

Soviet Russia Between Two Fires

BY G. E. W. JOHNSON

*Japan in the East and Germany in the West are disturbing
Kremlin composure, and there is a question whether
they may not join forces*

THE year 1933 saw a very significant change in Soviet Russia's attitude toward other countries. For years Russia had regarded herself as the spearhead of the proletarian revolution, which all the capitalist nations were conspiring to overthrow. This doctrine was a natural heritage of the days of the Allied intervention in 1918-20, when the powers had extended military and financial support to the anti-Bolshevik forces. In the years that followed there was a mutual repulsion between Russia and the outside world. The Soviet Union saw in every move of the "bourgeois" governments a move against Russia; the bourgeoisie of the world regarded the Soviet Union as a vast malarial swamp from which there continuously exuded a noxious miasma that bade fair to pollute the whole of their civilization.

But a train of events set in which, after rapidly gathering momentum in 1932, came to a culmination in 1933 and in a surprisingly short time effected a radical transformation in the Russian attitude to foreign countries. Instead of the vague suspicions directed indiscriminately against all capitalist powers, Russia's fears have been definitely fo-

cused upon two nations from which the danger of attack has become very real. The Japanese conquest of Manchuria in 1931-33 and Hitler's conquest of Germany in 1933 are two concrete facts which are full of ill omen for Russia's future, menacing her at the eastern and western extremities of her six-thousand-mile expanse of territory.

Russia is, in a territorial sense, one of the satisfied nations of the world. Including Siberia, she comprises the largest continuous tract of the earth's surface under one sovereignty; she has within her own borders all the territory she needs to meet the requirements of her large population. But it is her misfortune to be situated between two of the most land-hungry nations of the world—nations which are also most formidable in their capacity for military effort. What is more natural than that Japan and Germany, searching for an outlet for their rapidly increasing populations, should fix their eyes upon the vast, thinly peopled expanses of the Russian plains, which cover one-sixth of the land surface of the globe? Both countries have had their appetites whetted by decisive victories in the recent past. Japan demolished the myth

of white invincibility by defeating Russia in 1904-05; Germany, with one hand tied behind her back, battered Russia into a pulp in 1914-18 and extorted from the reluctant Bolsheviks the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, although she was barred from enjoying the fruits of this achievement by her subsequent defeat upon the Western Front.

For a long time following the Great War, Japan and Germany were quiescent; but the economic depression which settled upon the world in 1929 awakened in both countries the dormant spirit of militarism, which looks for a solution by conquering alien lands in which their cramped populations can find new homes and new markets.

The Japanese menace became acute in the early part of 1933, when the subjugation of the Russian sphere of influence in Manchuria was completed. Almost simultaneously, by a strange and fateful coincidence, Adolf Hitler, who had long dangled before the German masses visions of vast conquests at Russia's expense, gained control of Germany.

Under these circumstances, Russia's ideological picture of the outside world has undergone drastic revision. She no longer sees it as a complex of states that are equally evil because they are all alike capitalist; she now sees it as composed of separate units, some of which are real menaces to her security, and some of which are potential friends. Her leaders have discarded, or at any rate profoundly modified, a theoretical world-outlook based upon the dogmatic thesis of an inexorable conflict between capitalism and communism. In so far as this thesis is still maintained, the coming conflict has been relegated to a future so remote that it has no bearing upon present policy. The Soviet rulers

have adopted the realistic attitude of making friends with whoever is willing to reciprocate their advances. As a counterweight to the Japanese menace, Russia has sought and secured recognition by the United States; as a counterweight to the German menace, Russia has spared no pains to place her relations with France and Poland upon a firmer basis.

II

The tendency toward a readjustment of Soviet foreign policy in this direction might have been detected as early as 1924, the eventful year which saw the death of Lenin, the recognition of Russia by the powers of western Europe, and the beginning of the violent quarrel between Stalin and Trotsky as to the proper line for Soviet foreign policy to follow. Stalin favored closer economic relations with the capitalist powers; Trotsky opposed them, and argued that a world revolution was an essential prerequisite to the success of the Soviet experiment in Russia.

Stalin was victorious over Trotsky, who was ousted from one office after another, and finally exiled from Russia in 1929. Under Stalin's dictatorship, Soviet foreign policy entered upon what may be termed its second phase, which lasted from 1924 to 1933. The new policy was intended to be merely a *modus vivendi*; intercourse with capitalist countries was to be confined to the minimum necessary for achieving the industrialization of Russia. It did not in any sense imply the establishment of cordial relations with bourgeois governments with a view to common diplomatic action; on the contrary, it was still held that as the socialist experiment approached success, the proletariat in capitalist countries would become restive

and the bourgeois governments in desperation would form a coalition to destroy the Soviet Union.

It was the crystallization of the Japanese and German menaces during 1932–33 that ushered in the third phase of Soviet foreign policy under the astute guidance of Maxim Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The Soviet Government is now evincing a willingness, and even an anxiety, to transform its economic relations with well disposed powers into political friendships and *ententes*, to say nothing of alliances, with view to common defensive measures against an aggressor. Such an objective has naturally pushed the concept of world revolution into the background. Indeed, it has become a source of positive embarrassment to Moscow that Communist parties working in countries with which Russia is seeking friendlier relations should identify themselves as instruments or even allies of the Soviet Government. As Mr. Walter Duranty expressed it in a dispatch to the *New York Times* of November 20, 1932, "The Bolshevik Kremlin today regards the growth of the revolutionary movement in Europe with real anxiety."

The principles now governing Russian foreign policy were set forth in a speech of the utmost significance delivered by Commissar Litvinov to the All-Union Central Executive Committee on December 29, 1933. In this speech he undertook the task of adapting Communist dogma to the necessities of the new diplomatic situation. After a ritualistic repetition of the familiar postulate that capitalism inevitably breeds war, he continued: "But not every capitalist state has an equal desire for war at all times. Any state, no matter how imperialistic, may become deeply pacifist

at one period or another. . . . Side by side with the very few countries which have already either replaced diplomacy by war operations [like Japan], or, being still unprepared for it [like Germany], are preparing to do this in the near future, there are those which are not yet pursuing such objects. . . . There are also bourgeois states—and they are quite numerous—which are interested, for the immediate future, in the maintenance of peace and are prepared to pursue a policy directed towards the maintenance of peace. I am not going into an estimation of the motives for such a policy, but am merely stating a fact which is highly valuable to us. . . . In striving therefore toward the establishment and maintenance of friendly relations with all countries, we devote particular attention to the strengthening of relations and maximum *rapprochement* with those countries which, like ourselves, furnish proof of their sincere desire to preserve peace and show that they are prepared to counteract any violation of peace. . . . The whole world knows that we can maintain and are maintaining good relations with capitalist states under any régime, including also a Fascist régime."

III

Whatever may be one's opinion of the sincerity of Russia's devotion to the cause of peace in the abstract, there can be no doubt that there is nothing that the Soviet Government more earnestly desires at present than an avoidance of the strain which a war would impose upon her industrial system. It is common knowledge that this system is already being strained to the uttermost under the Government's industrialization programme. There are large

sections of the Russian population, particularly among the peasants and certain national minorities, whose disaffection might prove disastrous were they called upon to endure the further sacrifices entailed by a war. During 1931-33, many of the peasants, resenting the forcible collectivization of their farms, engaged in a wide-spread campaign of sabotage which brought large areas in Russia to the verge of starvation and caused a sharp increase in the mortality from malnutrition. Perhaps it is not without significance, as indicating the Soviet Government's opinion of their reliability, that the proportion of peasants in the Red army, according to the official figures of War Commissar Voroshilov, has been reduced from 57.9 per cent in 1930 to 42.5 per cent in 1934.

In addition, some of the national minorities, especially the Ukrainians, have not been wholly reconciled to their incorporation into the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian independence movement has been driven underground, but it retains a vigorous life, if we are to judge by the repeated discoveries, announced by the Soviet Government every few years, that highly placed Communist officials in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic are really secret agents of the nationalist counter-revolution. Stalin admitted the seriousness of the Ukrainian disaffection, which he adroitly linked with threats of German intervention, when he addressed the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party on January 26, 1934. "I have spoken of the tenacity of the survivals of capitalism," he declared. "It should be mentioned that survivals of capitalism in the consciousness of man have retained their tenacity much more in the national question than in any other sphere. . . . It is not so long ago that the deviation towards

Ukrainian nationalism was not the main danger in the Ukraine; but when the fight against it was stopped and it was given a chance to spread to such an extent as to make common cause with the interventionists, that deviation became the main danger."

IV

After this glance at the combination of external dangers and internal stresses which have motivated the change in the Soviet outlook on foreign affairs, it will be interesting to see how the new orientation has been reflected in Russia's relations with foreign powers.

The Japanese menace first loomed on the Far Eastern horizon in September, 1931, when the Japanese army began to oust the Chinese authorities from the provinces of Manchuria served by the Japanese-controlled South Manchuria Railway. In December Litvinov, in an effort to save the Russian sphere of influence, which was served by the Soviet-controlled Chinese Eastern Railway, proposed to the Japanese the signing of a non-aggression pact. The Japanese protracted the negotiations for over a year. During this interval, they methodically proceeded to mop up that portion of Manchuria which the Russians had been wont to regard as their own preserve. The Soviet Government, hoping to avert the confiscation of the C.E.R., refused to associate itself with the League of Nations and the United States in their condemnation of Japan, and adopted a policy which to other countries seemed complaisant and even servile. Their reward came early in 1933, when Japan broke off negotiations for a non-aggression pact, offered to purchase the C.E.R. for what the Russians considered a ridiculously inadequate sum, and applied pressure by

disrupting the operation of the line with a variety of restrictions and aggressions.

The Russian Government soon became convinced that Japan's ambitions were not confined to Manchuria, but that she aspired to absorb a substantial slice of Siberia. "A section of the military people in Japan," asserted Stalin in his report to the Seventeenth Party Congress, "are openly preaching in the press the necessity of war with the U.S.S.R. and the seizure of the Maritime Province, with the approval of another part of the military, while the Government of Japan pretends that this does not concern it, instead of calling the incendiaries of war to order."

Internally, the Russians have striven to protect themselves against Japanese attack by a heavy concentration of military force in the Far East; externally, they have sought to counterbalance the Japanese menace by a *rapprochement* with the United States. Fortunately for their desires, a new Administration had assumed office which was prepared to depart from the old tradition of aloofness and to meet the Russians half way. On October 10, 1933, President Roosevelt dispatched a message to President Kalinin, informing him that he would be pleased to receive a representative to discuss all questions at issue between the two countries. The Soviet Government eagerly accepted the invitation, and Commissar Litvinov, canceling all other engagements, arrived in the United States early in November. On the sixteenth of the same month, President Roosevelt announced the restoration of normal diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia. In order to secure this prize, Litvinov committed the Soviet Government to the most sweeping pledge against subversive propaganda that it had ever made. Not only would it re-

frain from direct propaganda, but it would restrain all organizations to which it lent financial aid from engaging in such activities. Hitherto the Soviet Government had always clung to the fiction that the Communist International with its headquarters in Moscow was an independent organization not under its control, but by this pledge it implicitly undertook to curb the International's activities as far as the United States was concerned.

v

Reconciliation with the United States had strengthened Soviet Russia in her dealings with Japan; at the other extremity of her borders she was also feverishly at work building a defense against possible German aggression. Adolf Hitler had become dictator of Germany in January, 1933. Here, instead of the symbolical bogey men at the mention of whose names all good Communists were wont to shudder, was a real fire-eater. In his book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had declared bluntly that Germany must seek territorial expansion at the expense of Russia, which he described as having fallen into the hands of the Jews, who were acting upon it as a "ferment of decomposition." This book was written many years ago, and it might be presumed that Hitler has since been sobered by the responsibilities of office. Litvinov, however, who is himself a Jew, expressed his skepticism in the speech to the Central Executive Committee already referred to: "We, for one, are unaware of a single responsible statement that would have completely erased the conception mentioned by me. The literary work in which this conception is preached continues to circulate in Germany without any expurgations in new editions, in-

cluding an edition with 1934 as the year of publication. The same conception is openly discussed even now in the pages of the German press. Only about half a year ago at the London International Conference a member of the German Cabinet [Dr. Hugenberg] expounded in a memorandum the same idea of conquering the East. True, he was disavowed and we have no right to, and will not, consider this memorandum as an official document, but the disavowal of a minister does not destroy the fact itself of the submission of the memorandum, which shows that the ideas stated in the document are still current even among Government circles."

In seeking to checkmate German ambitions, it was natural that Russia should turn to those states that also fear Germany, of which France and Poland are the most conspicuous. Poland and the Baltic States lie between Germany and Russia. There can be no German invasion of Russia without these intervening countries either conniving in or resisting such an attack. After having seen the destruction of the Manchurian buffer state in the Far East, it was to be expected that Russia would take every precaution to strengthen her relations with the bulwark of buffer states on her western frontier. Over a period of several years Russia had already negotiated individual non-aggression pacts with several neighboring countries. While the London Economic Conference was still in session, Litvinov took advantage of the disquiet excited among the delegates of the border states by the publication of the Hugenberg memorandum to negotiate a treaty defining the concept of aggression in precise terms. On July 3, 1933, this treaty was signed by Litvinov and the plenipotentiaries of nearly all the border states—Poland,

Estonia, Latvia, Rumania, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan.

Even more significant, however, were the gestures made by Russia toward a *rapprochement* with France. A non-aggression pact had been signed by the two Governments in November, 1932, during the premiership of Édouard Herriot, leader of the French Radicals. In August and September, 1933, M. Herriot, though no longer holding any official position, paid a visit to Russia, and was soon afterwards followed by Pierre Cot, French Minister of Aviation. Both were cordially entertained by the Soviet Government. M. Herriot in particular, as a known champion of closer Franco-Soviet relations, was singled out for special praise. In his December speech to the Central Executive Committee, Litvinov went out of his way to pay a personal tribute to M. Herriot—an honor which the French statesman shared with President Roosevelt. "After the signing of the non-aggression pact," said Litvinov, "our relations with France have made rapid strides ahead. . . . The recent visit to our Union of M. Herriot [applause], one of the most prominent and brilliant representatives of the French people, and one who reflects their peace-loving sentiments . . . gave fresh impetus to Franco-Soviet *rapprochement*."

VI

Needless to say, the course of the Russian *rapprochement* with the United States, France and Poland was viewed with distinct concern in Tokyo and Berlin. Both Foreign Offices were not long in launching a diplomatic counter-attack, aimed at detaching these newly won friends from Russia. Germany entered the struggle first. Hitler and his aides were obsessed by the fear that

France, Poland and their allies might launch a preventive war and crush Germany before she had time to rearm. A high degree of tension had been generated between Germany and Poland by the well known desire of the Germans to regain the Polish Corridor. This tension was materially eased when the two powers subscribed on November 15, 1933, to a joint declaration, which was subsequently implemented by a formal treaty to last ten years, whereby they agreed to renounce the use of force in settling any disputes that might arise between them. Hitler, knowing that this declaration would be interpreted in Paris as an anti-French move, immediately followed it up by granting a French journalist an interview which was published in *Le Matin* of Paris on November 22. This interview was remarkably conciliatory in tone. Hitler categorically surrendered all claim to Alsace-Lorraine. He sought to win French sentiment by depicting himself as a bulwark against Communism. War between France and Germany "would mark the downfall of our races . . . and eventually we should see Asia installed in our continent and Bolshevism triumphant."

This pacific gesture of Hitler's provoked a cleavage of opinion in France. The conservative wing of French political thought, or at any rate a section of it, is inclined to look with favor upon Hitler's offer. If Germany is willing to renounce Alsace-Lorraine and to guarantee to respect the integrity of French territory, there is no reason, they argue, why France should not meet Germany half way and sign a peace pact which would in effect be a pledge of non-intervention in the event of war between Germany and Russia. To put it baldly, they are prepared to purchase their own

security by giving Germany a free hand in eastern Europe.

The Radicals and Socialists, on the other hand, are strongly opposed to any agreement that involves offering up Russia as a sacrifice on the altar of Franco-German amity. They are sympathetic with the Soviet experiment and bitterly hostile to Hitler's policy of domestic repression. They argue that to turn Germany against Russia is only to postpone the day when the menace of Hitlerism, bloated by conquests in the East, will have to be met—and to be met without the assistance of a defeated Russia.

The recent political crisis in France saw the replacement of the Left cabinet of M. Chautemps with a cabinet of national concentration headed by ex-President Doumergue, who is noted for his conservatism. Since this change took place, rumors of an impending military alliance with the Soviet Government, which had been given currency in the French Right press in December, have died down. However, M. Herriot, the outstanding champion of Franco-Russian intimacy, is a member of the Doumergue cabinet, and it is unlikely that the tendency toward a gradual strengthening of Franco-Russian relations will be interfered with as long as he is in the Government.

The most recent indications are that France, instead of seeking an *entente* directly with Russia, has adopted the more cautious policy of promoting Russia's adherence to the League of Nations, and thereby fortifying that body in the task of dealing with German obstreperousness. It is an open secret that the French Foreign Office is now conducting the necessary preliminary negotiations with certain of the lesser powers that have an anti-Soviet

bias to ensure that at the September session of the League an invitation to become a member can be extended to Russia by unanimous vote. Soviet Russia once regarded the League as a "Holy Alliance of the bourgeoisie for the suppression of the proletarian revolution," but Litvinov's December speech contained a significant passage which bears all the earmarks of the beginning of a pilgrimage to Geneva: "Not being doctrinaires, we do not refuse to make use of any amalgamations and organizations, either existing or possible of formation, if we have now or in the future reason to believe that they serve the cause of peace."

Meanwhile, relations between Germany and Russia still continue strained. On March 28, Litvinov proposed to Germany a joint treaty whereby the two powers would mutually guarantee the independence and inviolability of the Baltic States. According to official statements made public in Berlin and Moscow on April 26, this offer was rejected by the German Government, which rather brusquely declared that "any attempt to throw doubt on the sincerity of this [German] policy must be categorically rebuffed."

VII

The recognition of Russia by the United States was a grievous disappointment to the Japanese. Whether rightly or wrongly, they fear that it implies American assistance in some form to the Soviet Government in the event of a Russo-Japanese war. Like Hitler, therefore, Japan also was not long in embarking upon a diplomatic counter-attack in an effort to dissuade the United States from associating itself too intimately with Russia. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the innumer-

able Japanese protestations, such as that of Foreign Minister Koki Hirota to the Japanese Diet, that "Japan fervently desires American friendship." The Japanese are realistic enough to know that a war with the United States might well prove disastrous to their ambitions in the Far East. An undisguised expression of Japan's anxiety at the state of her relations with the United States was manifested by the "informal and personal message" dispatched by Mr. Hirota to Secretary of State Hull in February. The correspondence, including Mr. Hull's reply, was made public on March 21. Although no concrete issues were discussed, the exchange seems to have cleared the air and paved the way for less strained relations. The removal of the bulk of the United States navy from the Pacific in April was another step in this direction, but the gradually improving sentiment between the two countries suffered a severe setback when a spokesman of the Japanese Foreign Office issued an informal declaration on April 17 which was in effect the proclamation of a Monroe Doctrine with respect to China. The essence of the declaration was the statement, "We oppose any attempt on the part of China to avail herself of the influence of any other country in order to resist Japan."

Why Japan should have chosen such a time to issue a statement which added nothing fundamentally new to her well known attitude toward China, but provided one more occasion for raising diplomatic temperatures, remains a subject of conjecture. It may indeed pre-empt that Japan, having now decided that war with Russia has become too dangerous, has resolved to tackle helpless China instead. On the other hand, it must not be ignored that the declara-

tion may indirectly pave the way for a clash with Russia. Was it sheer coincidence that a spokesman of the Japanese legation at Peiping on April 28 announced that Japan was watching with concern recent developments in Sinkiang Province, where Chinese Communists were waging a bitter civil war against Chinese Mohammedans? The Japanese spokesman expressed sympathy with the Mohammedans and charged that the Soviet Government was supplying war materials to the Communists. In addition to this alleged Russian intervention in Chinese affairs, there is the fact that Outer Mongolia, although nominally still a Chinese province, is actually a Soviet Republic as completely under the control of Russia as Manchuria is under that of Japan. If Japan seriously plans taking any action to enforce her latest declaration, it would be very easy for her to find an excuse to pick a quarrel with Russia.

Whatever may be the significance of the Japanese declaration, it has not conduced to better feelings between Tokyo and Moscow. The Soviet Government has intensified its already feverish war preparations. The Japanese continue to build strategic railways in Manchuria and to accumulate war materials.

VIII

There is a question which must inevitably arise in the minds of all. Is there any possibility of an alliance between Japan and Germany for the attainment of a common objective? Both countries are ambitious to expand territorially at the expense of Russia, both have resigned from the League of Nations in a huff, and both feel ostracized by the rest of the world. A political alliance between the two would seem to be in order. So far, however, there have been

no overt evidences of such a development, though many incidents, all trivial enough in themselves, point unmistakably to a mutual desire of both governments to remain on friendly terms with each other. It is very likely that the Japanese Foreign Office is still dubious of the advantages that would accrue from an alliance with a government whose relations with the powers of western Europe are strained; it does not wish to provoke the ill will of France and Great Britain in addition to that of the United States. If, however, Germany could succeed in patching up some sort of political *entente* with France which would give her a free hand to rearm for action against Russia, the world should not be surprised to see her form an alliance with Japan. It is therefore a favorable augury that France, instead of striking such a bargain, continues to insist that the League of Nations shall be the channel through which Germany shall air her grievances. The persistence with which France has been clinging to this policy is expressed very clearly in the French note of March 17 to the British Government: "Whatever may have been said or attempted against the League, it remains the only organization capable of furnishing a collective guarantee of peace. . . . Germany could give no better guarantee of world stability than her return, free of all constraint, to the community of states."

If Russia should join the League and coöperate sincerely with the other powers, it will afford the League what may well prove to be its last chance of recovering from the blows to its prestige suffered through the defection of Germany and Japan, and of making itself strong enough to curb the warlike spirit of these two powers before they unite to precipitate a world crisis.

Alan

BY JOHN LINEAWEAVER

A Story

THE lodge stood on stilts near the summit of the bank facing the lake, and at twilight after supper even on fine evenings pine branches brushed against its walls, making a sweeping noise like that of a dozen new brooms, in the sharpening breeze of on-coming night, while from the lake twenty feet down sounded the lapping of waves against the smooth rock bar which formed the swimming pier.

On this evening there was also a third, less soothing sound: a distant chorus of excited children's voices wafting down from the Recreation Hall and striving comically with the more usual concert of the frogs in their pools under the lodge.

On a cot in the locker room on the second floor Bob Hansen lay watching with ironical eyes while his fellow counsellor and friend, Alan Whitaker, for the second time unknotted and began reknitting a new, lavishly colored neck-tie; and as he watched he found himself half-consciously trying to pick out individual voices in the Recreation Hall chorus, just as a moment before he had been engaged with that of the frogs. That shrill piping one—corresponding, it occurred to him, to that of the oak toad—was young Penny's; he was almost sure of it. That other, the one full

of a deep intimate laughter, suggesting a Negro's, belonged indubitably to the elder Jenkins, brother of the kid who was in his cabin. He could pick out others but of these two he was certain, or almost certain, and for a fleeting second he thought of walking up to the Recreation Hall, where the play which Alan had coached was about to begin, in order to verify his detections. But immediately he thought: what kind of a fool idea is that? . . . Well, he answered himself a moment later, it's damn good practice anyway.

Meanwhile Alan, the joints of his fingers pale from effort, continued to work with the tie. His teeth bit into the side of his full lower lip, his free chin jutting pugnaciously, and he was frowning now, making whitish creases in his otherwise sun-browned forehead. Regarding him impersonally Bob thought for perhaps the thousandth time: he sure is a good-looking devil. You can't get away from *that*.

Then at last it was done. He pulled the ends and leaning forward, eyes intent on the little steel mirror hung on the wall before him, gave the knot a final critical look. After his eyes left it they traveled upward to linger a moment on his face—an action which did not escape Bob's notice, and sensing