement.

Further—and this too finds documentary confirmation in Dirksen's reports—Wilson reaffirmed that, in case the above-mentioned pacts between Britain and Germany were signed, the British policy of giving guarantees would be virtually abolished.

"Then Poland," said Dirksen on this point in his report, "would be left, so to say, alone, face to face with Germany."

Lastly, it was proposed to supplement the political agreement between Britain and Germany by an economic agreement which would include a secret deal on colonial questions, on the distribution of raw materials, and on the division of markets, as well as on a big British loan for Germany.

The effect of this, if it be true, is that the British Government was prepared to sacrifice Poland to Hitler at a time when the ink with which Britain's guarantees to Poland had been signed was scarcely dry. At the same time, if the Anglo-German agreement had been concluded, the purpose which many people believed that Britain and France had set themselves in starting the negotiations with the Soviet Union would have been achieved; *i.e.*, there would have been a greater possibility of expediting a clash between Germany and the U.S.S.R.

There is nothing inherently improbable in the Nazi account of the negotiations; but Nazis generally lie, of course,

and if in this instance they are not telling the truth the British government can refute them by publishing the documents.

JAPAN TOO

As if all this were not enough to enrage the U.S.S.R., and convince her that there was no hope of a sincere pact with Great Britain, the government also made an agreement in this same July with Japan, under which British officials and nationals in China were to refrain from any acts or measures prejudicial to the objectives of Japanese forces in China, and also joined with Japan in "deploring" the action of the United States in terminating the Japanese-American Commercial Treaty of 1911. This did not excite a great deal of attention in Great Britain; but in the U.S.S.R., a neighbor of Japan, necessarily anxious as to the risk of simultaneous attacks from the West and the East, it added to their suspicions of British policy.

One may agree with the comment of the well-known American professor Frederick L. Schuman, who wrote in his *Soviet Politics at Home and Abroad*:

"From these developments the men of Moscow concluded that the Western Munichmen had by no means abandoned 'appeasement' and much preferred an accord with Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo to any solid coalition with the U.S.S.R. against the Fascist triplice. All available evidence indicates that this conclusion was correct."

Public opinion was by this time gravely disquieted, and on July 29, in a speech in a by-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 today. 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 British 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."

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 defense 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 July 23, Moscow suggested the immediate dispatch 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 July 25.

SNAIL'S PACE

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 the government the importance of sending Lord Gort. But the missions did not leave until August 5, eleven days after the acceptance of the proposal; and they did not travel by air, the reason given by the *Times* being 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 August 11, six days after their departure, and seventeen days after the British Government had accepted the proposal; 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 dispatch from its Moscow correspondent printed by the *Times* on August 3, of the presence—and indeed of the reasonability—of the suspicions which I have suggested that the Moscow Government then entertained.

This dispatch ran:

"The Bolsheviks 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 recognizing that there has been a change of heart in the West, will not forget these painful lessons. Hence the difficulty about 'indirect aggression.'"

If British sources entertained or expressed as much suspicion as that, it was only to be expected and understood that the U.S.S.R. should have stronger views and suspicions.

NEGATIVE POLES

Before the French mission left for Moscow, the French had urged upon the Polish Government the necessity of accepting the military co-operation of the Soviet Union, but the Polish Government had absolutely refused to entertain the idea. When the Mission reached Moscow with its hands tied behind its back in this ridiculous fashion, Marshal Voroshilov, on August 14, raised the question, and said that unless his troops had access to Polish territory in order to defend, among other things, Polish territory, further military negotiations would be impossible. From the military point of view, I suppose, he could not well do less. But for once the *Times*, in its article of February 23, 1948, loses its sense of reality in describing this as "adding to the Soviet conditions for a treaty to the West." Surely what he was doing was asking for something without which it was utterly impossible to prevent the invasion and destruction of the Polish state. That it should not be acceded to could only increase Soviet suspicions that Britain and France did not want a treaty, but were still hoping for some development of events which would lead to the Soviet Union being attacked.

Further Franco-Polish discussions followed, while the

Soviet negotiators held their patient hands for another seven invaluable days. The Poles were never moved to change their position, and Paris finally decided to keep the negotiations alive by pretending falsely that they had done so. However, by the time the French mission were instructed to agree and make this announcement, August 21 had arrived, and with it the announcement that Ribbentrop was going to Moscow to sign the non-aggression pact.

(Notice, among other things, that to the very last, when it was common knowledge that a German-Soviet pact might be signed within a few days if the British and French did not agree, the latter displayed a lack of any sense of urgency.)

Such an attitude on the part of the Polish Government, and the French and British acquiescence in it, must seem, in the light of the tragic events of September, 1939, and especially of what they showed 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 indeed of many other valuable lives and interests besides. It meant, moreover, that if the U.S.S.R. had entered into a pact to assist Poland and war had subsequently broken out, she would have had to wait behind her own frontiers while 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."

The Polish attitude had a grave effect on the negotiations. The Soviet representatives had to point 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.

BREAKDOWN

In these circumstances it was clear to the Soviet Government 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.

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 lay with the British Government or with Moscow. In view of this outstanding fact—and it is to be noticed that no attempt has

ever 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 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 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.

First, it can be said of Mr. Chamberlain that his whole policy since he came to power 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 vigor to remove Mr. Chamberlain from his office.

It must be said, too, of the Soviet Union, that it had shown itself steadily and systematically in favor of peace and opposed to fascist aggression. Indeed, if anyone had suggested in, say, July, 1939, that the British Government was sincerely anti-fascist, and the Soviet Government was pro-fascist, he would have been laughed at, 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 was in any way less anti-fascist than before. The mere fact that after the 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.

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, with a natural bias in our own favor, we are forced to conclude from the facts stated above that the long history of anti-Soviet and pro-fascist policy and activities of the British government and governing class was gravely to blame for what came about; and

we can only expect that the Soviet Government and people, from their angle, formed a view of the British attitude and policy that was a good deal less favorable. Moscow knew that the price of her survival in a ring of capitalist states, all armed to the teeth, was 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.

In those circumstances, however greatly she must have wished to enter into an agreement with non-fascist Britain and France rather than with Nazi Germany, she could not regard the Western countries as friendly to her; and in accordance with her policy of seeking peaceful relations and if possible non-aggression pacts with all states, regardless of their internal constitution or ideology, she was forced, in pursuit of her paramount aim and duty of serving the interests of her own people, to agree with Germany if she could not agree with the West. That she would have preferred to stand with the West if it would stand with her was clearly demonstrated by the patience she displayed over a long period of Anglo-French flirtation and rebuff; but if she could not in the end do so, it was obviously necessary, and wholly consistent with her principles of foreign policy, to make agreement 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, as already mentioned and as further discussed below, had been trying for years to enter into relations with Germany. Obviously the best—indeed the only—"second line" for her was to make an agreement with Germany—in such a form, of course, as would make it not too easy for Germany to deprive her of the advantages of it by some betrayal.

WINSTON CHURCHILL UNDERSTANDS

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 April 3:

"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."

So on August 23, the pact of non-aggression was signed. Its text ran 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 1. 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 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, insofar as one of the Contracting Parties does not give notice of termination one year before the end of this period, the 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."

IV. THE CHARGES ANSWERED

With that long preamble, I come back to the first accusation, that the U.S.S.R. "betrayed" the Western democracies, democracy itself, and the peace front, and was responsible for the unleashing of the war, or even for causing it.

In the light of the narrative I have just given, and with the knowledge that it has always been the policy of the Soviet Union to make non-aggression pacts, pacts of amity, and commercial pacts, with any country, whatever its ideology, that was willing to make such pacts, it was natural enough for the Soviet Union, when it found that it could not get a pact with Britain and France, or at any rate not one that would be of the slightest value to itself, to make the pact of non-aggression with Germany which it did make on August 23, 1939; but it came at the time as a shock to ordinary people in Great Britain, who had been buoyed up by their press and their government with the hope that a pact would be made between their country and the U.S.S.R., and had also had no opportunity to learn that negotiations between the U.S.S.R. and Germany had begun. It is thus well worth while, as it was when the accusations were first made in 1939, to answer them fully.

Let me take first the "betrayal" of the Western democracies. It must not of course be thought to be true in any real sense that the U.S.S.R. threw up the opportunity of an agreement with Britain and France, and made a choice of Germany. It is pretty clear from what I have already written that she had no real option. But if it be useful to add any further evidence that the British Government never meant to make a pact, it may be noticed that as early as the middle of April, according to a report made by Count Raczynski, the Polish Ambassador in London, to his government,

Sir Alexander Cadogan had informed him that the Soviet proposal for a political treaty of reciprocal aid, in the form either of an Anglo-Russian agreement or an Anglo-French-Russian treaty, was unacceptable to Great Britain, and not desired by France.

MOSCOW HAD NO CHOICE

It is clear, in effect, that the U.S.S.R. did not have the opportunity to choose between a pact with the Western democracies and one with Germany, which would at any rate last long enough to give her breathing space and time to prepare,* but only a choice between a pact with Germany, and no pact at all. The "accusation" must be that she was wrong to make a pact at all; that she should have remained in isolation in a world on the brink of war, at a period when scarcely any country could live without allies even in time of peace, and none could hope to do so for long in time of war. What moral duty could there possibly be on the U.S.S.R. to keep herself in isolation, to refrain from making an agreement—for what it was worth—with her own natural enemies that those enemies should not fight her, when she had at last been convinced that she could not hope for an agreement with the Western democracies to protect herself, and them, from those enemies! The position was well put by Molotov, in the speech in which he presented the pact to the Supreme Soviet—the Parliament of the U.S.S.R.—on August 31:

"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

* Eye-witnesses report that, after the signature on August 23, Stalin said: "Well, two years!"

U.S.S.R. coincide with the interests of the people of other countries."

The accusation of betraying democracy is even more difficult to establish. It could fairly be said, even in the light of the many different meanings that people attach to that word, and of the extraordinarily anti-democratic behavior of the British Government related above, that if the pact to resist German aggression, for which we all hoped, had been made, it would have been a real service to democracy. In that sense democracy was betrayed; but however unpalatable we may find it we have to admit that the betrayer is the party responsible for the pact not being made. That party was not the U.S.S.R., as has already been made clear.

WHO BEGAN IT?

Some importance is attached by some critics to the question whether the initiative for the negotiations that led to the non-aggression pact came from the Soviet side or from the Germans, as if some additional reproach could be spelt out from that. I would hold it to be of relatively little importance, but the general impression that one gains from the documents is that the initiative came from the Germans. Mr. Ferdinand Kuhn, in his articles in the *Washington Post*, attributes it to the Russians, as a first move—on April 17, 1939—"not to halt Hitler, but to team up with him." The document on which Mr. Kuhn relies is a memorandum by Weizsäcker, the State Secretary in the German Foreign Office, of a conversation between himself and the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, which is the first document in the book. (This emphasizes criticism of the method of selection employed in the book, particularly as to the date of starting, and at any rate makes it impossible to find, from the book, any earlier evidence.) The actual terms of this memorandum, taken at its face value, make it equally possible to say that the Germans were "fishing," or the Soviet Ambassador was fishing, or neither party was. Mr. Byrnes, in *Speaking Frankly*, is emphatically of the opinion that the Germans took the initiative, and on February 6, 1948, the *Times* Washington

correspondent reported that "there are documents not included in the State Department volume which would support Mr. Byrnes' view, though they may carry an earlier date than that on which the editors decided to start the present collection."

The Germans' own view is that the initiative came from them, and it is a point on which they would have no motive for misrepresentation. It is given in an affidavit sworn at Nürnberg on March 15, 1946, by Friedrich Gaus, who had been the legal adviser of the Nazi Foreign Office. He says that the initiative came from Hitler, and was communicated to Weizsäcker and himself through Ribbentrop about the second half of June. (The earlier discussion of April 17, mentioned above, was obviously, according to Gaus, no fishing at all.) Hitler ordered that instructions should be sent to Schulenburg to make soundings in Moscow in the usual fashion. There were delays in getting the instructions approved, and it seems probable that the actual dispatch to which Gaus refers is that of July 29 (*Nazi-Soviet Relations*).

Ribbentrop in fact gave some evidence on the point on his trial at Nürnberg; but his complete unreliability as a witness on any point, great or small, makes it worthless to quote him.

"DESTROYING THE PEACE FRONT"

Then, the next subdivision of this first accusation is the charge that the U.S.S.R. 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. 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 the 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, has been almost universally recognized as one of whole-hearted endeavor to build up a peace front; even before its experiences in World War II, no country had more to gain from peace, or less reason to engage in hostilities except in self-defense in the strictest and most direct meaning of the words. The history of the governments of Great Britain and France, during the eight years up to 1939, was unfortunately 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 hindering the Western democracies in resistance to fascist aggression when it is clear that they had not at any time up to the breaking off of the negotiations shown any real intention of resisting it at all. This second accusation seems thus to be equally fallacious and unfounded.

The last part of this accusation relates to "causing" or "unleashing" the war. It is not even plausible for anyone with the slightest knowledge of history to suggest that the U.S.S.R., by making the pact, *caused* the war. The causes are well known, and lie deeper than that.

The charge that she "unleashed" or "precipitated" the war has this much superficial plausibility, that German hostilities against Poland started soon after the pact; but evidence from many sources makes it clear that Hitler had irrevocably decided long before on war against Poland.

Evidence given at the Nürnberg trials, and of course not mentioned in *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, established that as early as April 3, 1939, Keitel issued directives and plans for an invasion of Poland, to be carried out on September 1 or thereafter, and that Hitler told a secret conclave of generals on May 3 that Poland must be attacked at the first suitable opportunity. By the end of June, plans were complete and the decision to attack irrevocably taken.

In truth, all that the U.S.S.R. did, after trying in vain to secure a pact with the West which should make it difficult for Hitler to start a war, and impossible for him to carry it on for years or to win it, was to make sure that the (in any case inevitable) war should not at first be directed actively

against her, either by Germany or by any other power. If anyone "unleashed" the war, in the terrible form which it took, it was those elements in Britain, France, and Poland which refused a pact with the U.S.S.R. (They were of course very largely the same elements that—for similar motives—had built up Hitler and given him Czechoslovakia.)

"DOUBLE-CROSSING"

So much for the first accusation. The second, covering to some extent the same field, is that of "double-crossing" by negotiating with two sides at once.

The truth is, although *Nazi-Soviet Relations* gives the reader little opportunity to discover it, that while commercial negotiations between the U.S.S.R. and Germany were being carried on, without any concealment, during the summer of 1939, the constant efforts of the Germans to extend these negotiations to the political field fell on deaf ears in Moscow until a very few days before August 23, *i.e.*, until Moscow was at last utterly convinced that nothing would now bring the British and French to make a pact.

On the other hand, any suggestion that the British and French governments were not aware of the danger that a pact would be negotiated between the U.S.S.R. and Germany if an Anglo-Franco-Soviet agreement were not made is wholly unfounded. As early as May 7, 1939, M. Coulondre, the French Ambassador to Germany, warned his government that Hitler would aim at an accord with Moscow if the Franco-British negotiations failed, and he repeated his warnings throughout the summer, pleading in vain for an Anglo-Franco-Soviet pact as the only hope for peace, or at the worst for a victorious war.

Turning to British and American sources, one finds that in the first half of June, as recalled in the *Times* article of February 23, 1948, "there were already many reports both in Berlin and Geneva that Ribbentrop was planning to offer Moscow a non-aggression pact and a division of interests in Eastern Europe."

Again, on June 11, 1939, the *New York Times* carried a report from London that "Russia is stringing [the British]

along with the basic idea of ending up by making an arrangement with Hitler." It added that there was little evidence in support; but even a rumor of this kind could hardly have existed without giving one more hint to the British Government—if it could need one—of the danger it was running.

By June 17, the *Times* correspondent in Berlin was able to write:

"If the negotiations [between Britain and the U.S.S.R.] should fail, the Reich will no doubt attempt to secure the Russian front by means of an economic rapprochement as well as political assurances."

A little later, on July 27, 1939, the Moscow correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* reported—rightly or wrongly—that the Russo-German commercial discussions which were publicly stated to be taking place were, "although commercial in form, political in fact," and it was hinted that Germany was seeking an alliance with the Soviet Union.

Later still, on August 14, we find Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, reporting to Berlin that "a member of the American Embassy here, which for the most part is well informed, stated to one of our aides that we could at any moment upset the British-French negotiations, if we abandoned our support of Japan, sent our military mission back to China, and delivered arms to the Chinese."

Assuming there was some basis for the report, it is hardly likely that the American statement would have been either made or passed on if the Germans had not been working to upset the negotiations; and the only way so to work was to make a rival offer.

What was the British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, reporting? This not very far-seeing diplomat, who book, *Failure of a Mission*, is described by Professor Namier as "trifling or absurd in big matters and unreliable even in its simplest statement of facts," gives in his *Final Report on the Circumstances Leading to the Termination of his Mission to Berlin*, published in September, 1939 (Command Paper 6115 of 1939)—a document which betrays a considerable degree of admiration for Hitler—a story that the "secret of the negotiations had been well kept"; but he adds:

"It had been realized that German counter-negotiations had been proceeding throughout the summer, but it was hoped that they had been abandoned after the actual arrival at Moscow of the French and British Military Missions."

What plausible ground there could be for imagining that whatever negotiations there might be would be abandoned just because this group of rather undistinguished military figures (after spending the best part of a fortnight on a leisurely journey) had arrived in Moscow, unequipped with even the faintest authority to agree or decide anything, it is difficult to imagine.

The evidence and the inherent probabilities make it really impossible to believe that the British Government did not understand perfectly well the danger of negotiations fructifying between Moscow and Berlin. They would not of course want the danger pointed out to their public, for that would only increase the strength of public demand for an agreement with the Soviet Union, which it was determined not to make if it could be avoided; and the consequence was that when the Soviet-German Pact was signed the public had a surprise. But no blame should be attached to Moscow for that.

That the British Government was itself negotiating with the Nazis is, I think, pretty well established. The Wohltat negotiations described above amount to a good deal in themselves, and are hardly likely to have been an isolated incident.

The main source of information on this point is, for once, the British Government. It has so far published very little on the subject of all these negotiations, indeed, only three Command Papers, Cd. 6102, 6106, and 6115 of 1939.

The last I have mentioned above; the first contains little of importance that is not in the second, and the second is a book of nearly two hundred pages, oddly entitled *Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939*, as if Poland were really the center of European problems at that time. This publication is a selection of speeches, agreements, communications between British diplomats and the Foreign Secretary, communications between our diplomats

and German and other statesmen and officials or reports of interviews between them, communications between heads of states, and similar documents, preceded by a short summary.

HITLER GUARANTEES BRITISH EMPIRE

The most interesting document for present purposes is a communication (pages 120-22) from Hitler to Sir Neville Henderson of August 25, 1939. This came of course two days after the signature of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact. While no-one need believe in the truth of anything Hitler wrote or said, unless the surrounding circumstances make it inherently probable, it is likely that the text is the actual communication made by Hitler to the Ambassador. The general subject-matter of the communication was the possibility of arriving at an understanding between Britain and Germany; and the most interesting part of the document runs thus:

"The Fuehrer . . . accepts the British Empire and is ready to pledge himself personally for its continued existence and to place the power of the German Reich at its disposal if—

"1. His colonial demands, which are limited and can be negotiated by peaceful methods, are fulfilled, and in this case he is prepared to fix the longest time limit.

"2. His obligations towards Italy are not touched. . . .

"3. He also desires to stress the irrevocable determination of Germany never again to enter into conflict with Russia. The Fuehrer is ready to conclude agreements with England which, as has already been emphasized, would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances so far as Germany is concerned, but also if necessary an assurance to the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary."

It must surely be clear from this document that there had been substantial negotiations between the two powers. Even with Hitler, such a document could not have sprung from

virgin soil, and—if it had—certainly could not have led to the rapid moves that followed.

The document further makes it plain that—as was widely believed in 1938 and 1939—the negotiations included proposals for returning to Germany some or all of her former colonies.

Finally, the blunt—and of course lying—assertion under head (3) as to a possible conflict with the U.S.S.R. is one which would surely never have been included, even by Hitler, if there had not already been in the negotiations some discussion of the scheme that Hitler should attack the U.S.S.R. A most interesting comment on this, six months in advance, was made by Stalin in his speech of March 10, 1939, already mentioned. There, he said:

“Certain European and American politicians and newspapermen, 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 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.”

The British reply, dated August 28, 1939, referring to Hitler’s “proposals which, subject to one condition, he would be prepared to make to the British Government for a general understanding,” pointed out that they were of course “stated in very general form and would require closer definition, but His Majesty’s Government are fully prepared to take them, with some additions, as subjects for discussion; and they would be ready, if the differences between Germany and Poland are peacefully composed, to proceed as soon as practicable to such discussion with a sincere desire to reach agreement.”

This reply was carried from London to Berlin by the British Ambassador, who had flown to London in a German airplane at Hitler’s suggestion (page 122 of Cd. 6106) to put

Hitler’s offer before the British Government. When the Ambassador took the reply to Hitler on the evening of August 28, he reports (page 128) that he informed Hitler that “whatever some people might say, the British people sincerely desired an understanding with Germany, and no-one more so than the Prime Minister. . . . The Prime Minister could carry through his policy of an understanding if, but only if, Herr Hitler were prepared to co-operate.”

NAZI FRIENDSHIP, AUGUST 1939

It was a little later in the same interview (page 130) that there came the often-quoted passage of Sir Neville Henderson:

“At the end, 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.”

In a supplementary communication to Lord Halifax (page 131) reporting on the same communication, the Ambassador stated that Hitler had suggested that Great Britain might offer something at once in the way of colonies as evidence of her good intentions. The Ambassador merely replied that concessions were easier of realization in a good atmosphere than in a bad one.

The Prime Minister, in the House of Commons on August 29 (page 132), giving some account of these negotiations, stated that “Herr Hitler was concerned to impress upon His Majesty’s Government his wish for an Anglo-German understanding of a complete and lasting character.”

The next, the third accusation, is that by occupying the Eastern areas of Poland the Soviet Union was betraying that country, and stabbing it in the back. With it, I can deal with part of the fourth accusation, that she was just an imperialist land-grabber.

It will be remembered that Poland—the old Poland—was or pretended to be so convinced of her own strength that she needed no help, and was so anti-Soviet that she would not allow the Red Army on her soil, nor even have her name on a document if the U.S.S.R. was to sign it too; and yet that, in spite of all the bravery of her troops, she collapsed utterly in the first fortnight of the war. The Red Army crossed into Poland on September 17; Moscow claimed that this was done to protect the lives and property of populations left defenseless by the collapse, while critics in the West said that it was a “stab in the back” to Poland.

“A STAB IN THE BACK”

The main criticisms at the time in Britain, and I suppose the main criticisms sought to be revived now—were and are 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 in the East, have continued such resistance; and, 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 comes in the picture to some extent.

On the first point, it in fact became clear within a few weeks of the events, in spite of the fog and smoke of propaganda—and is still quite clear, even if it has been forgotten until this American publication compelled us to recall the facts—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 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.”

These facts are, I think, sufficient to show that the entry of the Red Army 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.

“LAND-GRABBING”

There is next 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, after calling the Soviet Union all the names they could think of for three decades, 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 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 those territories if the U.S.S.R. had not stepped in; the second, who inhabited those 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.

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. He was in effect compelled by the U.S.S.R. to accept a line of demarcation between his troops and the Red Army

a long way west of the then Polish-Russian frontier—in itself a substantial political and diplomatic defeat. Apart from the military and political advantages to the anti-fascist cause of such a step at the time, surely even a stranger would have a moral right to rescue the inhabitants of these territories from the treatment which Hitler was likely to inflict—and did later inflict—on the people of any land he occupied; and no one could have a better right on this point than the Soviet Union, whose bitterest enemies have to admit that in the treatment of minorities in general and Jews in particular she has shown the whole world an example.

WHAT WAS EASTERN POLAND?

The second point, as to who inhabited the territories in question, and how they came to be under Polish rule, is important both as reinforcing the moral basis of the first and on its own merits.

Few Poles lived in these lands; and the inhabitants were not closely related to the Poles but were White Russians and Ukrainians identical in race, history, and traditions with the White Russians and Ukrainians across the borders of the U.S.S.R. They had moreover resented bitterly for two decades their separation from their kin in the Soviet Union, and the Ukrainians in particular were a nation more keenly conscious than almost any other of national aspirations for unity. They had in addition suffered so acutely from foreign government, misgovernment, brutality, pogroms, and the exactions of alien landlords, that they were more ready than ever to join their racial brothers in an economic and social system which was distinguished by its recognition of the fullest rights for national minorities, which had put an end to pogroms, and which favored methods of land tenure and cultivation that had no need of landlords and tended to raise substantially the agricultural standard of living. The territories had not been 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 unsavory series of imperialist scrambles; and there could certainly be no moral

justification for letting her recover them at the end of the first World War. Part of the territories had been taken by Poland in warfare against the then "White Guard" 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 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 the British dockers to load the *S.S. Jolly George* with munitions for Poland, by the active protests of the Labour Party, and by 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 that followed, the inhabitants, under the reactionary rule of a semi-fascist Polish Government, and the extortions of Polish landlords, presented almost the most tragic example of the fate of "national minorities."

One could quote reams of objective writing between the wars to prove how abominably the old Poland, over which so many reactionary Tories in Britain and America grow sentimental even today, treated the inhabitants of these territories. I must confine myself to two quotations. The first is from the *Daily Herald* of November 27, 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 to-day. . . .

"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."

And the next comes from the *Manchester Guardian* of October 10, 1938:

"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 severe 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 political, educational, and economic organisation has been going on almost without intermission."

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—to point out by way of justification of her action that the vital interests of the Soviet State in the preservation of her 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 should appear in the intoxication of a great military victory directly on her boundaries. She was rather in the position of one who sees his neighbor'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 her neighbor's land, but a real no-man's-land.

Mr. Winston Churchill, broadcasting on October 1, 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 had always coveted and which he had 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, had 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 of Parliament, put it in the House of Commons on September 20, 1939:

"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-defense."

On all these grounds it is surely clear that the U.S.S.R. had ample justification in morals and in international law for what she did.

The accusation of a breach of the Soviet Union's non-aggression pact with Poland really fails also on the ground

that, as a state, Poland had ceased to exist. It may seem like a lawyer's argument to say that you cannot have an effective pact with a state or a government that has in substance disappeared. But it is also 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.

It should be added that the U.S.S.R. had loyally observed her non-aggression pact with Poland, and had taken no steps to regain these territories directly or indirectly, until Poland collapsed and left them lying open and defenseless; but when that happened she had every moral right to step in, and step in swiftly before Hitler could seize them. If anyone could have complained it would have been Hitler, who 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.

The steps taken by the U.S.S.R. in August and September 1939, in relation to the occupation of Polish territory (or more accurately of territory that formed part of the Polish state) have been as fiercely criticized, both in 1939 and again in 1948, as anything else she has done or is alleged to have done; but in truth they were not merely legitimate in themselves but were of great service to the anti-fascist cause, and to the long-term interests of peace. They comprised no agreement "to carve up Poland," but an agreement that, should Poland be carved up—as it was certain that it would be carved up by Hitler—the Soviet Union was to take territories to which she was entitled on ethnographical and many other grounds, and in so doing to deprive the Nazis of Jews and Gentiles to oppress and exploit, of petroleum for their war purposes, and of territory which would in due course help their invasion of the Soviet Union. This meant a severe defeat in advance for the conquering armies of Hitler, who were ready to sweep through the corrupt, rotten Polish state and enslave the workers and peasants who were its subjects and victims. That people who claim to be anti-Nazi should complain of this is evidence of a depth of hostility to the Soviet

Union which will surprise those who have not made a study of the pathology of certain types of politicians.

THEY CHOSE THE BEST MOMENT

One may perhaps conclude the examination of this third accusation by noticing that the exact point of time at which the Soviet troops moved into Poland provides a remarkable proof of the sincerity of the U.S.S.R. Had they gone in a few days earlier, it would have been of real help to the Germans (and, had they 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 only thwart German aims.

On the question whether Poland could be said to have been betrayed, it is interesting to read again the views of Professor Schuman:

"Insofar as this unhappy land [Poland] was 'betrayed' in 1939 by those outside of its own incredibly romantic and short-sighted ruling class, the betrayal was not consummated by Moscow on August 23 [1939] or September 17, but by London and Paris during the spring and early summer. . . . Moscow's decision, bitterly damned by those in the West who had sought to do in reverse exactly what Moscow did, and hotly denounced by many who knew nothing of the realities, are no evidence of turpitude, but merely of diplomatic astuteness. The constant misrepresentation of the Nazi-Soviet Pact as an 'alliance' and the distortion of its meaning by . . . anti-Soviet publicists cannot alter this judgment among those concerned with facts rather than fancies. Chamberlain's policy of fostering a German-Soviet war, with the Western Powers neutral, was a failure, ending in Soviet neutrality in a war in which Britain was soon without allies against the most formidable foe of all time. Stalin's policy of self-protection against the Tory-Nazi threat was a success. . . . The fact remains that Anglo-French policy gave Stalin and Molotov no viable alternative to the course they finally adopted."

MOLOTOV IN BERLIN

The fourth accusation really falls into two quite distinct charges of the same kind of "offense." The first is the move into Poland in September, 1939; with this I have dealt, for convenience, in my answer to the previous accusation. The next is a charge that Molotov, on his visit to Berlin in November, 1940, at a time when Hitler thought—or pretended to think—that he had already won the war, accepted some grandiose offers of a carve-up of the world. The short answer is that he did not accept them, but on the contrary rejected them, and that the whole episode was not a thieves' conclave for the division of loot but a severe defeat for Hitler and a frustration of his scheme to make the Soviet Union his accomplice, to secure his rear for a real attempt to smash the Western democracies and then to enthrone fascism in Europe, and perhaps in the world, for an indefinite period.

That is the answer, but the story is a complex one, and calls for careful examination.

No less than one-seventh of the text of *Nazi-Soviet Relations* is taken up by this visit and its immediate preliminaries; and the greatest part of this consists of the most unreliable type of one-sided Nazi documents, namely, internal memoranda.

The visit had been heralded by elaborate publicity, and it is clear that Hitler hoped for a wide-reaching arrangement that would really secure his rear while he attempted to invade Britain and destroy the British army. But he failed. Molotov was extremely "unforthcoming."

It is hardly necessary to discuss the details of the sensational boasts and the equally sensational offers that were made by Hitler and Ribbentrop in their endeavors to interest Molotov in the pickings to be obtained from the supposed collapse of the British Empire, since he refused to be "drawn" by any of them. Various negotiations followed, but the stiff attitude of Molotov led to a complete breakdown, although all sorts of soothing versions were put out by the Nazis for public consumption.

At any rate, Molotov went back to Moscow without accepting anything—or giving anything away! And on November 26, as appears from pages 258-59 of *Nazi-Soviet Relations*,

Schulenburg reports to the German Foreign Office an interview with Molotov, in which the latter demanded the immediate withdrawal of German troops from Finland, the safeguarding of Soviet security in relation to the Dardanelles by a mutual assistance pact with Bulgaria and by the lease of a base "within range of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles," the recognition of the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf as "the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union," and Japanese renunciation of her rights to concessions in Northern Sakhalin.

MOLOTOV DEFEATS HITLER

This, to Hitler, was a complete rejection. It was indeed, as von Papen said, his major defeat. If he could have acceded to Molotov's demands, it would in the long run have been an even greater defeat for him, and thus a great service to peace.

Yet even here the press finds fault with Moscow. A typical example is to be seen in the *Economist*, which wrote: "Just over three weeks later, Hitler assigned the overall directive for 'Operation Barbarossa.' The Russians had asked too much."

The *Economist* could not even be grateful that Molotov, instead of attempting to secure further postponement of the Nazi attack on the U.S.S.R.—with tangible territorial advantages thrown in—at a possible cost to Great Britain of complete defeat, had by refusing to be fooled or bribed laid the foundations of the great combined machine that was ultimately, at a fearful cost to Molotov's fellow-countrymen, to destroy fascism. It thought it necessary to insinuate that the Soviet statesman had by sheer greed brought upon his country an attack which prudence or moderation could have postponed or averted.

But in truth, as soon as the facts are examined, two points become clear. The first is that this presentation of the case is a complete misrepresentation; and the second, in some ways more important, is that the editors of *Nazi-Soviet Relations* have achieved an unusually glaring example of distortion of the facts. Although the book is described as "Documents from the Archives of the German *Foreign Office*" (my italics)

it yet includes (on pages 260-64) one—and only one—document drawn from the Archives of the Wehrmacht, namely, the famous "Directive No. 21" for Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the U.S.S.R.), dated December 18, 1940. This is the document referred to by the *Economist* in the quotation given above.

Why the editors selected this one Wehrmacht document can be guessed—it was to mislead the *Economist* and anyone else who could be misled; but other Wehrmacht documents on the same topic, disclosed at the Nürnberg trial, make it plain that, so far from the decision to invade the Soviet Union having been taken after Molotov's November visit, and as a result of his attitude, preparations for the attack had begun not later than the previous August, and had, for example, been communicated to von Paulus (afterwards to become a Field Marshal, and to surrender to a Red Army Lieutenant in a cellar at Stalingrad) on September 3, 1940, when he became Quartermaster-General of the German General Staff. And three days later, on September 6, Jodl issued from Hitler's headquarters a statement that German forces in the East were to be strengthened substantially by the end of October. On November 4, Hitler ordered that "preparations for Ostfall" (case East, an earlier name, probably, for Barbarossa) "are to be continued."

It is just conceivable that, had Molotov allowed himself to be duped by Hitler and Ribbentrop, the Nazis might have felt safe enough to invade Britain without first attempting to destroy the Soviet Union; but surely not even the most bigoted anti-Soviet partisan would wish to revile the U.S.S.R. for having saved Britain from such a dangerous invasion, and forced upon Hitler the ever dreaded "two-front war," by resisting Nazi blandishments at this fateful period.

GERMANY LOSES THE WAR

A very fair summary of this episode is to be found in the *New York Times* of January 25, 1948:

"Hitler wanted Molotov to sign a Four-Power Treaty—Germany, Russia, Italy and Japan—to divide up the world. Molotov balked. . . . The conference was a failure. Molotov and Hitler did not get along either diplomatically or personally. Later the clever von Papen declared that it was at this meeting that Germany lost the war."

The (London) *Times* on February 24, 1948, gives an interesting summary of the negotiations, emphasizing the realist caution of Molotov and the uncomfortable cross-examination to which he submitted both Hitler and Ribbentrop. Perhaps nowhere in the whole story does the superiority of the Soviet negotiators stand out more clearly than in this episode.

With regard to the fifth main accusation, that the U.S.S.R. was helping Germany with supplies during the war, it would be easy to go through long passages of the book—always of course containing only the Nazi version—and to observe how sometimes one and sometimes another of the two parties were defaulting, or complaining of the other's default. If one turns once again to the Nürnberg disclosures, one finds that to satisfy Soviet demands, in default of which the deliveries from the East would be withheld, it became necessary as early as March 30, 1940, for Hitler to order that priority for war material for the Soviet Union should be given even over deliveries to the German armed forces themselves. (By August, 1940, it is interesting to note, it had been decided that such punctual delivery was only to be given up to the spring of 1941.)

But any charge against the Soviet Union in relation to supplies can really be answered more generally. To begin with, as has already been shown, the U.S.S.R. had no real option but to make a pact with the Germans; having made it on the best terms they could, they had to keep to it in the main, for fear of precipitating an attack. And they owed—as already explained—no moral duty to the Western democracies, who as yet were not fighting a truly anti-fascist war.

In the second place, it ill becomes the British or the Americans—of all people—to complain that one ought not to supply goods of military importance to a country with whom one is likely to be soon at war, or with whom some other country who will be your ally is at present at war. Such a complaint would invite awkward questions as to the quantities of invaluable war material which the British were supplying to Hitler right up to the last moment, and as to the similar treatment of Japan by the U.S.A. (As a picturesque touch, much of the old “elevated” railway in New York City went to Japan to make shells to kill American sailors and soldiers.) Indeed, one might be led to enquire further, and to recall the promises of the Du Ponts to I. G. Farben at the beginning of the war in 1939 not to pass on any patent knowledge to British firms, and the fact that their cartel agreement with I. G. Farben for a long time limited severely the supply of magnesium to Britain by the Aluminum Company of America and the Dow Chemical Company.

V. NAZI-SOVIET RELATIONS

Up to this relatively late stage of the book, it has been possible and indeed convenient to deal with the charges against the Soviet Union without following them line by line through the documents printed in *Nazi-Soviet Relations*. This is partly because the charges are rather implied in or based on the documents, than specifically made in them, for after all they were prepared by the Nazi enemies of the Soviet Union, and not either by or for her Washington and Wall Street enemies; and it is partly because there is so little that is really new in the book, and the charges are consequently well-known. But there are definitely some parts of the book that should be examined specifically, and answered expressly. This task I shall now undertake.

It is not easy to decide exactly what passages call for such examination, for in these days, when any stick is good enough to be used to belabor the people who fought at Stalingrad, Leningrad, Sevastopol, Moscow, and scores of other tragic and glorious battlefields, bleeding while they waited three years for the opening of the Second Front, one can never guess which unlikely Nazi document may be picked out of this collection, treated as wholly true, and made the subject of a diatribe; but I have done my best to select everything that has been or seems likely to be used as the basis of attack.

Perhaps the first point in the book that need be mentioned is that in the interesting (but of course, like the rest of the book, Nazi-sided) account of the interview between Stalin, Molotov, and Ribbentrop on the night of August 23-24, 1939, (pages 72-75), Stalin, after speaking naturally enough with some hostility towards Great Britain, added—according to the Germans—the very just tribute: “England, despite its weakness, will wage war craftily and stubbornly.”

CONGRATULATIONS?

There comes at this stage, on September 9 (page 89) an item which has been widely—and pretty inaccurately—described in the British press (e.g. the *Daily Telegraph* of February 5, 1948, and the *News-Chronicle* of March 5) as a message of congratulation on the fall of Warsaw from Molotov to Schulenburg. What it was, in truth, was Schulenburg's version, in a report to Berlin, of a telephone message from Molotov, in answer to a communication (of which the text is not given) from Schulenburg to Molotov. It is best to quote the whole of the report, thus:

“I have just received the following telephone message from Molotov: ‘I have received your communication regarding the entry of German troops into Warsaw. Please convey my congratulations and greetings to the German Reich Government. Molotov.’”

Now what is the true view of this? The U.S.S.R. had been driven into the pact of non-aggression. Its one object and duty was to keep itself free from attack as long as possible, to build itself up for the war. With that in view, it had to be as conciliatory as possible; and at the very least it had to preserve the conventional diplomatic courtesies towards the Nazis. The latter had just achieved a great military victory over Poland, due in part, no doubt, to the incompetence of the Polish Government, far more to their refusal of Soviet aid in the summer negotiations, and to a fair extent to the complete inability of the British and French to bring them any more help than the dropping of leaflets in Germany. This great—undeniably great, however horrible—victory over the Poles, much increasing the danger to the U.S.S.R. and shortening the time which it might hope still to have to prepare, called for the greatest circumspection, for the avoidance of any ground for reproach from Berlin, for at least the utmost courtesy. And what did Berlin get from Molotov? Not a line of writing! Not even an invitation to Schulenburg to call and receive congratulations! Just something, or nothing, over a telephone, which Schulenburg found it possible or advisable to report in the cold and “correct” terms quoted above! Could Molotov

have done less? Should anyone have been surprised or shocked in the circumstances if he had gone further, and actually sent a postcard? But that is all he did; and that is made a subject of headlined attack.

After this, on page 91, we find on September 10, in a dispatch from Schulenburg to Berlin, a great anxiety to press Molotov to occupy Eastern Poland. This links up with what is set out above, and it is hardly necessary to discuss it further at length.

There is a further communication from Schulenburg to Berlin on September 16, 1939 (page 95), from which it appears—so far as it can be trusted—that Molotov was informing Schulenburg of the declaration which would be made on the entry of the Red Army into Poland, to the effect that:

“The Polish State had collapsed and no longer existed; therefore all agreements concluded with Poland were void; third powers might try to profit by the chaos which had arisen; the Soviet Union considered itself obligated to intervene to protect its Ukrainian and White Russian brothers and make it possible for these unfortunate people to work in peace.”

The proposed declaration “contained a note that was jarring to German sensibilities,” but Molotov insisted that it must stand.

There is some material in the wording of this communication which might suggest cynicism and insincerity on the part of Molotov and his colleagues; but one is surely justified in ignoring anything in these Nazi reports that does not consist of well-confirmed facts.

There came at this time the declaration (page 108) of September 28, calling for the end of the state of war in Europe. For those who judge in the light of the war as it subsequently developed, this provides a plausible ground of criticism; but at that time, with Britain and France conducting a “phony” war with pamphlets, with many signs that France was rotten within, with the long history of British hostility to the U.S.S.R., and the danger of further Nazi adventures, it would have been of great service to the world, and in particular to the task of ultimately uprooting fascism, if the war had

stopped—for a time—then. At any rate, in all the circumstances set out above, no one could blame the Soviet Union for thinking that it was an advantage, or for seeking to achieve it.

FINNS SEEK GERMAN HELP

The next matter of interest—a new one—comes on October 9 (page 121). Seven weeks before the outbreak of the 1939-40 war between the U.S.S.R. and Finland—in which Finland was to become so greatly favored by Britain and France as to be furnished from their dangerously scanty stocks with airplanes and other military equipment to use against the U.S.S.R., and was even to be promised an expeditionary force of 100,000 to help her “destroy” the Red Army—we find the Finnish Government (so far as we can trust Nazi documents) seeking German help against the U.S.S.R. This throws a flood of light on Finland’s orientation, later to become so clear, and on German hostility to the Soviet Union. The Memorandum in question, signed by State Secretary Weizsäcker, is worth quoting:

“The Finnish Minister had announced a visit today to the Reich Foreign Minister. On the latter’s instructions I received Herr Wuorimaa this afternoon. He presented the following facts:

“By virtue of the developments in the Baltic States, Russia had now penetrated so far into the Baltic that the balance of power there had been upset, and predominance threatened to pass to Russia. The lack of interest in this matter on the part of Germany had attracted attention in Finland, since there was reason there to assume that Russia intended to make demands on Finland identical with those made on the Baltic states.

“The Finnish Government had requested of Wuorimaa that he find out whether Germany remains indifferent to Russia’s forward thrust in this direction, and, should that not prove to be the case, to learn what stand Germany intends to take.

“The Minister added that, on her part, Finland had

tried her best during the last few weeks to regulate her commercial relations with Germany and maintain them on a normal basis and to carry out the policy of neutrality desired by Germany also.

“I answered the Minister in the sense of the enclosed instructions to Helsinki. Wuorimaa asked me to call him if we had anything further to add.

“From the words of the Minister it could be inferred that the Finnish Government was rather disturbed over the Russian demands and would not submit to oppression as did Estonia and Latvia.

“As regards this attitude on the part of the Minister I merely said that I hoped and wished that Finland might settle matters with Russia in a peaceful manner.”

It is worth adding a communication (page 123) of the following day from the German Minister in Finland to Berlin:

“All indications are that if Russia will not confine its demands to islands in the Gulf of Finland, Finland will offer armed resistance. The consequences for our war economy would be grave. *Not only food and timber exports, but also indispensable copper and molybdenum exports from Finland to Germany would cease.* For this reason I suggest you intercede with Russian Government in the sense that it should not go beyond a demand for the islands.”

A point on the Finnish problem is noticed in a dispatch from Berlin to Schulenburg on December 6 (page 129), a week after the Finnish-Soviet war broke out. Weizsäcker wrote:

“There is no doubt that British influence on the Finnish Government—partly operating through Scandinavian capitals—induced the Finnish Government to reject Russian proposals and thereby brought on the present conflict.”

Again, too much reliance must not be placed on this; but it conforms remarkably with a view already widely held.

There might be thought, on April 9, 1940 (page 138), to be another slight hint that—according to the Nazis—Molotov

was friendly over the proposed invasion of Norway. Schulenburg attributes to him the phrase: "We wish Germany complete success in her defensive measure."

Careful enough; and two days later (page 138) Schulenburg is reporting that there had been "a distinct shift . . . unfavorable to us," of which he gave instances, such as a suspension of petroleum and grain shipments. He reports, truly or falsely, a subsequent improvement after Germany had invaded Norway, and gives a reason which is worth quoting—without necessarily fully believing it. He wrote to Berlin:

"I suspect the following: The Soviet Government is always extraordinarily well informed. If the English and French intended to occupy Norway and Sweden it may be assumed with certainty that the Soviet Government knew of these plans and was apparently terrified by them. The Soviet Government saw the English and French appearing on the shores of the Baltic Sea, and they saw the Finnish question reopened, as Lord Halifax had announced; finally they dreaded most of all the danger of becoming involved in a war with two Great Powers. Apparently this fear was relieved by us."

On June 18, 1940 (page 154), there is an incident resembling the "congratulations" on the fall of Warsaw. By this time Germany had become by a colossal—and again a horrible—series of victories probably greater for the moment in a military sense than any country had ever been. And what does Molotov do—according to Schulenburg?

Again, no line of writing; but this time he actually sees Schulenburg face to face. And is said to express "warmest congratulations of the Soviet Government at the splendid success." A trifle less chilly over the capture of half a continent than over that of a capital city? Yes. But the spoonful of jam is accompanied by pretty grim powder, in the form of the announcement of the steps the Soviet Government proposed to take in the three Baltic republics. Germany could not stop this move, which not only strengthened the Soviet Union strategically against the coming German attack but also deprived Germany of supplies which it was drawing and hoping to draw from those states. (As it appears from pages

152-53, these supplies were valuable, and had been the subject of secret agreements between Germany and these states.)

EASTERN FRONT WORRIES HITLER

On March 29, 1941 (page 303), we find Ribbentrop informing Matsuoka, the Japanese Foreign Minister, that "the greater part of the German army was on the Eastern boundary of the Reich, and was ready to attack at any time."

Ribbentrop may well have been lying; even when not setting out to lie, he seldom told the truth; but there is a great deal of evidence to show that throughout the period of the war when the U.S.S.R. was still neutral the Germans kept heavy forces in the East. The assertion—made of course into a reproach against the Soviet Union—that the Non-Aggression Pact had enabled Hitler to "clear his rear" to fight Britain was certainly not one on which Hitler even acted; indeed, one important reason for his attempt to give the U.S.S.R. a large part of the world to which to deflect their energies was that he wanted to feel, as he never had felt, that his rear was clear. The facts as to his troop dispositions in the East during the "neutral" period can partly be gleaned from the long and rather hysterical letter which Hitler wrote to Mussolini on June 21, 1941 (pages 349-53).

In this letter, beginning with an accusation that the U.S.S.R. is "reverting firmly to the old Bolshevik tendency to expansion of the Soviet State," he continues:

"The prolongation of the war necessary for this purpose is to be achieved by tying up German forces in the East, so that—particularly in the air—the German Command can no longer vouch for a large scale attack in the West. I declared to you only recently, Duce, that it was precisely the success of the experiment in Crete that demonstrated how necessary it is to make use of every single airplane in the much greater project against England. It may well happen that in this decisive battle we would win with a superiority of only a few squadrons. I shall not hesitate a moment to undertake such a responsibility if, aside from all other conditions, I at least possess the one certainty

that I will not then suddenly be attacked or even threatened from the East.

"If circumstances should give me cause to employ the German air force against England, there is danger that Russia will then begin its strategy of extortion in the South and North, to which I would have to yield in silence, simply from a feeling of air inferiority. It would, above all, not then be possible for me, without adequate support from an air force, to attack the Russian fortifications with the divisions stationed in the East.

"I, also, was compelled to place more and more armored units on the eastern border."

The widely held belief that at most stages of the "neutral" period seventy Nazi divisions were kept on the Eastern front is to some extent confirmed by a statement in the latter part of the same letter: "Even if I should be obliged at the end of this year to leave sixty or seventy divisions in Russia"—he was dreaming of victory, of course—"that is only a fraction of the forces that I am continually using on the Eastern front."*

A further reference to his hope to be able—after the awaited victory over the Soviet Union—to turn on England "with our rear secured" confirms that he had never felt up to that time that his rear was secure. The West was thus, in a sense, saved by the U.S.S.R. even before it entered the war; Hitler never felt able to use his full strength against the West while the Soviet Union was "in being," and consequently in the end, unable to buy it off in any way, had to attack it. Thus did he achieve defeat.

The evidence of General Jodl and Field Marshal Keitel at the Nürnberg trials confirms this. It does not detract from the great merits of the R.A.F. in the Battle of Britain to recall that on November 27, 1945, at his trial, Jodl gave as the reason why the Nazis had never directly attempted to invade Britain that "no one could take upon himself to allow the German air arm to bleed to death, in view of the struggle which lay ahead against Soviet Russia."

* It is curious to recall that Hitler, who did not feel safe against the U.S.S.R., non-belligerent up to 1941, with less than seventy divisions, contented himself for nearly three years after with about 20-24 divisions in the West to confront the belligerents there.

Later, in June, 1946, Jodl gave evidence that during the campaign in Poland there were only twenty-three German divisions in the West, facing some 110 French and British. Field Marshal Keitel, on April 4, had put the figure as low as twenty. Both witnesses were seeking to establish an argument, but it is doubtful whether they would have lied about a matter no doubt verifiable from available German documents; and it is probable that, for years after, the figure of twenty-three was not greatly exceeded.

(It is worth noticing very briefly that, during the "neutral" period or some part of it, the French and British, inactive against the German armies and planning to help the Finns against the U.S.S.R., were maintaining something like forty divisions in Syria, and were actually planning an invasion of the Caucasus as well, with a view to attacking the oil fields and refineries of Baku and Batum.)

