

# ANGLO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

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**B**LUE-PRINTS of a new world are gradually taking shape. The first sketch was drawn at the historic conference between Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt at sea in August, 1941, when the so-called *Atlantic Charter* was agreed to. The Lend-Lease agreements between the United States and various allied governments laid down the economic principle. With the British-Russian Alliance recently announced, the new order in Europe begins to emerge. While completion of the structure depends on decisive victory for allied arms, the new alliance should contribute greatly to this end, precisely because it represents agreement on the objectives of victory among the three principal partners.

The treaty falls into two parts: the first relates to the present conflict in Europe; the second to the post-war period.

Part One confirms formally the "gentlemen's agreement" made with Russia after Hitler's invasion of last summer. It provides for mutual military and other assistance of all kinds against Germany and her associates in acts of aggression in Europe. By Article Two of the treaty, it is agreed that no peace will be made with any German government, or the government of any of Germany's associates in Europe, which does not clearly renounce all aggressive intentions, and each party agrees not to enter separate negotiations or conclude any separate armistices or peace with Germany or her European associates.

This part of the treaty, as well as the later provisions for a continuing alliance, applies only to the European aggressors: Japan is significantly omitted. Yet the omission is no evidence of Russia's acquiescence in Japanese aggression; it implies rather Russia's unwillingness to undertake a war on both fronts if it can be avoided. The omission can be filled in later, when her western front is secure, or Japan may force the issue beforehand. Self-interest may be counted on to induce Russia to co-operate in re-establishing a free and independent China as a buffer state against Japan. In any event, by Article Seven of the treaty each of the high contracting parties undertakes not to enter any alliances or coalitions directed against the other—a provision which guarantees against any Russian co-operation with Japan.

Part Two of the treaty, however, contains really significant additions to the previous understanding with Russia. In Article Three the parties declare their desire to unite with other like-minded states in adopting proposals for common action to preserve peace and resist aggression in the post-war period. In line with the *Atlantic Charter*, this article implies as a peace objective the organization of a collective system not merely on an European, but presumably on a world, basis. "Pending the adoption of such proposals, they will after the termination of hostilities take all measures in their power to render impossible the repetition of aggression and violation of peace" by Germany and her associates in Europe. This clause would permit of such measures as disarmament of European aggressors (as provided in the *Atlantic Charter*), or even joint occupation of late enemy territory for police purposes. But measures cannot be laid down as yet in detail. Presumably the terms will be dictated by the United Nations jointly, when the time comes for an armistice or for imposing a preliminary peace.

Article Four represents the most radical departure from traditional British policy towards Europe. It provides for a twenty-year alliance against Germany and her European associates in aggression, each party pledging to the other "all military and other support and assistance in his power", provided that the parties may recognize by mutual agreement that the alliance is superseded by the establishment of a wider system of security as contemplated in Article Three above. With the exception of the historic alliance with Portugal and the 19th century agreement with France and Germany guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium, Great Britain has always studiously avoided long term commitments in Europe, and especially an alliance with another Great Power. Her traditional policy has been rather that of preserving a European balance of power by reserving her freedom of action to throw her weight and influence to the weaker side if Europe should be threatened with domination by a single master or group of masters.

Even after the last war, an alliance with France was refused, since the United States would not join in a similar arrangement. Proposals to tighten the Covenant of the League so as to provide definitely for military assistance were also avoided. Only when war became imminent, did Britain give positive guarantees to any country, first to France, and later with France to Poland and Roumania. In contrast with this traditional mistrust of commitments even in Western Europe, Great Britain now in effect

gives Russia in advance a guarantee of whatever settlement is achieved in Central and Eastern Europe.

Article Six, which provides for "all possible economic assistance" between the two parties "after the war", is in a large measure the economic counterpart of the military alliance, though, unlike the military clause, it is without time limit. But the Article is so general that its meaning is far from clear. Undoubtedly the economic needs of both in the post-war period will be great. For Russia the primary need will be that of aid for rebuilding its capital equipment in the vast areas devastated by the war. For Great Britain the need will probably be rather for markets to maintain a population whose existence has hitherto depended on foreign trade. But whether after the war Russia will have supplies immediately available to exchange for capital imports, or whether its industrial equipment can be rebuilt only by long-term credits repayable only in a nominal way similar to war material advanced on lend-lease-principles, is a matter of sheer speculation. The important point is that Article Six, like the lend-lease agreements, accepts as a basic principle of reconstruction economic solidarity, rather than economic competition, between the parties.

Article Five is concerned with the reconstruction of Europe as a whole. It provides for "close and friendly collaboration, after the re-establishment of peace, for the organization of security and the economic prosperity of Europe". It is agreed further "to take into account the interests of the United Nations" and to "act in accordance with the two principles of not seeking territorial aggrandisement for themselves and of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states".

Vague as is this Article, it represents an important advance in the understanding between Russia and her allies. There have been apprehensions on both sides; on the part of Russia that Britain and the United States might attempt to organize the new Europe on a capitalistic basis as against Russia; on the part of British and American peoples, and probably some of their allies, that Russia might dominate the new Europe and endeavour to establish satellite Communist states against Capitalism. The Article is important principally because it is a mutual self-denying ordinance, and precisely for this reason it should remove much of the existing apprehension on both sides. It is also a pledge of co-operation in re-organizing the new Europe both economically and politically. But the primary question, whether

the new Europe should be essentially socialist or essentially capitalist, is merely postponed.

Nor does the undertaking on both sides not to interfere in the domestic concerns of any state settle the question. Intervention can scarcely be avoided at the very outset, at least in the territories of the vanquished. The collapse of Hitlerism will in all probability lead to chaos. It is folly to assume that new democratic régimes will emerge at once, in Germany, in Italy, in Hungary, in Roumania, or even in France. There is much more likely to be an interregnum in which Left and Right groups struggle for mastery. The mere recognition of either by the allies might well decide the issue, since it probably would mean that the contender would at once become policeman and quartermaster, entitled on the one hand to use force to restore order, on the other to distribute foodstuffs and other consumers' goods supplied by the allies for a starving populace. It should not be forgotten that by recognizing the Social Democrats in Germany in 1918 the Allies indirectly assisted the suppression of Bolshevism in Germany and all Central Europe. The present treaty is thus only a beginning. The best will on both sides, and the utmost patience and good faith, will still be required to prevent disagreement if the opportunity of influencing the decision should arise, as it may well do.

In comparison with the *Atlantic Charter*, certain significant omissions in the treaty should also be noted. The Charter promises the restoration of "sovereign rights" and "self-government" to the conquered nations of Europe, and it declares that the parties desire "no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned". Does the omission mean that the U.S.S.R. is not agreeable to such definite commitments for the resettlement of Europe? To be specific, is Russia prepared to see the petty Baltic States restored, or the sovereignty over Bessarabia decided by the wishes of the peoples concerned? Further, although the treaty declares the parties seek no territorial aggrandizement for themselves, a pertinent question is whether this self-denial operates from September 1939 or from June 1941. Realistic approach to the post-war order in Europe must take into account the strategic weakness of Russia in both regions before 1939, and the strong bargaining position Russia is likely to hold in any peace conference as the power probably in actual possession not only of the Baltic littoral and Bessarabia but of much of Central Europe as well. Is it conceivable that Russia will be prepared to settle her

strategic frontiers in these regions on the basis of the *status quo ante* 1939, or on the idealistic principle of self-determination? But quite apart from these specific issues, it may well be doubted whether any commitment to restore the anarchic ideal of national sovereignty as the basic principle of European polity is desirable. The treaty, if less specific than the Charter, may be indeed the more realistic as a basis for the new Europe.

Any difference between the treaty and the Charter was presumably made with the knowledge and probably the consent of the United States. Mr. Molotoff visited Washington, and Washington announced the treaty and its general agreement therewith at the same time as did London and Moscow. Moreover, Washington apparently gave material support to the treaty by undertaking huge lend-lease supplies, and agreeing to a second front during 1942. The treaty thus represents an understanding among all three Allies.

Why, then, did the United States not also sign the treaty, if it agreed with the principle? There were, no doubt, sound tactical reasons. Isolationism is not dead in the country or the senate, nor the fear of "entangling alliances". A treaty would have to run the gauntlet of senatorial approval, and might split the country at the very moment when an all-out war effort is imperatively needed.

Yet is the reluctance of Washington to enter an alliance merely a matter of tactics in domestic politics? Despite the oft-expressed opinions of high government officials, such as Mr. Hull, Mr. Welles, Vice-President Wallace, as well as President Roosevelt, that the United States must co-operate not only in establishing peace but in maintaining it, it may be doubted whether the United States will even ultimately enter such definite military commitments for the maintenance of Europe as the Russian treaty provides. It is one thing to make joint defence arrangements with Canada and Mexico, who are near neighbours and relatively weak. It is quite another to enter an alliance with a remote great power, even if there is a basis of common interest in the maintenance of peace. In a democracy a government must weigh carefully the long enduring opinions of its people. The American people may now be convinced that the defence of Britain and Russia is essential to the defence of the United States, but will they remember this indefinitely? Will a new generation realize that the defence of London and Sevastopol was indirectly the defence of New York? American policy must take account of such possible shifts in opinion.

Likewise with Canada and her sister Dominions. It is well known that the three-power alliance (the United States—Great Britain—France), proposed to guarantee France after the close of the last war, expressly exempted the Dominions, as did the Locarno Agreement later. Nor did any Dominion enter into the guarantee to France or Roumania made by Britain prior to the present war. These were regarded as the immediate responsibility of the United Kingdom. Similarly the present alliance carefully indicates that it is made by the government of the United Kingdom; the clear inference is that the Dominions are not bound thereby. No doubt there are Canadians who will say that Canada should enter the alliance with Russia, since if the United Kingdom were drawn into a new war to carry out such a treaty, the Dominions would be involved in any event. The real difficulty is that the Canadian people as a whole are little more likely to approve of specific commitments of this sort in the post-war era than they have been in the past. Like the American people, they are likely to regard the Russian alliance as an European security arrangement, and, as such, the peculiar interest and responsibility of the United Kingdom, not of Canada.

As noted above, the treaty with Russia envisages the probable organization of a wider system of security; presumably a collective system along the line of the late League of Nations rather than a mere extension of the Alliance. There is abundant evidence of official interest in the United States in the organization of such a system, and widespread hope in British countries that the United States will not this time desert the cause. But the Russian treaty indicates the probable rôle of the United States, as well as of the Dominions, in such a system. Admittedly in a broad sense peace is one and indivisible; but does it follow that the responsibility for its maintenance should be equal and indivisible, even if we assume the existence of a collective system? Within the state, public order is a matter of concern to all law-abiding citizens, but not all are expected or required to assist at once in restoring order should it be disturbed. Halifaxians, for example, are not called out to suppress a riot in Vancouver, though Vancouver citizens may be. But should the riot assume the proportions of insurrection, Halifaxians as well as Vancouverites would certainly be liable for service, and for sharing the financial costs of suppression. The fundamental problem of organizing a collective system is this reconciliation of direct and regional interests with indirect and remote interests, and of achieving an appropriate division of responsibility. This problem

was not solved satisfactorily in the League system. The beginning of a satisfactory solution would appear to be the recognition that the maintenance of peace in Europe is the primary responsibility of Europeans, and only a secondary responsibility of the outer world. The Russian alliance appears to rest on this principle.

But whatever the prospects of a collective system, the Russian alliance is a clear recognition that the main architects of the new Europe will be Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. Theirs will also be the primary responsibility for its maintenance. At the Peace Conference of Versailles, Russia was not even represented; there, the leading European rôle was played by France, and the resulting pattern of Europe peculiarly reflected French views and French ambitions. At the next Peace Conference the rôles of Russia and France may be largely reversed. Nevertheless France must be brought into the new Europe as an interested party; a disgruntled or badly weakened France might endanger the stability of any new European order, as well as the security of Britain's position in the Eastern Atlantic.