

PREFACE TO THE FIRST PRINTING

An attempt is made in this study to bring together material on one of the most interesting, important, and controversial episodes of recent history—the period of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of 1939. An examination of recently published materials and the large collections of documents gathered by the prosecution and defense for the Nuremberg trials has produced such an amount of evidence concerning German-Soviet relations in the period from 1939 to 1941 as to warrant a presentation of the course of events in that period in the form of a chronological survey.

It should be noted that in the account of the events leading up to the signing of the Pact, generally available evidence and episodes previously analyzed by several competent historians have not been treated at such length as has the later period for which much of the relevant documentation has hitherto remained unknown.

The free and complete access accorded the writer by the Law School of the University of Chicago to its vast collection of documents, transcripts, and other materials from Nuremberg has made this work possible. The large number of unpublished documents cited throughout the text indicates that the search through these mountains of paper, though tedious, is rewarding. The Divisions of Manuscripts and Aeronautics of the Library of Congress have kindly permitted access to some interesting German documents in their custody.

Many thanks are due to Dr. Hans Rothfels under whose guidance most of the research was done, to Dr. George B. Carson and Dr. S. William Halperin who followed the writing of the text with the greatest care, and to Dr. Fritz T. Epstein whose detailed examination led to many improvements.

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Washington, D.C.
January, 1953.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND PRINTING

During the nearly two decades since the appearance of the first printing, a number of important new sources for the period covered by this book have become available. The continued publication of the collections of German and Italian foreign office documents; the appearance of an analogous Hungarian series; the opening of German, American, British, and Japanese archives; and the steady stream of articles and monographs have all enriched our knowledge of those years. Various re-evaluations of the past within the Soviet Union have brought to light some documents, important memoirs, and a considerable serious secondary literature, much of it dealing with the ex-

ceedingly controversial subject of Soviet preparation and readiness — or lack of both — for the German invasion of June, 1941.¹⁾

If this book still has any usefulness in the face of such developments, two factors may be responsible. First, the new sources have in many cases provided added detail rather than substantial alteration. Even where corrections are needed, these affect minor matters while leaving the main theses unaffected. Thus the appearance of Volume VI of Series D of the *Documents on German Foreign Policy* makes possible a correction in the date of a crucial meeting between the German and Soviet trade negotiators, Karl Schnurre and Eugene Babarin, from July 22, 1939, as deduced in this book (p. 37) on the basis of an erroneous translation in the Tokyo War Crimes Trial collection, to July 18, 1939. As for the basic policy issue, however, this correction only gives added support to the assertion (p. 38) "that the Soviet decision to resume formal economic negotiations must have been made before the news of the Hudson-Wohlthat talks were published on July 22, and in all probability before the talks took place on July 20." The more accurate dating now possible should finally demolish the thesis that the Hudson-Wohlthat episode led the Soviet government to move toward Germany.

A second factor to be noted is the development of the secondary literature on the subject of this book. The thesis that Hitler made his decision to attack the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940 produced a scholarly controversy,²⁾ but the serious scholar involved in that exchange, Andreas Hillgruber, largely abandoned his earlier position and moved toward the one argued in this book in his own more recent thoughtful study of Hitler's policy.³⁾ Neither of the books published since 1954 on the subject of this work is particularly persuasive. Phillip W. Fabry's book, published in 1962, is too full of errors and distortions.⁴⁾ Characteristic of his scholarship, to cite an example

1) The author summarized the then current state of the scholarly discussion of the subject in "Deutsch-sowjetischer Nichtangriffspakt," *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft, Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1966), cc. 1177-87, which also contains a bibliography.

2) See *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, I (1953), 301-18; II (1954), 240-54.

3) *Hitlers Strategie; Politik und Kriegführung, 1940-41* (Frankfurt/M: Bernard & Graefe, 1965).

4) *Der Hitler-Stalin-Pakt, 1939-1941, Ein Beitrag zur Methode sowjetischer Aussenpolitik* (Darmstadt: Fundus-Verlag, 1962). There is a detailed review by the author in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, XII (1964), 132-35, and a comparison of Fabry's book with the author's by Fritz T. Epstein in *Neue Politische Literatur*, VIII (1963), 337-42. Fabry's subsequent treatment of the subject, *Die Sowjetunion und das Dritte Reich, Eine dokumentierte Geschichte der deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen von 1933 bis 1941* (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1971), has not profited greatly from the criticism of his earlier work.

related to the controversy just mentioned, is his use of a letter by General Walter Warlimont as evidence against a decision by Hitler in the summer of 1940 and in support of a decision after the Molotov visit of November, 1940, when that letter in fact contains a full page of arguments which led Warlimont "to the conclusion that Hitler made his firm decision to attack Russia in the second half of July 1940."⁵) The second volume of James E. McSherry's work on German and Soviet diplomacy is more useful because of its summarization of the published documents, but leaves much to be desired in analysis and interpretation.⁶) A comprehensive new study of the relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union before and during their temporary alignment with each other would be welcome indeed, but remains to be written.

If one were to recast major aspects of this book in the light of new material, it might be in terms of broad perspectives rather than specific detail. Our understanding of the ideological preconceptions governing Hitler's foreign policy, assisted by the discovery of his second book,⁷) would suggest greater stress on Hitler's predisposition to launch a war on the Soviet Union, in the face of which the decision of July, 1940, assumes a somewhat different appearance. On the other hand, the willingness of Stalin to come to an agreement with Hitler in previous years and the failure of those hopes because of the latter's disinterest at the time — now more clearly documented than in the earlier literature — places the ability of the two dictators to reach an accommodation in 1939 in a different light also.⁸) Within its self-defined limits as a chronological survey, however, the account now reprinted may still be useful to those interested in one of the more fascinating episodes in the history of this century.

October, 1971

⁵) Walter Warlimont to Andreas Hillgruber, October 12, 1954; copy in Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, under Z.S. 312.

⁶) *Stalin, Hitler, and Europe*, Vol. II, *The Imbalance of Power, 1939-1941* (Cleveland: World Publ. Co., 1970).

⁷) Gerhard L. Weinberg (ed.), *Hitlers zweites Buch, Ein Dokument aus dem Jahr 1928* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1961).

⁸) The author has dealt with this in *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), esp. pp. 220-23, 310-12.