THE XXth CENTURY

VOL. VIII SHANGHAI, FEBRUARY 1945 No. 2

When on December 10, 1944, Stalin and De Gaulle concluded an alliance, the entire problem of alliances and pacts, which had played a huge role in European history, was reopened.

EUROPEAN ALLIANCES

By KLAUS MEHNERT

THE VERDICT AFTER WORLD WAR I

WHEN at the end of the first World War people tried to determine the causes which had brought about that catastrophe, many believed to find it in the European system of alliances. Taking at random some American university textbooks on modern history, we find statements such as these :

Most important among the underlying causes of the World War was the development among these states of Europe of a theory of entangling alliances. (F. L. Benns, *Europe Since 1914.*)

The conflict of alliance systems has seemed to many scholars the most important cause of the World War. (Raymond James Sontag, *European Diplomatic History.*)

The alliances became the menace to European peace . . . . Izvolsky and Poincaré were successful in 1912 in transforming the Triple Entente [France, Russia, England] from a defensive into an offensive alliance. (John Geise, *Men and the Western World.*)

Public opinion in general tended severely to criticize the European alliances of pre-World War I days and the spirit which they represented, and many were the voices demanding that never again should a system of alliances be allowed to develop in Europe. One of the hopes connected with the League of Nations was that it would take over the solving of controversies between states and thus dispense with alliances. President Woodrow Wilson, in a speech of September 27, 1918, clearly stated:

"There can be no leagues, or alliances, or special covenants and understandings within the general and common family of the League of Nations."

There are two extremes in the possible relationships between states. One is the relationship between states which are not bound by any political ties and have not committed themselves to co-ordinate their policies. The other is a federation or union as, for example, the USA or the USSR with no independence whatever in foreign affairs for the member states. The alliance is halfway between the two extremes, approaching in some instances the first, in others the second.

Most alliances are concluded for a definite period of time, while a union or federation is not. The Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy of 1882, for example, was concluded for five years and afterwards frequently renewed for the same period each time. Usually an alliance is also directed against one or several specific adversaries. Thus the famous Grand Alliance of 1689 was directed against Louis XIV of France and the Quadruple Alliance of 1814 against Napoleon. However, to be an alliance a treaty does not necessarily have to be called by this name. More important than the text of the agreement is the purpose behind. It also makes a difference who the partners concluding an alliance are. What may be a true alliance in the case of two equals, may be nothing but a protectorate when concluded between nonequals as, for example, the so-called alliances concluded between Great Britain and Iraq in 1922, or between Italy and Albania in 1927. The most potent alliances in history were those born of common desire for booty or from fear of a common enemy.

Whatever definition one may apply to alliances, there was no need for them after the end of the Great War. The victors had taken all the booty they wanted, and their enemies, particularly Germany, were completely crushed, without armies, and torn by internal chaos. If ever there was a situation with perfect psychological as well as factual conditions for abolishing the alliance system, it was that in which Europe found itself at the close of the first World War.

ALLIANCES AND THE LEAGUE

But the League of Nations' Covenant, which was intended as a constitution for the nations of the world, did not prohibit alliances. Its Article 18 expressly sanctioned the conclusion of alliances, although under one condition:

Every treaty or international engagement entered into hereafter by any Member of the League shall be

forthwith registered with the Secretariat and shall as soon as possible be published by it. No such treaty or international engagement shall be binding until so registered.

Far from preventing new alliances, this article even had a contrary effect: the governments felt that the alliances registered with the League's Secretariat were, so to speak, legalized by the League and by public opinion, although the Secretariat had no power to refuse the registration of a treaty.

Articles 20 and 21 expose the ambiguity of the Covenant. While Article 20 denounces "all obligations or understandings between the Members of the League which are inconsistent with the terms of the Covenant," Article 21 reads:

Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements, such as treaties of arbitration or regional understandings like the Monroe doctrine, for securing the maintenance of peace.

This latter article made it possible for any nation to claim that the alliance which it was about to conclude was "a regional understanding for securing the maintenance of peace." For even the slight limitation contained in the word "regional" was overcome when France claimed that the term referred not only to states related by geography but also to states "connected by the community of their interests." And so, in spite of the severe public verdict against alliances, there were at no other period in history so many pacts concluded as in the twenty years after the signing of the League of Nations' Covenant. Over 1,000 treaties were registered with the League's Secretariat between 1919 and 1939.

FRANCE'S REASON AND ALIBI

Between the two World Wars, France was the driving power behind the erection of this tower of Babel consisting of pacts and alliances. The reason which prompted France to do this was always the same: fear of Germany. This fear was a psychological if not pathological factor of grave importance and issued from two sources. First, from France's feeling of weakness, fostered by her declining birth rate, the bourgeois character of her people, and the realization of her inability to fight Germany singlehanded. Secondly, France's fear was the result of an—unadmitted—guilty conscience over the treatment she had accorded Germany at Versailles, closely linked with her assumption that Germany after 1919 was as desirous of revenge as France had been after 1871. The effect of this assumption was not lessened by the fact that it was mistaken. Anyone who knew the Germany of the twenties realized that, in spite of Versailles and the Ruhr invasion, the Germans, with the exception of small although vociferous groups, had no other desire than to heal the dreadful wounds of the war and to adjust themselves to the new conditions —provided the others allowed them to do this.

To herself and to the rest of the world, France tried to justify her ceaseless quest for alliances with the disappointment she suffered at the hands of Great Britain and America. In 1919 France signed identical treaties of guarantee with Great Britain and the United States. They provided for these two countries to "come immediately to France's assistance in the event of any unprovoked movement of aggression against her being made by Germany." But these two treaties, which might perhaps have satisfied France's urge for security, suffered a sad fate. The United States Senate repudiated the Franco-American treaty; thereupon the Franco-British treaty, although ratified, also became void, as its acceptance had been made "contingent upon the United States Government undertaking the same obligations."

In 1921 France once more attempted to get Britain to agree to a political alliance. But the British were willing at the most to promise France assistance in case of a direct German invasion of France, which not even the most nervous Frenchman expected at that time. In July 1922, further negotiations came to nothing. Although the whole League was in reality nothing but a gigantic pact-system in itself designed to guarantee France the fruits of victory, France felt that she had been betrayed by her two great war-time allies and that she had the moral right to find security through other alliances. With whom should she conclude them? All those nations interested in the preservation of the European situation as it had been fixed at Versailles were potential allies for France. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Belgium: they had all either been given something that had formerly belonged to Germany and her allies, or been newly created at the expense of others. Poland feared the Soviet Union and Germany; Rumania feared the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria; Czechoslovakia feared Germany, Austria and Hungary; Yugoslavia feared Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria; and Belgium feared Germany.

THE FIRST STEPS

France has an old and tried tradition of anti-German alliances. In her desire to keep the center of Europe as weak as possible, France has for centuries followed the policy of concluding alliances with nations in Eastern Europe in order thus to put Central Europe in the jaws of a pincer from west and east. The "most Christian King" of France was just as willing to conclude an alliance with the Moslem Turks (1536), at that time the dread of all Europe, as capitalist-bourgeois France was with the Bolsheviks. France was ready to forgive them being anti-European as long as they were at the same time anti-German.

When, in the first period after the Great War, there existed no paramount power in

Eastern Europe, France based her security system on alliances with two secondary Eastern European states: Poland (1921) and Czechoslovakia (1924). (Details of all alliances and pacts mentioned will be found at the end of this article.) The three governments considered their alliances so integral a part of their foreign policy that, contrary to custom, the treaties did not mention any time limit. They also openly stated their purpose: the preservation of the *status quo* as it had been established at Versailles; moreover, they were meant to check whatever revisionist sentiment there might have existed in the defeated countries at that time. Even earlier, in 1920, France and Belgium had signed a military agreement.

Thus, less than five years after the formation of the League of Nations, which allegedly ushered in a new age of international relations, France had forged a chain of military alliances with three governments. This was clearly against the spirit—if not against the letter—of the League. It expressed France's lack of confidence in this organization in which she herself at that time was playing the leading role, and it greatly contributed to the undermining of the League.

To this inner ring of French alliances were added the Locarno treaties (1925) and the treaties of friendship and nonaggression with Rumania (1926) and Yugoslavia (1927). While the latter two both gave the preservation of the *status quo* as their aim, Locarno consisted of a complicated system of treaties all designed to guarantee France and Belgium their eastern frontiers from any German attack.

THE FRANCO-SOVIET ALLIANCE

When by the end of the twenties Germany's recovery seemed to make quick and unexpected progress, France felt that her system of pacts was no longer sufficient. Patiently she began to prepare the road for an alliance with the Soviet Union which, by the sheer weight of population and resources, had by then reentered the ranks of the great powers. The steps on this road were: 1. Nonaggression pact between France's ally, Poland, and the USSR (1932). 2. A Franco-Soviet nonaggression pact (1932). 3. Sponsored by France, the entry of the USSR into the League of Nations (1934). 4. An actual Franco-Soviet alliance (1935).

This alliance was a masterpiece of legalistic phraseology. France, the leading power in the League of Nations, and the USSR, the newly won convert to that institution, were both equally eager to conceal the anti-League spirit of the treaty by constantly referring in it to the League's Covenant. They tried to create the impression that the treaty was wholly within the Covenant's framework and had no other object than to strengthen and confirm it. Yet the treaty had a Supplementary Protocol which contains in its Article 1 the following sentences (italics ours):

> It is agreed that Article 3 binds each of the high contracting parties to render the other immediate assistance by immediately following the recommendations of the Council of the League of Nations as soon as these have been issued on the basis of Article 16 of the League of Nations. It is also agreed that the two high contracting parties will act in common in order to achieve that the Council of the League of Nations issues its recommendations with all the speed necessitated by circumstances, and that *if the Council of the League of Nations should nevertheless for some reason issue no recommendations, or if no unanimous decision is arrived at, the obligation for mutual assistance applies none the less.*

Complicated as the wording of these sentences is, one thing is quite clear: France and the USSR are obliged to give each other military aid even if this should be contrary to the League's decision. Thus the League had definitely lost any power which it might have had over European affairs. Two weeks later a similar treaty, also sponsored by France, was concluded between the USSR and Czechoslovakia.

Almost one year passed before the Franco-Soviet Alliance was ratified. During this period, Germany warned France time and again of the serious consequences the ratification would entail for the future of German-French relations and of Europe. Nevertheless, on February 27, 1936, the French Chamber agreed to the alliance. On March 7 Adolf Hitler made a historic speech before the German Reichstag:

> "Through the new Franco-Soviet Pact the threatening military power of a gigantic empire has entered the heart of Europe with a detour via Czechoslovakia. The impossible situation which has now arisen consists in the fact that, without taking into consideration a decision of the League of Nations' Council which either has been or is expected to be rendered, France and the Soviet Union committed themselves, in the event of Eastern European entanglements, to settle the question of guilt according to their own ideas. . . . France formerly had mutual-assistance agreements with Czechoslovakia as well as with Poland. Germany took no exception to them not only because these pacts, in contrast to the Franco-Soviet Pact, were within the framework of the League of Nations, but also because Czechoslovakia and Poland have always primarily followed a policy in accordance with their national interests. Germany does not desire to attack these states, nor does she believe it to be in the interest of these states to launch an attack upon Germany. Above all, Poland will remain Poland, France will remain France.
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> Soviet Russia, however, is the constitutionally organized exponent of revolution. Its state creed is its espousal of the cause of world revolution. It is impossible to determine whether or not tomorrow or the day after tomorrow this creed may also triumph in France. Should such an eventuality occur—and, as a German statesman, I must consider this possibility—then a Bolshevist France would become a section of the Bolshevist International, and the decision concerning aggression or nonaggression will be made by her, not in accordance with her own objectives and desires, but under directions from Moscow.
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> On the basis of information given by the Soviet Government, M. Herriot informed the French Chamber that the Russian Army has a peace-time strength of 1,350,000 men; that it comprises 17,500,000 men in war strength and reserves; that its tank equipment and air force are the largest in the world. The introduction of this most powerful of all military factors,

which was also described as excellent in its mobility and leadership and at all times ready to prove its mettle, into the Central European field of operation, destroys every genuine European balance of power."

In the climax of his speech the German Chancellor declared that the Franco-Soviet Treaty had automatically relieved Germany of her obligation, undertaken in Locarno in 1925, to keep the German Rhineland demilitarized. While he was still speaking, units of the German Reichswehr re-entered the Rhineland.

THE LITTLE ENTENTE

The French alliances and pacts with Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and the USSR were linked to a similar, although much smaller system of alliances known as the Little Entente.

The Little Entente consisted of those nations in southeastern Europe which had profited by the Great War and was born from their desire to safeguard their gains through co-operation. At first this combine was also to include Poland and Greece; but the bitter hostility between Poland and Soviet Russia and between Poland and Lithuania, Poland's quarrel with Czechoslovakia over Teschen, as well as the Greco-Turkish War raging at that time, made it undesirable to include these two states. Thus Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia remained. The Little Entente was organized in 1920/21 by the conclusion of three bilateral alliances which each of them concluded with the other two, all of them clearly of the pro-*status quo* type, openly mentioning Hungary and Bulgaria as the nations against which they were directed.

At first the three countries did not act as a unit. Individually they also had treaties with other nations and co-ordinated their policy only as far as it concerned Hungary and Bulgaria. Clarity was also lacking in their foreign policy because, in the beginning, they tried to co-operate both with France and Italy, which two countries did not always see eye to eye. It was only when, under the influence of Mussolini, Italy began to go her own way in the second half of the twenties that the Little Entente became definitely oriented toward France. It was in particular the fear of quickly recovering Hungary, which entertained friendly relations with Italy, that drove the three nations into ever closer co-operation.

During the following years the little Entente went through three stages, growing from an alliance almost to a federation. (1) In 1929 the three individual treaties were completely co-ordinated; the clause on arbitration was the first step toward regional federation. (2) In 1930 it was agreed to convoke periodical conferences of the three Foreign Ministers for a closer co-ordination of their countries' foreign policies. (3) Benes, Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, was anxious for still closer co-operation. In a possible conflict between France and Germany, Czechoslovakia would, by the Locarno Treaty, be automatically involved, while Rumania and Yugoslavia had no such obligations. In 1933, sixteen days after Hitler came into power, the so-called "Pact of Organization" was signed at Benes's initiative. This climax in the Little Entente's development completely co-ordinated the foreign policy of its member states. It would, Benes hoped, create a new first-class power consisting of the three federated states. Most important was the Pact's Article 6 :

> Any political treaty of any state of the Little Entente, any one-sided action which alters the political situation of one of the states of the Little Entente with regard to a third state, as well as any economic agreement entailing important political consequences, will from now on require the unanimous consent of the Council.

At first glance one might feel inclined to applaud this gradual merging of three minor states into a large political unit. One might see in it a promising attempt to restore something of the *Grossraum* in the Balkan Peninsula which had been destroyed by the Paris peacemakers when they hacked the Hapsburg monarchy to pieces. Yet from the point of view of European politics the Little Entente turned out to be an obstructive factor. For it owed its existence purely to the desire to keep down Hungary and Bulgaria and to prevent a strengthening of Austria and Germany through their union. Not without justification has the Little Entente pact of 1933 been called "a pact against life," as it was directed against the normal growth of certain states and thereby intensified the conflicts in southeastern Europe. Even if one of the three countries should some day summon sufficient common sense to meet the justified wishes of one of the states which stood for revision (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria), it would, according to Article 6 (quoted above) not be allowed to follow such a policy, since its foreign policy had become dependent on the consent of its two partners.

Still, it would have been interesting to study the results of the "Pact of Organization" over an extended period of years. But the Little Entente did not give itself a chance to prove its worth. Czechoslovakia concluded her alliance with the USSR and was thus drawn into the game of power politics for which she was not equipped and in which she perished.

The French structure of alliances thus consisted of three systems. There were in the first place her pacts with Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania; then there was the triangle of military alliances between the USSR and France and between the USSR and Czechoslovakia; and there was finally the Little Entente with its close dependence on France. The point of junction of all three systems was Prague. This explains the huge importance of Czechoslovakia for France and also the attitude of Germany toward Prague.

NEO-ENTENTE CORDIALE

To this pact structure one more system was added, the neo-*Entente Cordiale*. After the Great War, Great Britain had returned to her policy of "splendid isolation." The only commitment on the Continent which she had assumed was the Treaty of Locarno, through which she gave France some of that feeling of security which France had so urgently solicited. But how little inclined England was to meet her obligations, and how she was determined to preserve for herself the decision when and how to act, was shown in 1936 when Germany, following upon the Franco-Soviet alliance, declared Locarno null and void and remilitarized the Rhineland. To be sure, London sent a protest to Berlin. But that was all. She did not wish to employ sanctions against Germany.

But lest France's disappointment over England's attitude and the frequent German overtures to France should lead to the possibility of a Franco-German *rapprochement*, Great Britain, less than a month after she had practically consented to the remilitarization of the Rhineland, sent notes to France and Belgium, declaring her readiness to carry on joint staff talks. In December of the same year, 1936, statements were made in the French Chamber and in the British Parliament promising mutual assistance in the case of an unprovoked German attack, which meant in fact the restoration of the *Entente Cordiale*. These declarations and the state visit of King George VI to Paris in July 1938, increased France's dependence on Great Britain. The logical consequence of this was that the fateful decisions with regard to the German-Polish quarrel in 1939 were made in London and not in Paris.

THE PACT POLICY OF THE USSR

To find the extreme opposite of the French pact policy we must turn to that of the Soviet Union. In doing so, we must keep one fact in mind: the USSR is not a state like others. On the contrary, it is a state which considers itself the cell of a world state and which is in fundamental opposition—sometimes outspoken, sometimes silent—to all the other, the so-called capitalistic states. During the first three quarters of the period under review, i.e., up to the early thirties, this opposition and the Soviet state's unique position were frequently and proudly admitted by Moscow; and if, in the course of the thirties and particularly during the second World War, Moscow has taken a different propagandistic line, this was the result of a change of circumstances, not of the Soviet Union.

As a special type of state the USSR has also a special type of foreign policy, a double-barreled foreign policy. One is official, represented by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, the other unofficial, represented by the communist organizations throughout the world. The first is a concession to the fact that the states in the rest of the world are old-fashioned states with which somehow or other the old-fashioned diplomatic relations must be carried on; the other is the expression of the true nature of the Soviet state. Here we are only concerned with the official foreign policy of the USSR.

Ever since it was inaugurated, the official foreign policy had one main object: to obtain conditions under which Moscow could pursue its unofficial and real foreign policy as securely and energetically as possible. More concretely, the official foreign policy of the Bolshevist state up to the outbreak of the second World War is explained by three facts: loss of considerable territories in the course of the Revolution; fear of intervention by the capitalist states; hostility toward National Socialist Germany.

(1) In the course of the Bolshevist Revolution, a number of areas conquered or annexed by the Tsars in previous centuries made themselves independent of Russian rule. It was the first task of Soviet foreign policy to reannex as many of them as possible. It succeeded—accompanied by force—in the case of White Russia, the Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbeijan, Armenia, Khiva, Bokhara. It failed with Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Bessarabia.

(2) The combined intervention of Great Britain, France, America, and Japan during the years 1918 to 1922 had given rise to serious apprehension in Moscow that this intervention might be repeated; and if Churchill, the leader of the anti-Soviet policy, tried to erect a *cordon sanitaire* of buffer states against the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union on its part labored patiently for many years toward the erection of its own *cordon sanitaire*. The aim was to establish relations with the neighbors of the USSR which would make it very difficult, if not impossible, for the great powers to use them as a jumping-off place for an attack on the cradle of world revolution. Moscow built up this counter-*cordon sanitaire* by means of a multitude of pacts:

(a) It concluded peace treaties with its neighbors (with the exception of Rumania). (b) It obtained in one way or another recognition by the great majority of states (among the exceptions up to 1939 were Switzerland and Yugoslavia). (c) It concluded (1925-1932) non-aggression pacts with all its neighbors (except Rumania) and also some states that were not neighbors. (d) It signed the so-called Litvinov protocols with all its neighbors (including Rumania, excluding Finland) in 1929. (e) In 1933 it sponsored the so-called "London Agreement for the Definition of the Aggressor," which was signed by the Soviet Union and all its neighbors in Europe and in the Near East, as well as by

Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. (f) On September 18, 1934, it entered the League of Nations. Although formerly Moscow had bitterly ridiculed this institution as an organ of capitalist exploitation and had been most eager to include neutrality clauses in its nonaggression pacts, there was a good deal in common between the political ideologies of the League and the Soviet Union. Both now insisted that the world and hence also peace and war were indivisible; that every quarrel between nations involved the rest of the world; that there could be no such thing as neutrality. Within a short time, the Soviet Union succeeded in building up a very strong position within the many committees of the League.

(3) Having neutralized its neighbors as far as possible by this flood of pacts, the Soviet Union took the next step and concluded the alliances with France and Czechoslovakia. They were clearly directed against National Socialist Germany, the crushing of which had by now become the chief aim of Moscow's official as well as unofficial foreign policy.

(4) When Stalin found that the Soviet-Franco-Czech alliance prevented neither the further growth of Germany nor the Soviet Union's humiliation in Munich, he decided on a different move. By concluding the famous treaty with Berlin in August 1939, he helped to bring about the outbreak of war between Germany and the Western powers in the course of which he hoped to get rid of his most dangerous foe without having to fight himself.

And so we have the following picture: Soviet foreign policy, revolutionary though it was and is in its aim and essence, was conservative in its appearance and led Moscow into such extreme *status quo* institutions as the League of Nations and the alliance with France. Is this contradictory? Only to those who are not familiar with Bolshevist dialectics.

WAVERING ITALY

Next to France and the USSR, Italy was the country with the most active foreign policy. But she suffered from the ambiguous nature of her political position. On the one hand, she belonged to the ranks of the victors and was as such sentimentally connected with her Great War allies and interested in the preservation of her war gains, especially South Tirol. On the other hand, Italy felt that she had not received a fair deal from her allies—she had not been given all that she had been promised for joining the Allied camp during the war—and was therefore sympathetic to those who pleaded revision of the treaties. That Italy never quite overcame this ambiguity is proved by her present sorry plight. Yet during the years between the World Wars she underwent a change. During the first few years her position as a country favoring the *status quo* was more pronounced; during the late twenties and during the thirties, she adopted more of a pro-revision attitude. At first (1924-1926), Italy concluded typical pro-*status quo* treaties with Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania. But gradually her rivalry with Yugoslavia over their positions in and around the Adriatic, particularly the treaties which she concluded with Albania, strained her relations with Yugoslavia and thereby with the Little Entente.

While Rome did not renew its treaties with the countries of the Little Entente, it concluded treaties (1927-1930) with Hungary and Austria, i.e., states living in strained relations with the Little Entente; and in 1930 it cemented its friendship with equally revisionist Bulgaria through the marriage of an Italian princess with King Boris. In two speeches in Milan and Venice (1930), Mussolini declared himself openly in favor of the revision of the peace treaties.

When Hitler came to power in Germany, the result was not, however, as many had expected, a quick Italo-German *rapprochement*. On the contrary, tension developed between the two countries. Italy had always felt uneasy over the acquisition of South Tirol. Austria could not, of course, reclaim that province; but if National Socialist Germany were to merge with Austria then, Italy feared, Germany might do so. Therefore, Italy tried to split up the revisionist camp and to make herself the leader of one part of it, Germany being the leader of the other. In the so-called Rome protocols (1934, 1936) Italy, Austria, and Hungary agreed to co-ordinate their foreign policies. At that time Italy's opposition to the *Anschluss* of Austria to Germany brought her closer to France than she had been since Versailles. The Mussolini-Laval treaty of 1935 was meant to iron out all major points of friction between Italy and France, and Germany's rearmament resulted in the Italo-Franco-British Conference of Stresa in April 1935. Had France's chance come to win Italy back into her camp, to tie her down to active participation against Germany? Once again Germany seemed to face the united front of the Versailles powers.

But in the great game of the powers a new card appeared—and one must always reckon with the appearance of new cards in a game—Abyssinia. The front of Stresa collapsed during the conflict which broke out between Italy and the two Western powers over Abyssinia. Mussolini realized that he had to choose. He chose Germany, and the Rome-Berlin Axis emerged, a new factor in European politics, as it was not based on a written alliance but the personal friendship of the leaders.

Under the impression of the events in Italy in 1943, the evaluation of Italy's political weight has undergone a change; yet for the late thirties the formation of the Axis was of

the greatest consequence. It brought about a close foreign-political collaboration of Germany and Italy, and the high rating or overrating of Italy's actual strength contributed to the rapid change of the European map during the following years.

GERMANY

The foreign policy of Germany, the victim of Versailles, cannot be compared with the foreign policy of the three great powers analyzed so far. Following upon her defeat, Germany was condemned for a long time to be entirely passive in the foreign field. In addition, her early governments were primarily interested in domestic affairs. So her initial foreign policy consisted merely in carrying out the orders of the victors.

The first independent action of the Weimar Republic in the field of international relations was the conclusion of the Rapallo Agreement with Soviet Russia in 1922. In its text it was anything but sensational, not much more than the liquidation of the war between the two countries, a liquidation which had become necessary since the German-Russian peace treaty of Brest Litovsk had been annulled in the German-Allied armistice terms of 1918. Yet Rapallo became a sensation because it seemed to herald the beginning of an independent German foreign policy and because the victors had never overcome their fear of a possible German-Soviet co-operation against the capitalist powers. They need not have worried. Such intentions were far from the minds of the men who led the German Government, the intellectual Rathenau or the bourgeois Wirth. Under Stresemann, too, that is, since September 1923, Germany followed a clearly Western-oriented foreign policy, fulfilling to the best of her ability the obligations forced upon her at Versailles, at the same time trying to reduce them to reasonable proportions. The conclusion of the so-called Berlin Treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1926 did not indicate any change in Germany's orientation toward the West.

It was only after Hitler had acceded to power in 1933 that Germany began to develop an independent foreign policy. It had been the Führer's original intention to form close foreign-political ties with England and Italy. But as far as England was concerned he did not succeed. It has almost always been England's policy to support the second-strongest European power in order to preserve a balance of power on the Continent and allow her to direct her energies toward the rest of the world. Since the middle thirties, France was clearly no longer the strongest power, and so the outlines of the *Entente Cordiale* began to emerge again. The Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 did not change the situation.

The Berlin-Rome Axis, on the other hand, became more and more a true axis around which European politics revolved. Eventually it developed into a regular alliance (1939). Japan with her strong grievances against the Anglo-Saxon powers and a political ideology which was, like that of Germany and Italy, equally hostile to Western imperialism and international Marxism, was the third power to join the newly emerging political organization. The form by which this was done was the Anti-Comintern Pact between Germany and Japan in 1936, which was later joined by Italy and many other states.

THE REST

All other alliances or attempts at alliances taking place in Europe in the period between the two World Wars can be dealt with summarily.

Poland dreamed of organizing Eastern Europe under her leadership and concluded a number of pacts which, although symptomatic of the mania for pacts of those years, did not, in distinction to the Little Entente, represent any real factor in politics.

Nor did the so-called Balkan Pact become a political reality. It had no distinct political object but was founded instead on the idea of a cultural and regional community. Among those participating in the negotiations which went toward its preparation since 1930 were Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, but not Hungary or Czechoslovakia, which two latter countries regarded themselves as Central European and not as Balkan states. Bulgaria withdrew when it became apparent that the pact would include a guarantee of the *status quo*, against which Bulgaria had very justifiable grievances. The other four nations signed it in 1934.

The Baltic states were united in their common fear of the Soviet Union. What stood in the way of their political union was the fact that Finland felt closer ties with Scandinavia than with the other Baltic states, and that Estonia and Latvia did not wish to be drawn into the Lithuanian-Polish conflict over Vilna. So at first (1923) there was simply a defensive treaty between Estonia and Latvia which, similar to the Little Entente, was expanded in 1934 to co-ordinate foreign policy. In the same year, Lithuania joined the other two by signing the Baltic Treaty. When the three states concluded a military alliance, Moscow used this as an excuse for invading them with the Red Army on June 15, 1940.

THE ACID TEST

We have only mentioned the principal alliances and pacts of the period between the two World Wars and have already found a confusing number of them. Considering how much effort the politicians of those two decades invested in the system of pacts, how great a role it played in international life, and how

large a measure of public discussion was devoted to it, we must ask: what were the results?

First of all, which of the pacts were in force when the test of their worth came in 1938 or 1939? The answer is simple: all the important pacts mentioned in this article were in force, with the one exception of the Franco-Belgian alliance. When Belgium witnessed how Germany was able to remilitarize the Rhineland without either France or England being able to prevent her, she dissolved her alliance with France on October 14, 1936. She freed herself from foreign-political obligations and declared that from now on she was going to carry on a purely Belgian policy of neutrality without any allies.

All the other pacts were valid—on paper. Take France. All her alliances and pacts were in force: with Poland (indefinitely); Czechoslovakia (indefinitely); Rumania (up to 1946); Yugoslavia (up to 1942); and the USSR (up to 1940). But did France in any way profit from her alliances? On the contrary. She became their victim—a spider choked in its own web. When at the Munich Conference of 1938 France agreed to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, her system of alliances, although legally still intact, was shattered. Czechoslovakia ceased to exist at first as a political factor and soon even as a state. This led automatically to the collapse of the Little Entente. Moreover, the Soviet Union was completely estranged by France's attitude toward it during the days of Munich, and in August 1939 she concluded her treaty with the Reich. The only alliance which had not been affected by these events was that of France with Poland. Partly owing to this alliance, Poland felt that she could afford an attitude toward the USSR which was responsible for the failure of the French negotiations with Moscow in 1939; and it was the alliance with Poland which drew France into the second World War and entailed her quick defeat. Once in the war, France was not supported by a single one of her allies. The Maginot Line of her pacts collapsed no less than the one built of concrete. Instead she found on her side—to be sure, in a most unsatisfactory manner—a country which had constantly refused to conclude an alliance with her: Great Britain. In a way, one might compare France's position in 1939 with Germany's in 1914. In 1914 the alliances which Bismarck had built up for Germany with such patience had ceased either to exist or to be political realities, with the exception of the alliance with Austria-Hungary which drew Germany into the war and eventually into defeat.

And how did the Soviet pact system stand the test of time? The Bolsheviks overthrew their nonaggression pacts themselves when, in spite of all treaties and definitions of aggressors, the USSR went to war with or occupied Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. They even left the League when this institution, in 1939, declared the USSR to be the aggressor in the war with Finland. As to the alliances—neither did the Soviet Union aid Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, nor did it assist France in 1939 and 1940, nor did its pact with Germany prevent the outbreak of the Soviet-German war.

It is not too much to say: with the exception of the Franco-Polish alliance, none of the countless pacts concluded in Europe during the heyday of pact-making had any effect whatever when it came to the showdown.

Nobody even mentioned them. Three alliances which played a role had come into being no earlier than 1939, shortly before the outbreak of the war: the Anglo-Turkish, the German-Italian and the Anglo-Polish ones. All other alliances which were to gain significance during the second World War, particularly the German-Japanese alliance and that between the USSR, the USA, and Great Britain, were not concluded until after the outbreak of war and quite independently of the post-Great War pact systems. From the fact that these are not European but world-wide alliances we can tell, incidentally, how greatly the importance of purely European alliances has dwindled.

THE VALUE OF ALLIANCES

So we now feel skeptical toward the pact mania of the twenties and thirties and are no longer inclined to regard those politicians who set their signatures to a record number of pacts as masters of politics. We are willing to admit, however, that they proved more inventive in the sphere of interstate agreements than their colleagues of any previous time. The aversion for the unpopular alliances led to the development of new types of treaties which, however, were often distinguished from an ordinary alliance only by their official designation. One can almost speak of fashions which led at certain times and in the case of certain politicians to the conclusion of whole series of similar treaties. Locarno ushered in the series of the "guarantee pacts"; the Kellogg Pact entailed a whole series of "prohibitions of aggression" fixed by treaty; the first formation of a bloc, the Little Entente, was followed after a short interval by the Baltic Treaty and the Balkan Pact; the conclusion of "nonaggression pacts" was a specialty of Soviet diplomacy.

With due regard to the League of Nations' statute, all these pact-makers were united in their effort to represent any war of *other* powers as war and a crime, but their *own* wars not as war or at least as a permitted war. This explains the fact that in most conferences and agreements of the thirties the emphasis was placed not on the problem of preventing war-like conflicts but on determining who was the

"aggressor" in a war that had already broken out. This determining of the "aggressor" represented the golden opportunity for the politicians. Once the blame had been apportioned, the League of Nations' pact in favor of the nonaggressor had to come into effect.

This attitude led to international relations being regarded from a somewhat formal legal point of view. Once a pact was fixed in writing, sealed and signed, everything seemed to be in order; if doubts arose, a new pact was simply made and pact built upon pact. But while attempts were thus made to fix the relations between states on paper, actual political conditions were constantly changing. Political reality and the pacts were on two different levels, which finally had nothing more in common and of which the level of reality was by far the stronger.

Does this mean that alliances or pacts are utterly senseless? No. But it does mean that, in an epoch of such dynamic impetus as the period between the two World Wars, the forces brought into motion are too strong for them to be tied down by pacts. In such times, alliances can only have meaning if those concerned are prepared to go to the utmost and not slink off through the back door of legal interpretation of one or the other of the paragraphs. But a contracting partner is only prepared to go to the utmost if he regards this as being in his own interest or if he is forced to do so by the stronger partner. In other words, if an alliance or a pact legalizes an already existing political relationship, if reality precedes its conclusion, it will probably be of significance. But one cannot expect alliances to create political realities.

THREE FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCES

There is another thing to be learned from our study of the policy of alliances. Alliances embodying a political threat create suspicion, unrest, counteralliances, and other conditions favoring war. A grim example of this are the Franco-Russian alliances. For the alliance which De Gaulle concluded with Stalin on December 10, 1944, is the third of its kind in little more than half a century.

In her search for allies for her policy of revenge after 1871, France had long wooed Russia. Her opportunity came in 1890, when the existing Russo-German treaty lapsed. A year later, on August 27, 1891, France and Russia signed a treaty which, at the insistence of the Russian Government, was purely diplomatic and contained no military clauses. But the French did not give up their quest for more. They succeeded in getting the Russian signature to a military alliance directed against Germany, on August 17 of the following year. But for a further sixteen months the Tsarist Government hesitated with its ratification. When in December 1893, the Russian Foreign Minister Giers put his signature under the document, he crossed himself and prayed that God might stop his hand if this alliance were to the detriment of Russia. Giers' hand was not stopped, yet the alliance proved to be one of the most detrimental documents signed in modern history. It contributed more than any other to the outbreak of the Great War and thus to the collapse of the Tsar's Empire. The outstanding monograph on the first Franco-Russian Alliance was written by the French historian, Georges Michon, under the title *L'Alliance Franco-Russe*. After tracing the alliance's history in great detail for hundreds of pages, the author comes to the conclusion "that it contributed in a large measure to the outbreak of the most awful cataclysm of modern times."

We have already discussed the sinister role of the second Franco-Russian Alliance. And as to the third? Even less than its two predecessors does it disguise its aggressive disturbing character—the reader may study it for himself. Nor did the partners hesitate to ratify it: it was done within a fortnight in Moscow and Paris. What future historians will say about the third Franco-Russian Alliance remains to be seen. But perhaps it will not be very different from what Michon wrote about the first alliance:

> The opinions current in France in regard to her ally Russia were utterly at variance with the facts. The truth is that the facts were systematically concealed from the French public . . . . Confidential reports have disclosed the astounding degree of venality of the leading French journals, which for many years received subsidies from the Russian Government. As the *Correspondant* of September 25, 1912, put it: "The Russian Government takes the necessary steps to ensure that public opinion in France only knows what it is meant to know. In 1910, and there is no reason to doubt that the same state of things exists today, the Russian Embassy in Paris had at its disposal the sum of 1,200,000 francs per annum for use in this way, not counting the cost of financial advertisements." . . . .
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> In the mentality of the French *bourgeoisie* lies the root cause of France's blindness in regard to Russian affairs. It was not that it was impossible to get at the truth . . . . The fact is that the governing classes of France, from which her diplomats, her staff officers and her business men were recruited, did not attempt to find out the truth, did not in fact wish to know it, because the critical sense, the instinct to investigate, to inquire, to verify, was not in accordance with their habits of mind, and particularly because the Russian people's aspirations were totally at variance with their political and social ideals . . . . Ludovic Naudeau went so far as to assert that: "If anyone had taken it into his head to publish accurate revelations concerning the great Russian Empire, he would have made a host of very influential enemies. He would very likely have been accused of attempted blackmail, of being a contemptible hack in search of hush-money, and it is by no means certain that patriotic citizens would not have called him a pro-German without more ado." . . . .
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> How contemptible they now sound, those paeans of adulation, those fervid expressions of faith in the Russian giant, uttered . . . to silence the sacrilegious tongues and proclaim, in a voice trembling with emotion, the holiness of the Alliance, the nobility of soul of the Tsar, and the might of the Russian army. It was a spectacle in which the elements of the sinister

and the grotesque were equally blended . . . .

Far from protesting against the secrecy of the treaty and demanding details of France's commitments, the Radicals . . . showed that they regarded the Alliance primarily as an instrument of revenge against Germany . . . . They should have seen that the adoption of an aggressive foreign policy by allied Russia would expose France to the utmost peril . . . .

The Alliance had the effect of causing democratic France to acquiesce and assist in the expansion and success of an autocracy which was opposed to all the principles for which she stood—a success, moreover, which could, as a rule, only be attained at the expense of France's real influence in the world . . . . The ultimate condemnation of the Franco-Russian Alliance lies in this—that it drew its strength from the degradation of the two peoples . . . that it served to bolster up one of the most abominable régimes known to history . . . .

The Russian Alliance forms one of the blackest pages in French history . . . . The "isolation" from which it is alleged to have rescued her was infinitely less dangerous, as subsequent events have proved, than the risks she incurred of being dragged into war for objects alien to her vital interests . . . . There must be added the unprecedented moral bankruptcy, the betrayal of the ideals and the very meaning of democracy. The Alliance was a standing insult to the memory of those who, by the force of their intellect or the sacrifice of their lives, founded the French Republic. It can no longer be doubted that it was France's financial, material, and moral support that . . . consolidated the most loathsome autocracy known to history, the object of world-wide contempt and in consequence perpetuated the oppression of a nation . . . . Let France not only take control of her foreign relations; let her shun the whole policy of alliances, which are always liable, in certain hands, to become an instrument of imperialism and war. Let her at last realize the true end of democracy by exercising a constant supervision over her political representatives, her "statesmen," and her press, whose contemptible lies about Russia will be an everlasting stigma upon the present régime.

Do these words of Michon not sound as if they were written about the third or second rather than about the first Franco-Russian Alliance? All one has to do is to replace the words Tsar and Tsarist by Stalin and Bolshevist.

But we do not have to wait for the future historian to state the following few facts about the De Gaulle-Stalin pact:

(1) Just as the second Franco-Russian pact was irreconcilable with the spirit of the League of Nations, so is the third one irreconcilable with the spirit of a new postwar world-security system as envisaged by the Allies.

(2) Article 5 makes it impossible for France to establish close relations with any government disliked by the USSR. Thus all the potential enemies of the Soviet Union become the enemies of France.

(3) France promises economic aid to the USSR. On the basis of the first Franco-Russian Alliance, the French nation had pumped many billions into Russia (17 billions up to 1914, not counting the loans during the Great War) of which the French creditors practically never saw anything again as the Soviets repudiated the debts of the previous governments.

(4) If in the first and second alliances France felt more or less an equal of Russia, she cannot do so now for three reasons: never before have the French communists—who take orders from Moscow rather than from Paris—played such a role in France as today; France lacks the diplomatic support of her former Eastern European allies, as all of them—Poland, Benes's Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia — are under Soviet control; if the treaty is carried out, France is forced into perpetual enmity with Germany and thereby becomes completely dependent on Soviet support.

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It is appalling to see how, in spite of all the lessons of the period between the two World Wars, the system of pacts is rearing its head again. For the Stalin-De Gaulle treaty is not the only one. There is also the Stalin-Benes treaty of December 12, 1943 (see *The XXth Century*, March 1944, p. 233) which, like the alliance of 1935, aims at turning Czechoslovakia into an outpost of the Soviet Union in Central Europe. There has even been talk of a new *Entente Cordiale* and a Balkan entente.

The statesmen of the Allied camp are returning to the well-trodden but certainly not reliable path of a policy of European pacts. This is just one more proof of their reactionary, sterile mentality. If Europe is not to be swallowed up utterly by chaos, it must find a way out of this vicious circle. The fratricidal European systems of alliances and counteralliances must be replaced by the cooperation of all of Europe. The goal cannot be the resurrection of old pacts but only the creation of a new Greater Europe.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF EUROPEAN TREATIES, ALLIANCES, AND PACTS

The treaties, etc., are listed as follows: date of signing, signatories, place of signing, object, period of validity.

June 28, 1919 Versailles Treaty incl. League of Nations' Covenant, most participants in the Great War.

June 28, „ France, USA. Versailles. Alliance against German attack. Not ratified by US Senate.

June 28, „ France, Great Britain. Versailles. Alliance against German attack. Never validated.

Feb. 2, 1920 Soviet Russia, Estonia. Dorpat. Peace treaty, recognition of Estonia's sovereignty by Soviet Russia.

July 12, „ Soviet Russia, Lithuania. Moscow. Peace treaty, recognition of Lithua-