

CURRENT MAGAZINES

SOVIET RUSSIA AS BRITAIN'S ALLY

A Henchman of Stalin: Sidelights on Dictatorship—Mr. H. C. Fox, in the *Quarterly*.

Russian Achievements—Major-General Sir. C. Gwynn, in the *Fortnightly*.

Teuton and Slav—Brigadier-General John Charteris, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

IN a famous passage of acquiescent wonder, at the turn things had taken before his eyes, Thomas Carlyle exclaimed: "This also—in the cycle of Revolving Ages—this also was a thing we were to see".

Are we reduced to such despair of explanation as we contemplate Soviet Russia allying herself, almost overnight, with Great Britain? Josef Stalin in consultation with Winston Churchill about the method by which they may work together for Europe's rebuilding! In last number of this magazine an effort was made to disclose causes, acting beneath the surface, by which Molotov was determined to diplomatic partnership with Ribbentrop. He is now, instead, the partner of Anthony Eden! Did Lewis Carroll (whose teeming imagination in wonders inspired an article for the July issue of *The Dalhousie Review*) ever present in fantastic fiction a stranger reversal than this piece of contemporary fact?

I

So far as Stalin and Molotov are concerned, we have a manifest key to the puzzle. For them, it was a matter of sheer self-defence: "Kill or Be Killed". They began to fight their German "friend" of yesterday because that extraordinary person—under a sudden impulse that looked like what doctors call homicidal mania—had attacked them; of course they then became eager to cooperate with Britain. Why had they not been more wary, nearly two years before, in dealing with a person whose murderous mania had already shown itself against several others? It does seem queer. But it is only fair to remember how hard was the choice which Molotov had to make in that summer of 1939.

The bargain which Ribbentrop then offered him was alternative to a bargain with Georges Bonnet of France and Josef Beck of Poland. What trust could a Soviet leader place in either of these? Suppose Russia had come in, as solicited, to be co-guarantor of Poland against German aggression. Josef Beck was stipulating that fulfilment of the guarantee should in no case bring Russian troops on Polish soil, because Poles disliked and feared Russians more than even Germans—a truly remarkable attitude, as Molotov pointed out, for a victim towards a rescuer! No one who knew Georges Bonnet could feel any confidence that the French Foreign Office under his control would not enter into a secret arrangement with Ribbentrop for betrayal of a Soviet Russian ally. Of what practical use, in such circumstances, would be the British guarantee? What access would Britain then have to the area of battle, and what strength of airplanes could she or would she spare for action in Poland? Upon the U. S. S. R., fighting alone, with paper pledges from allies unable or unwilling to fulfill them, the whole *Blitzkrieg* might thus fall.

Thoughts such as these must have haunted the mind of the Russian Foreign Secretary, and no doubt he knew well that another *Munich Agreement* was actually being plotted that very moment at the Quai d'Orsay. Molotov would think again about the events of eleven months before: about the way the Czecho-slovakian crisis had ended, as a presage of the way the Polish crisis might well end: that meeting of Chamberlain, Daladier, Mussolini, Hitler, on which Russia had been warned so peremptorily not to intrude! He would recall, too, the attitude of both British and French Foreign Offices to Russia's alleged "intervention" in the Spanish Civil War. So if he sprang a shocking surprise on his French and British colleagues at that 1939 Conference in Moscow, it should be noted that the whole period was one in which wild chances were being taken; precedent and earlier practice had ceased to supply any guide, for country after country had been acting in a manner the precise opposite of what its past might have led one to expect.

The conduct of Russia during that extraordinary interchange on Poland was one for which I here offer no defence or apology. Duplicity of others is not redeemed but rather made worse by one's own counter-duplicity. But the coming impartial historian is likely, in describing what took place at Moscow the last week of August, 1939, to modify and amend those terms of

reprobation that were at once showered upon the Soviet negotiators by the contemporary press of London and of Paris.

Molotov's feeling may well have been much like that which Mrs. Poyser, in *Adam Bede*, put so well: "It's fine talking, but it's hard to tell which is Old Harry, now that everybody has got boots on".

II

That Stalin had no alternative, and—as a mere means of self-preservation—must combine his forces even with those of "capitalist" Britain (since his co-dictator had betrayed him), is plain enough. But why on earth did Hitler suddenly turn this most serviceable friend of his régime into an implacable enemy? Rumor has it that Goering disapproved, and incurred his Chief's fierce displeasure in consequence—Ribbentrop's advice being preferred (as on at least two previous occasions). From Stockholm, *via* Moscow, came (three weeks after the invasion of Russia) a story that the Air Marshal had been shut up in a Nazi concentration camp, shrieking imprecations on the agent for champagne who presumed to judge the capacity of an Air Force. The story may have been a mere product of Soviet inventiveness: it elicited next day a counter-story from Berlin, that the Russian government was about to flee from Moscow! About each, the radio commentators warned us "It is unconfirmed". And unconfirmed each remains still.

But it needed neither Goering nor anyone else of the inner circle to point out the enormous loss and risk to Nazi purpose from an attack last June upon Russia. What were the compelling reasons on the other side, for incurring the risk and facing the loss? Perhaps it had to be done because Germany was running so short of wheat and oil? That sounds unconvincing, for Russia was sworn to cooperate with Germany, and their interests were so closely united that one cannot think an appeal from Berlin for needful war supplies would have been refused at Moscow. Molotov says that no such appeal had been made and refused: there is no reason to doubt his word about this, or to suppose (as has been curiously suggested) that Hitler's design was to get the supplies *without payment*. How much wheat and oil could have been bought for less than the cost of this Russian campaign? And what gigantic quantities of oil had to be used up in thus fighting a friend of yesterday! The economic explanation, as Miss Dorothy Thompson was quick to point out, seems unacceptable.

Was Hitler, by any chance, suspicious of his Russian associate? Can we believe that there was even a substratum of truth in his account of the menacing 22 Russian divisions massed on the German frontier? Now that Poland has been divided between them, these dictatorial States, once more neighbors, may be a threat to each other. And of course, in Hitler's eyes, the security of a "Pact" is but an elephantine jest. It is not a complete reply to point out how far superior was the German to the Russian fighting strength last June, and how improbable for this reason was any attempt by those "22 divisions" at invasion of Germany. Hitler, according to this theory, was looking ahead: he had in mind his own project of invading Britain, and was taking measures to secure his rear as preliminary to such bold move forward. No doubt the Russian divisions on his frontier could not with any prospect of success invade Germany last summer. But if the coming Nazi attack on Britain should fail, those Soviet troops ("poised", as the vivid despatch puts it, "for descent on the Reich") might be very dangerous indeed. A Germany driven frantic by external disaster would thus be an easy prey to "the Bolshevizers".

This suggested explanation has been the topic of much inconclusive argument. It is a sterile enquiry; for at present those who know the answer will not disclose it (nor would they carry conviction if they did), and the evidence otherwise available is insufficient to decide. The accessible facts are such as would indeed be met by this theory, that Hitler distrusted Stalin and thought it needful to disable him before undertaking an invasion of Britain whose failure—if it did fail—would give Stalin such a chance. But can we suppose Hitler to be making serious plans for what should happen in the event of complete catastrophe to his invading army? Does anyone think him so concerned as that for any interest but his own? And so far as his own interest goes, once the great onslaught on Britain had been tried and had failed, it would certainly make no difference what else he had done or had left undone. The stakes for which he is playing are much too high: there is no possibility between a hit and a miss. After such a miss, Hitler's display to his countrymen of what he has taught them to call "liquidation" would suggest the next step—to be taken (as in Roehm's case) for him if not *by* him.

If it was not to secure any material advantage otherwise out of his reach, perhaps he attacked Soviet Russia for the sake of the moral impression abroad? To waken enthusiasm for

Nazi Germany in that part of every country where the master motive is anti-Communism? It would be expensive and highly speculative advertising, but Europe's great showman—with a confidence in his own sagacity regarding propaganda which a long run of successes may be quoted to explain—may have taken this chance for revival of a waning prestige. As champion of anti-Communism, he had at first become strong enough at home to extort concession of the Chancellorship. The Fifth Column, which rallied to his support later in country after country, in Norway and Belgium, in the Netherlands and France, had come in response to the same lure. Japan, constantly on the watch against the inroad of "dangerous thoughts" (the Japanese term for Communist argument), had bound herself to the Nazi cause as this embodied itself in the "Anti-Comintern Pact". But the alliance cemented with Soviet Russia in August, 1939, had affected very seriously these sources of early strength, and it was beginning to seem doubtful whether there had been loss or gain on balance by that transaction. Especially Japan, whose support (as a deterrent to the United States) might be so precious, had intimated that the Nazi-Soviet bargain made it needful for her to reconsider how she stood.

Thus the mind of the Fuehrer seems to have worked, and the decision to have been reached, in characteristic contempt of every scruple about consistency or good faith. He would take down from their resting-place the sheets of propagandist rhetoric he had used in years gone by against "Bolshevism", construct from them new and up-to-date phrases of abuse about "the scum of the earth in Moscow", and announce a crusade under Nazi leadership for the twin causes of Christianity and private property. For the sake of the property element in this slogan, Japan would no doubt tolerate the element about Christianity, and the threat of breach in the Anti-Comintern Pact might thus be warded off. The whole sequel, in Axis manifestos since June 22nd, goes to confirm this interpretation. As these lines are being written, a bulletin quotes Mussolini's telegram to Hitler, despatched on return to Rome after the five-day conference late in August on the Russo-German war front: "The fervid days which we passed together at your headquarters, and the visits made to our troops engaged in the war against Bolshevism, will remain . . . an uncancellable memory in my mind."

War against *Bolshevism*—this is what the Nazi propagandist authority requires to be always emphasized! Poor Mussolini

is probably now no more responsible for the telegrams bearing his signature than the aged Pétain for the broadcast speeches he reads. Closest of all perhaps is the analogy with Hindenburg's message of congratulation to the Fuehrer on the Blood Bath of midsummer, 1934. It was understood to have come to his desk all ready, with requirement of quick signature "along the dotted line". Hitler's talent is for such negotiation with the aged.

There was an interval of curious hesitation, after Russia was announced to be at war with Germany, before Britain declared herself Russia's ally. One observed an attempt (surely the product of some legal brain in its more grotesque and untimely mood) to distinguish "ally" from "co-belligerent". At a sign from Mr. Churchill, the lawyers soon postponed these professional diversions to a time with more leisure for their enjoyment, and a close Anglo-Russian military alliance was proclaimed, pledging each partner to complete cooperation and to refusal of a separate peace.

Despite this closely rivetted association, Soviet Russia was not asked to join in the *Statement of War Aims* issued by President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill on August 15, from "somewhere in the Atlantic". It is among the paradoxes with which the present scene is laden that War Aims were declared by a Power formally still neutral, but not by a Power sacrificing blood and treasure on an enormous scale in the fight. A paradox, however, as G. K. Chesterton used to tell us, is not just a contradiction; it is rather a truth to which the terse summaries of everyday language are inadequate. Everyone (except apparently Mr. Herbert Hoover, Mr. Charles Lindbergh, and a few others for whom a special explanation at once suggests itself) can see justifiable alliance for a special military purpose among partners whose ultimate aims are different. History does not record any protest during the Crimean War against alliance between British and Turks (on the ground that it might commit Britain to approval of polygamy), or during the first World War against the Western Powers availing themselves of Arab allies lest this might prove a dangerous *rapprochement* with Islam. The association of Soviet Russia just now with Britain and the United States is for the single end of overthrowing Hitlerism. For reasons far from coinciding, and at times far from being even similar, Hitlerism is hated in Moscow as it is in London and in Washington. Practical wisdom directs that whoever will lend a hand at this hour in the attack on this monster should have the help of everyone else who wants to destroy it. What practical

wisdom no less plainly forbids is that such assault should be interrupted or delayed by a dispute among the assailants about motives which are so various for an enterprize that is one and the same.

III

Miss Dorothy Thompson declares that the attack on Russia as a lure to the anti-Communist nations has been futile: the "Holy Crusade", she says, has turned out "the dud of duds". Certainly the first announcements of its effect were such as only a very adroit advertising agent could construe to his principals as encouraging. Mussolini, we were told, was sending Italian auxiliaries for the Crusade: but everyone knew that Hitler could have requisitioned such auxiliaries for any purpose. Rumania, too, was reported as starting an anti-Jewish, anti-Communist pogrom; but with Rumania in the hands of German garrisons, no ridiculous pretext of a Crusade was needful to effect this. At Madrid a recruiting office for volunteers in the anti-Soviet War was opened, but not apparently with the explicit sanction (though it must have had the permission) of General Franco. Most favorable among the apparent results of the new move, from the Nazi point of view, was the excitement stirred in certain countries of Latin-America, such as Bolivia, Brazil, and of course Argentina, where the fear of Communism, always intense, was quickened by Hitler's action into plans to thwart President Roosevelt's appeal for Pan-American democratic unity. But such were indeed slender gains in comparison with what the venture must before long have cost.

It is incredible that the Nazi strategists decided on the step taken last 22nd June with complete miscalculation of the probable consequences. We do well to suspect a theory which explains what these men decide upon as "just stupid": unfortunately this is far from an accurate account of them. What, then, is it in the future which this attack on Russia is expected to ensure? What, particularly, from the point of view of Nazi leaders, whose imagination must already be haunted by coming terms of peace? The answer surely is that this attack on Russia, this definite forcing of Britain and the United States—in conflict with Germany—to become Soviet Russia's allies, is meant to bring to Germany's help in the coming settlement every interest, British or American, which is first and foremost anti-Soviet. Such interests can do little for Hitler

now. They can do nothing whatever in Great Britain, where so many of their typical men (not nearly all, but enough to scare the rest into silence or even into pseudo-patriotism) are in concentration camp. In the United States they can now effect no more than occasional obstruction or delay of lease-lend supplies, under pretence of concern for "America First". But the Nazis, who look far ahead, believe that the chance for their friends ("those of our way of thinking in England", as Hitler once called them) will come again at the Peace Conference, and are already preparing for that.

Most probably the scheme is one of Ribbentrop's devising. The laurels of his shrewd advice to the Fuehrer about Czechoslovakia, three years ago, are not yet quite faded. Not even the demonstrated folly of his advice a year later about Poland has made Hitler cease to trust him as, on the whole, the surest judge of how to manipulate groups in enemy countries. As German ambassador in London, and later as Foreign Minister of the Reich in constant contact with the French Foreign Office, he developed complete confidence in his own discernment of "the way to pull wires" abroad. Ribbentrop knew in Paris the men who worked, five years ago, in Mussolini's interest, to defeat "Sanctions"; he knew the editors they bribed, the Fascist and semi-Fascist organizations with which they threatened the Republic. He perfectly understood (indeed he has told us that Georges Bonnet acknowledged it to him) how French leaders, engaged in this intrigue with the dictatorship, had to make all manner of "orthodox" republican speeches, in the Chamber and outside, so as to keep their hold upon those simpletons, the French people. But he understood with equal clarity how in a crisis such men as Bonnet and Laval would either coerce or cajole France into doing the dictators' will. And why? Because their own interests and the interests of their class were so much more secure against insurgent Labor in France while dictatorship prevailed across the Rhine and across the Alps. A conspicuous confirmation of the Ribbentrop analysis had been seen in the surrender of France last year—by the very same men who, for six preceding years, had played at Paris so cautiously the Fascist game.

Flushed with this crowning success, enough to make Hitler recall his wisdom about Czechoslovakia and forget his mistake about Poland, the Nazi Foreign Minister tackles the harder problem of Britain and the United States. Convinced that there are the makings of Fifth-Column everywhere, and that

these consist primarily of men alarmed at the insurgence of Labor, he thinks of his contacts during years gone by—in London, Washington, perhaps even Ottawa and Montreal. He remembers the constant talk about how democracy is inefficient, how the League of Nations was but the dream of an American pedagogue, how obviously there must always be wars, how the world's real danger is "Communism", and how thankful "everyone who has anything" ought to be for Mussolini and Hitler who had taken so stern a line with "the Reds". Ribbentrop was a familiar visitor at "Cliveden", and if he mistook some whom he met there for British counterparts of Laval and Bonnet, he had some excuse for it. No doubt they said things in his hearing which they only half meant, but which Bonnet and Laval when they spoke so had meant wholly. And with Teutonic lack of humor, Ribbentrop would mistake as seriously intended what was in part a cynical jest, in part a touch of politeness to keep the German ambassador in good mood. "Poor, pale Ribbentrop," says the *London Times*: "he never could understand us". No doubt it was his fault, but it was not altogether his fault, if he so heavily exaggerated the promise of pliability to Nazi design in influential British circles. It was playing with fire when "men of pith and moment" ran the risk of being so misconstrued by so dangerous an observer. And if some of them were not misconstrued, but were indeed as he conceived them, so much the worse. The British Labor spokesmen, who have been demanding the resignation of two of Mr. Churchill's colleagues as false to our Russian ally, adopt apparently the graver estimate.

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If this way of interpreting Hitler's attack on Russia is correct, if it is indeed meant chiefly to stamp the war as a conflict between Reds and anti-Reds (Hitler leading the latter) so that those in all countries nervous about "property" will combine to make the settlement favorable—or at least easy—for Hitler, what is the inference?

It is but common sense to learn, when one has the chance, from an enemy. What Hitler is arranging to intensify, when the time for settlement comes, it is for the British to limit or exclude: and this is specially simple when the instruments of his design are certain qualities in the temperament of certain British people that we know very well indeed.

We must expect, when the reconstructing job begins, much reiteration of the impossibility of "keeping 85,000,000 people permanently down", and much emphasis on the alleged injustices of the Treaty of Versailles. There will follow eager insistence that Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, Hess are not typical Germans, but abnormal, and that if only they (and a limited number like them) were dropped, the Reich would be able to take its place as a most valuable member in the comity of European Powers. The duty of being "magnanimous" in the hour of victory will be pointed out. And the fearful danger of having Germany either "balkanized" or "bolshevized" will be developed with earnestness. These will be quite honest pleas, as they come from some who at that time of international debate will claim to be heard. It is not, however, from those who will use them honestly (and hence are amenable to reason on the subject) that Hitler has much to hope or we to fear.

It is from those who feel but one genuine anxiety—lest in the débâcle of the dictators an enterprize of social justice, by which their personal fortunes would suffer, may be facilitated. With a rueful misgiving which they dared not express, certain groups, long over-privileged, read the passage in the Roosevelt-Churchill Declaration about "social security". Hitler and Mussolini had at least been their safeguards against such a menace as that! Already here and there a voice is heard—from the quarters that were most vociferous against Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal—to denounce the British-American-Soviet alliance as immoral and godless. The real objection is to its peril for the protester's property. Ribbentrop, with memories from London, Paris, Washington, Ottawa, was not mistaken about the chords which, in certain highly influential natures, he could make to vibrate.

If he foresaw how these might be used on the Nazi side, cannot we take measures in time to nullify them? We know the groups: memories of the Abyssinian affair and the Spanish, of the Austrian and the Czechoslovakian, supply name after name. The motives, the method, the whole ignoble machinery, for a time hidden, have been uncovered by the sequel. To be forewarned in such a matter is to be forearmed. As in business, so in international affairs. "It may not be your fault to be deceived once, but to be deceived twice by the same swindler is your fault."

H. L. S.