

BERND MARTIN

Germany between China and Japan

German Far Eastern policy of the interwar period

(Martin, Bernd [Sonderdrucke, Teils. 10])

GERMANY BETWEEN CHINA AND JAPAN

*German Far Eastern Policy of the Interwar Period**

BY BERND MARTIN

Between the wars the Japanese Empire slowly shifted away from the coalition of the victorious powers of Versailles towards an alliance, finally signed in September 1940, with Germany and Italy. While the neo-imperialistic Japan gradually became an enemy of the Western powers, Nationalist China advanced to the position of an ally, until in 1943 it was recognized as one of the four big powers whose obligation it supposedly was to guide the world to eternal peace.

Actually, the weak Chinese Central Government in Peking had declared war on Germany on August 17, 1917.⁽¹⁾ But that decision was made under severe pressure from the Americans. From the Chinese point of view it was intended to counter Japanese imperialism rather than to engage in war with Germany. After the seizure of Tsingtao,⁽²⁾ the Tokyo Government had unveiled its future goals on the Asian mainland by confronting Peking with the

* The author wishes to express his appreciation to the Institute of Modern History of the Academia Sinica for the hospitality he enjoyed as a visiting research associate during the winter of 1976/77.

The present article is an enlarged version, completed by footnotes, of a lecture given by the author at the Institute of Modern History on January 22, 1977.

The footnotes have been limited mainly to German sources and German literature, they do not cover all the books written on the topic.

(1) For German-Chinese relations in World War One and during the 1920ies see: *Chen Chi*, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und China bis 1933*. Hamburg 1973; *Carlton L. Wood*, *Die Beziehungen Deutschlands zu China*. Dissertation Heidelberg 1935; *Feng Djen Djang*, *The Diplomatic Relations between China and Germany since 1898*. Shanghai 1936 (Reprint Taipei 1971); *Lorne E. Glaim*, *Sino-German Relations, 1919-1925: German Diplomatic, Economic, and Cultural Reentry into China after World War I*. Unpublished Dissertation, Washington State University (USA) 1973.
Still unsurpassed: *Beverley D. Causey*, *German Policy towards China 1918-1941*. Unpublished Dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge (USA) 1942.
For a general survey see: *Fritz van Briessen*, *Grundzüge der deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen*. Darmstadt 1977.

(2) For German colonial rule in China see: *John E. Schrecker*, *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism. Germany in Shantung*. Harvard University Press 1971; for a military account of the German-Japanese combat: *Charles B. Burdick*, *The Japanese Siege of Tsingtau. World War One in Asia*. Hamden, Connecticut (USA) 1976.

ill-famed "21 demands". By allying themselves with the Western cause of democracy and by obtaining a seat at the peace conference, China hoped to be treated as an equal partner, hoping to influence the revision of the treaties with the colonial powers and to regain full sovereignty over the Chinese territory.

When this attempt failed at Versailles, China refused to sign the peace treaty with Germany. Once more it should be borne in mind, that this step was not directed against the German people, but served as a means of pressure against the Japanese and the Anglo-Americans. Since there had never been any express hatred against Germany in China, and since the Peking Government did not treat German nationals as citizens of an enemy country, the war was terminated through an unilateral declaration on the part of China in September 1919. Only about two years later, in 1921, German merchants regained their pre-war position in China.

China and Germany as well as the Soviet Union were all outcasts of the Versailles peace settlement. The possibility of these countries joining forces in the field of international relations was enough to raise distrust among the Western powers. Therefore, when China and Germany reached an agreement in May 1921 in order to reestablish normal diplomatic relations, the German Republican Government had to give up all former special rights granted to Germany in China. For the first time in modern history the Republic of China was treated as an equal partner in a treaty with a major Western power. By giving up her extraterritorial rights Germany gained in prestige and made an immense profit. Chinese Nationalists began to look upon Germany as an ally in the fight against the Anglo-American world dominance and highly admired the rapid German recovery after the defeat in the Great War. The stage seemed to be set for friendly relations between the young Chinese republic and the even younger German republic. However, World War Two again saw the two countries in hostile camps, since Germany preferred to sign an alliance with Imperial Japan, which by then had become China's arch enemy.

These developments raise important questions, such as whether certain long range political or social factors, as for instance the modernization from above effected through a conservative governing class that had never been challenged by a revolution, were decisive steps in the transformation of both Germany and Japan into authoritarian states, whose approach to solving issues

was similar because of the integral logic common to both systems,⁽³⁾ or whether, on the contrary, these similarities stemmed from the traditional conflict of interest among comparatively autonomous political and economic groups. It could also be asked whether the politics of other powers, especially the Anglo-American influence, determined these developments. In which way did the political leadership of Germany and Japan, especially that of Adolf Hitler in Germany,⁽⁴⁾ influence this rapprochement? Or was this "alliance without a backbone"⁽⁵⁾ just the casual product of a momentary decision arising, on the German side, from Hitler's restlessness and, on the Japanese, from political stubbornness of the militarists ruling the country?

As it was, both Japan and Germany actually added certain secret amendments to all their agreements which were often contradictory to the express content and which left each one free to act against the other's vital interest and - even in regard to military defense - to follow their own "sacred egoism". Thus they seemed incapable of any real partnership as practised by the Anglo-American war coalition or even of any real strategic or political agreements like the ones within the heterogeneous alliance between the Soviet Union and the Western powers.

In Japan the social conflict between the lower echelons of society and the traditional governing oligarchy which dominated the state as well as the economy was politically institutionalized by the Meiji Restoration.⁽⁶⁾ But for a

(3) Barrington *Moore*, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. London 1967, and - much better -; Reinhard *Bendix*, *Preconditions of Development: A Comparison of Japan and Germany*. In: Reinhard *Bendix*, *Nationbuilding and Citizenship*. New York 1968.

(4) The best study on Hitler's foreign policy: Klaus *Hildebrand*, *Deutsche Aussenpolitik 1933-1945. Kalkül oder Dogma?* Stuttgart 1973 (English translation: *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich*. University of California Press 1974).

(5) This term ("Allianz ohne Rückgrat") can be found in the standard work on German-Japanese relations: Theo *Sommer*, *Deutschland und Japan zwischen den Mächten 1935-1940. Vom Antikominternpakt zum Dreimächtepakt*. Tübingen 1962.
Ernst *L. Presseisen*, *Germany and Japan. A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy 1933-1941*. The Hague 1958; Frank W. *Iklé*, *German-Japanese Relations 1936-1940*. New York 1956; Bernd *Martin*, *Die deutsch-japanischen Beziehungen während des Dritten Reiches*. In: Manfred *Funke* (Ed.), *Hitler, Deutschland und die Mächte*. Düsseldorf 1976, pp. 434-470; Bernd *Martin*, *Japan - Zur Rezeption und wechselseitigen Beeinflussung von Herrschaftspraktiken und Weltmachtbestrebungen*. In: E. *Forndran*, F. *Golczewski*, D. *Riesenberger* (Eds.), *Innen- und Aussenpolitik unter nationalsozialistischer Bedrohung*. Opladen 1977, pp. 87-109.

(6) The first profound German work on the effects of the Meiji Restoration: Annelotte *Piper*, *Japans Weg von der Feudalgesellschaft zum Industriestaat*. Köln 1976.

certain time this conflict was covered up by the imperialistic power politics before and during the First World War. In the 1920ies, racial discrimination against the Japanese by the Anglo-Americans and the Nine-Powers'-Treaty, which forced Japan to acknowledge the "open-door-policy" in China, were criticized by nationalist groups, mostly officers of petty rural origin, who envisioned a social imperialist policy of living space ("Lebensraum") in East Asia that seemed vitally necessary for Japan. ⁽⁷⁾

Since the Japanese army consisted in large part of conscripts of rural origin -with the exception of the Navy which favoured the recruitment of skilled craftsmen of urban background - and since Japan still remained an agrarian country, slogans like that of "direct actions" met with a favourable response in the army. In 1931, the troops stationed in Manchuria felt encouraged to act on their own. ⁽⁸⁾ This was a blow directed against the coalition of capitalists and upper classes, which, due to its policy of deflation, was taken responsible for the impoverishment of farmers and small craftsmen. The parliamentary system which had been stabilized during the twenties was destroyed in 1932, when its opponents, court circles and nationalist die-hards, united and when the main leaders of the democratic capitalist polity were assassinated. The internal radicalization and the rising influence of the army - uncontrolled by any parliament or ministers - forced Japan to take an intransigent attitude towards the Manchurian crisis. Finally, on March 27, 1933, this made the country leave the League of Nations. ⁽⁹⁾ This occurred four days after the German Reichstag had approved the enabling law ("Ermächtigungsgesetz"). Although Germany in Geneva had voted against the Japanese aggression in Manchuria the timely coincidence of these two facts was to be of some importance for the two countries later on.

The Weimar Republic looked upon Japan as a party to the oppressive Versailles treaty. Mutual relations were restricted to mere diplomatic formalities

(7) For Japan's policy of aggression as a mobilizing factor see: Bernd *Martin*, Aggressionspolitik als Mobilisierungsfaktor. Der militärische und wirtschaftliche Imperialismus Japans 1931-1941. In: F. *Forstmeier* and H. E. *Volkman* (Eds.), *Wirtschaft und Rüstung am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkrieges*. Düsseldorf 1975, pp. 222-244.

(8) Sadako N. *Ogata*, *Defiance in Manchuria: The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931-1932*. University of California Press 1964.

(9) Christopher *Thorne*, *The Limits of Foreign Power. The West, the League, and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933*. London 1972. A study on the German Reich and the Manchurian crisis is being prepared by Gabriele *Herre* (Freiburg i. Br.), *Das Deutsche Reich und die mandchurische Krise*.

and some – though small – trade on the basis of a trade agreement dating from 1927. Even though Japan, from 1931 onward, shared the German attitude towards the question of reparations, the “Wilhelmstrasse” (German Foreign Ministry) officially remained neutral in its Far Eastern Policy. Nevertheless, the German export industry, which foresaw the future market in China, the Foreign Ministry and the German military stuck to their de-facto pro-Chinese outlook. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Sun Yat-sen, ⁽¹¹⁾ the father of the Chinese Republic, had visited Germany on a number of occasions before the First World War. He considered the German national unification, brought about by Bismarck’s appeal of “iron and blood”, rapid industrialization and direct state encouragement of the economy, as relevant models for the development of China. Sun even looked for direct German aid and German advisers. But shortage of money on the side of the Chinese and fear of Allied intervention on the German side ended those first endeavours. ⁽¹²⁾ However, Sun Yat-sen’s desire for a closer relationship between Germany and China was also shared by high ranking Kuomintang officials, among others by Chiang Kai-shek and Dr. Chu Chia-hua.

The precise nature of the origins of the German advisory group, which was finally established in Nanking in December 1928, will remain mysterious

(10) For Germany’s Far Eastern Policy, covering China as well as Japan, see: John P. Fox, *The Formulation of Germany’s Far Eastern Policy 1933–1936*. Unpublished Dissertation, London School of Economics 1972; from a Marxist point of view: Karl Drechsler, *Deutschland–China–Japan 1933–1939. Das Dilemma der deutschen Fernostpolitik*. Berlin (Ost) 1964.

(11) There is no recent German biography on Sun Yat-sen.

(12) Jerry B. Seps, *German Military Advisers and Chiang Kai-shek. 1927–1938*. Berkeley, California 1972, p.23. This unpublished dissertation has been the only scholarly work so far on the German advisers in China. The unpublished doctoral thesis of the East German Marxist historian Karl Mehner, *Die Rolle deutscher Militärberater als Interessenvertreter des deutschen Militarismus und Imperialismus in China 1928–1936*. Leipzig 1961, made use of source material stored in the “Deutsches Zentralarchiv”, Potsdam. These documents are closed for scholars from Western countries. Mehner’s interpretation, however, can not be regarded as well balanced, since he openly takes sides with the Chinese Communists. The recent article by B. Walsh (*The German Military Mission in China, 1928–1938*. In: “*Journal of Modern History*”, 1974, pp.502–513) does not cover the topic. The typescript, edited by the *Office of Military History*, Taipei 1971, on “*A Summary of the Work of the German Advisory Group in China*” offers some useful information, but contains errors and some mistakes as well.

The author (Bernd Martin) intends to edit a collection of essays, some of them written in English, on the German advisers. This book will be published under the title “*Militär und Aussenpolitik. Die deutsche Beraterschaft in China 1928–1938*” in Freiburg i.Br. in 1979.

as long as Chinese documents on that subject are classified.⁽¹³⁾ Therefore, the following analysis which is primarily based on private German papers may be subject to correction. Chu Chia-hua who studied engineering at the Berlin Metallurgical Institute during the war and who received a German doctorate became the main sponsor of German interests in China. Until 1938, when the German advisers were finally called back, Chu served the German group as a friend and ubiquitous liaison between the Chinese government and military circles and the Germans in China.

In 1926, as acting president of the Sun Yat-sen University in Canton, Chu sent a telegram to his former German professor, requesting estimates for factories, primarily munitions plants, apparently for construction in the Canton area. Finally, the powerful though clandestine coalition of German rightist industrialists and retired officers of the monarchy, who had worked well together during the war, sent Colonel Max Bauer on an inspection trip to China.⁽¹⁴⁾ Bauer, who had been Ludendorff's (former German chief of staff) right hand, was notorious for his rightist political opinions. He was even forced to flee Germany after he had supported the armed rightist plot of Kapp to overthrow the government of the Weimar Republic. However, this did not seem to influence either side: not only did the Germans regard him as the proper person for a business-inspection of China, but the ex-colonel was immediately befriended by Chiang Kai-shek and was entrusted by him with a mission to Germany in order to select a staff of military and civilian advisers. Although Bauer and the advisory group were never supported by the German War Ministry ("Reichswehrministerium") or the German Foreign Office, they were trusted by Chinese as well as German nationalists and heavily criticized by their democratic counterparts in both countries. Despite his political

(13) These documents, mainly memoranda by the chief advisers and written in German, are supposed to be stored among Chiang Kai-shek's private papers which are not open to the public. A part of Chu Chia-hua's private papers are kept in the Institute of Modern History which has been preparing an edition of key documents. But neither the papers nor this edition contain anything on the German advisory group.

In the Federal Republic of Germany the Political Archives of the Foreign Ministry in Bonn as well as the Military Archives in Freiburg i. Br. hold some useful folders. But the bulk of the material was burnt when the Central Archives in Potsdam were bombed in 1944.

(14) John P. Fox, Max Bauer: Chiang Kai-shek's First German Military Adviser. In: "Journal of Contemporary History", 1970, pp.21-44. See also the relevant chapters in the only biography on Bauer: Adolf Vogt, Oberst Max Bauer. Generalstabsoffizier im Zwiellicht 1869-1929. Osnabrück 1974.

opinions, Bauer laid the foundations for German aid to the Chinese and contributed remarkably to the reorganizing and modernization of the Kuomintang revolutionary armed forces. ⁽¹⁵⁾

Thus, the Germans helped to stabilize the Chinese central government of Chiang Kai-shek, ⁽¹⁶⁾ a fact, which in the long run was of course contrary to Japanese interests. Only slowly could Hitler and certain Nationalsocialist groups shift the German Far Eastern policy from China towards Japan. In general, the Japanese were regarded as narrow-minded and were mistrusted because of their tendency toward technical imitation. These deeply rooted resentments against them could never be completely dispersed by any pro-Japanese propaganda.

Hitler, who in his programme "Mein Kampf" actually never said anything about his future East Asian policy, was now forced through his anti-bolshevist policy at home and abroad to look for new allies. For him, the Reichswehr, the Foreign Ministry, and certain economic groups a continental alliance with a Far Eastern power in addition to a German English front seemed an ideal means to encircle the Soviet Union. The only question was with which of the two, Japan or China, the Reich should form an alliance.

Yet, for the time being, the German relations with these two countries were overshadowed by the nationalsocialist racial doctrine, which, of course, was resented by both of them. Asian diplomats frequently intervened in Berlin and forced the ministries to influence the Party in order to change the crude so far used differentiation between Aryans and Non-Aryans into one of Aryans and Jews. ⁽¹⁷⁾

Hitler made all his decisions, before and during the war, according to his conviction that the "Germanic master race" had to find its way to world power on its own, without the help of the "yellow" race. Only as long as there

(15) Political Archives, Foreign Ministry Bonn: Folder "Politische Beziehungen China zu Deutschland", Abt. Pol. IV: Memoranda by Bauer on the reorganization of the Chinese army (December 14, 1929) and on the development of a railroad-system in China (December 28, 1929).

(16) The standard work in German on Kuomintang-China was written by Jürgen Domes, *Die vertagte Revolution. Die Politik der Kuomintang 1923-1937*. Berlin 1969. See also the controversial interpretation by Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution. China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937*. Harvard University Press 1974.

Recently, a biography on Chiang Kai-shek was published in German by Friedrich-Wilhelm Schlomann and Paulette Friedlingstein, *Tschiang Kai-schek: Ein Leben für China*. Stuttgart 1976.

(17) Fox, Formulation p.141

was nothing concretely planned between Germany and the Far Eastern Empire did Hitler welcome Japan as his associate against the Soviet Union and, from 1940, against the USA. Neither the future Foreign Secretary Ribbentrop, nor the German military, nor the industrialists shared Hitler's racial prejudice. This plus divergent interests among these groups further hindered a unified German political attitude towards East Asia.

Although the Japanese army officers greatly admired the German dictatorship, the German-Japanese rapprochement was actually initiated by leading National Socialist groups, and in particular by Hitler himself. Hitler sponsored a formal recognition of Japanese dominated Manchuria in order to outmaneuver the traditional "China-lobby". These were: the pro-Chinese Foreign Ministry as well as army generals, who were interested in China as a territory for military experiments after the collaboration with the Red Army had been suspended, and a strong China-lobby within the armaments industry. On the other hand, Hitler was supported by the newly appointed ambassador to Tokyo (Dirksen), by Rosenberg's office and by Fritz Thyssen, who hoped to build heavy industry combines together with the Japanese in Manchuria.⁽¹⁸⁾ However, Foreign Secretary von Neurath together with the Reichswehr and those industrial groups, who profited by the arms trade with China, prevented Hitler from changing the Far Eastern policy too quickly.⁽¹⁹⁾

Obviously, Hitler's pro-Japanese policy could not be realized by traditional diplomatic channels. This task could only be fulfilled by a newly created institution consisting of Party members and businessmen who were interested in trading with Japan. Joachim von Ribbentrop, since April 1934 Hitler's special envoy in questions of disarmament together with his office ("Büro Ribbentrop"⁽²⁰⁾) – a kind of rival party organization to the established Foreign Ministry – seemed to be best suited for creating the world-wide anticommunist alliance aimed for. Ribbentrop made sure of the German navy's help, whose obvious weakness made it lean towards the sea-powers Britain and Japan. In his first contacts with certain Japanese naval groups in January 1935, Ribbentrop used Dr. Hack,⁽²¹⁾ a German armament lobbyist, who had had success

(18) *Ibid* p. 50 and p. 239

(19) *Ibid* p. 86, *Sommer* op. cit. p. 21, *Presseisen* op. cit. p. 57.

(20) Hans-Adolf *Jacobsen*, *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik 1933-1938*. Frankfurt am Main 1968, p. 252.

(21) This and the following outline are based on the private papers of Friedrich-Wilhelm *Hack*. These documents were provided by Hack's nephew, Dr. R. Hack, whom the author wishes to thank for his generosity.

with some business transactions between the Heinkel aircraft works and the Imperial Japanese Navy.

Despite the different opinions on the parity of naval forces, which the Western powers had denied, the Japanese admiralty stuck to a policy of reconciliation with the Anglo-Americans who were regarded as economically superior. For this reason, these German feelers were rejected, but were, as it seems, taken up by the Japanese army. Apparently both sides took some steps which were finally to lead to the Anticomintern pact.

The Japanese army, represented in Berlin by the fervently pro-German-military attaché Oshima, had become aware of the pro-Japanese activities of certain persons around Hitler. Exploiting these tendencies was considered to be useful in two ways: First, the German influence in China might be neutralized, or even withdrawn, by an agreement with Germany, and second, Japan might thereby gain an ally against the Soviet Union who endangered the Japanese position in Manchuria. On 17th of September 1935 Oshima suggested to Hack to try to intensify the German-Japanese collaboration which was to be worked out without the help of the two foreign offices.

Oshima took Ribbentrop into his confidence and - only a few days later - presented a handwritten draft plan for a pact. The German envoy Hack informed both Admiral Canaris, then head of the intelligence service and Blomberg, the Minister of War, about the Japanese propositions. Without hesitation Canaris agreed to an anti-Soviet front, which, originally, was to include Great Britain, Germany, Poland, and Japan. Blomberg, on the other hand, did not want to endanger the German position in China by such an alliance. But since the Japanese army had also tried to use the Germans as a mediator between Japan and China,⁽²²⁾ it seemed possible that China would be included in the formation of such a pact. For this reason, Blomberg decided to give up his opposition. The basic ideas of the alliance, especially its anti-Comintern tendency, had been fixed by the end of November 1935. Hitler himself - against the opposition of the Foreign Ministry - had approved of this draft in a discussion with Ribbentrop.⁽²³⁾

On November 25, 1936, the treaty was signed in Berlin. This delay of almost a year can be explained by an officers' rebellion in Tokyo and by the

(22) *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. IV, Documents Nos. 433, 451, 452.

(23) 27 November 1935 (*Hack private papers*, note November 28, 1935).

changing situation in world politics. In addition, in 1936, both partners thought it advisable to add some secret amendments which would convert the treaty into a military defense pact against the Soviet Union.⁽²⁴⁾ The latter had entered into a defense alliance with Outer Mongolia and had ratified the pact with France which had been signed in May 1935. Finally, the Spanish Civil War had also broken out.

Nevertheless, the German-Japanese rapprochement was preceded by a loan-agreement with China,⁽²⁵⁾ which the Reichswehr and the Foreign Ministry advocated, and by an agreement with Manchuria⁽²⁶⁾ that had also been sponsored by the traditional diplomacy. Thus, by signing the Anticominternpact, Hitler and those who shared his pro-Japanese outlook, gained in influence, but could in no way predominate the Far Eastern Policy of Germany.

Only the Japanese army, which regarded Nationalsocialism as a model in domestic politics, recklessly approved of the alliance. The officers even tried to enlarge the armament production by imitating the Nationalsocialist "Four-Years-Plan", by intensifying their state control system and by further suppressing the few remaining civil rights.⁽²⁷⁾ Since the army gained much political influence by signing the Anticominternpact, the government in Tokyo to a certain extent gave way to the army's wishes. But the so called "quasi - war economy" increased the discontent among the working classes, who in the last free elections before the war with China began, clearly voted for a parliamentary system.

In order to break the opposition in Japan and to unify the people behind the emerging alliance between the military and big business, another rather important political incident was useful: namely, the outbreak of fighting in China in July 1937. This event had been prepared long in advance, a fact which demonstrates the domestic concerns from which it derived its political *raison d'être*. This war, euphemistically called a "conflict", was welcomed by the Japanese navy because it changed the direction of continental expansion from Soviet Russia southward towards the promising raw material holdings of French-Indochina and the Dutch East Indies. With this war the Japanese army definitely supported economic imperialism, and the initial conflict between the

(24) *Sommer*, op. cit. pp.30-56 and for the documents and amendments *ibid.* pp.493-499.

(25) 8 April 1936 (*Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. V, Doc. 270).

(26) 30 April 1936 (*Fox*, Formulation p.231).

(27) *Martin*, Aggressionspolitik p.232

interests of the army on the one side and the navy and business on the other side was overcome in the common chauvinism of war.

The army, instead of preparing for war against the Soviet Union —as was proposed in the Anticomintern pact — pursued its ends in China. There it was confronted, ironically enough, by elite Chinese troops that had been trained and armed by German military advisers. By 1936 the German influence in Kuo-mintang China was visible everywhere. Had the war not broken out in July 1937, the German impact might have been even greater. Colonel General Hans von Seeckt, who had reorganized the small German armed forces after the humiliating defeat in the First World War, promulgated German interests in China to an extent quite unknown until then. During his brief term of office as German chief adviser 1934/35⁽²⁸⁾ he won the complete confidence of Chiang Kai-shek. He was even granted the privilege of issuing orders on behalf of the Marshal. As a German nationalist and military man Seeckt propagated two purposes: 1. re-establishment of Germany as a world power by strengthening her international position, 2. support for a united and modernized China.

From Seeckt's as well as from the other military advisers' point of view China was to become a strong anticommunist bulwark as well as a reliable trading partner and finally a political ally of the Reich. Barter agreements served the economy of both countries best. German armament exports to China boomed, German heavy industrial enterprises like Otto Wolff signed contracts for the construction of railways, and the huge chemical concern IG Farben gained a monopoly in China, as did German firms specializing in electronic equipment, like Siemens. Had Germany ranked fifth in the total value of Chinese imports in 1932, the Reich rose to a 17% share on total Chinese imports in 1936, which placed her second, only less than one percentage point behind the United States.⁽²⁹⁾

On the other hand, Germany received 72% of her total imports of tungsten from China in 1937 (which is of utmost importance for any high quality steel production and which as raw material is not to be found in Germany

(28) See the chapter "Seeckt in China" in the biography on Seeckt written by Hans Meier-Welcker, Seeckt. Frankfurt am Main 1967.

(29) Causey, op. cit. p. 277: According to the "Monthly Reports of the Chinese Maritime Customs on the China Trade" (July 28, 1937) the figures after the first half of the year 1937 ran as follows: USA 17.99%, Germany 17.24%, Japan 15.23%, Great Britain 11.9% share on total Chinese imports.

itself). Last but not least, the gap between German food production and consumption could be closed through imports of soya-beans without spending any foreign currency which the Reich was always obliged to draw on when importing foodstuffs from West-European countries.⁽³⁰⁾

Although the Germans for their own purpose stressed heavy industry and communications as the key to national sovereignty and economic progress, this concept was not altogether self-serving. It had forged Germany into a great nation and was regarded as the only relevant model for China's development by the German advisers as well as by most of the Kuomintang leaders.

German advisership and Chiang Kai-shek worked hand in hand. Both were dependent upon each other. But to maintain that approximately hundred German advisers were responsible for modernizing China and for strengthening the political position of the Marshal would be an exaggeration. However, denying all German influence in China would clearly contradict the historical facts and the contemporary statements of Chinese officials who as late as 1941 openly declared German military help to be the only practical military assistance that China had ever received.⁽³¹⁾

The prolonged resistance of Chinese forces against the Japanese in Shanghai in 1937 should be regarded as a symbol of China's reconstruction. The then German chief adviser General Alexander von Falkenhausen⁽³²⁾ completed several strategic plans and offered suggestions for the battle of Shanghai as well as for the building up of various lines of defense all over China which apparently concurred with the Marshal's own intentions.

But the struggle on the Asian continent caused the Reich, like the other great powers, to take sides. Since the Japanese invasion of Manchuria the United States strongly opposed any change in the status quo in the Far East and, consequently, supported China's claims. Germany however, after trying

(30) For trade statistics see: *Causey*, op. cit. p.275 and *Fox*, Formulation p.328. Between November 1935 and October 1936 a 57% share of Germany's total armament export went to China (*Fox*, Formulation p.111).

Bill Kirby (Harvard University) will focus on the economic aspects in his forthcoming dissertation "Foreign Advisers and Kuomintang-China: The German Effort 1927-1938".

(31) *Walsh*, op. cit. p.512.

(32) *Seps*, op. cit. p.472; *Liang Hsi-huey* (Vassar College, Poughkeepsie), Alexander von Falkenhausen and the Chinese. Manuscript, to be published in 1978. See also Falkenhausen's private papers, which were returned to the German Military Archives, Freiburg i. Br., late in 1977.

in vain to reconcile the belligerents,⁽³³⁾ decided to support Japan. The recall of the German military advisers from China and formal recognition of Manchuria in early summer 1938⁽³⁴⁾ marked the real turning point in Germany's Far Eastern policy.

The Japanese aggression had already disrupted any regular exchange of goods with China. Therefore, German industry expected economic advantages in China as soon as Japan consolidated its occupation. But the manner in which the Japanese behaved as an occupying force, and, in particular, their proclamation of a "New Order in East Asia" quite clearly aimed at eliminating any "white", German or Anglo-American, influence in Asia. The Japanese Empire was to become the leading Far Eastern power at the expense of the other Asian countries.⁽³⁵⁾

These aims were bound to provoke the Soviet Union as well as the United States and the European colonial powers. Thus Japan's revisionist power politics coincided with the Nationalsocialist leaders' intentions to incorporate Austria and the Sudetenlande into the Reich, which meant taking risks in Europe that could be compared to those the Japanese took in Asia. After Italy's signing the Anticominternpact, Ribbentrop transformed the alliance into an anti-British one, yet without completely losing its anti-Russian character.⁽³⁶⁾

Border clashes at the Soviet-Manchurian frontier⁽³⁷⁾ which caused the Japanese army heavy losses, made the Japanese government increasingly desire a military alliance of the "world-political triangle", Berlin-Rome-Tokyo. Yet, preparations were delayed because of the solid opposition of the Imperial Navy, which did not want and, in fact, had never wanted, a full-scale war against the Western powers. Finally, Hitler's pact with Stalin and the outbreak of war in Europe definitely ended any attempts at converting the Anticominternpact into a military alliance. The Japanese government, especially the

(33) *Sommer*, op. cit. pp. 68-82; *Nieh Yu-shi*, Die Entwicklung des chinesisch-japanischen Konfliktes in Nordchina und die deutschen Vermittlungsbemühungen 1937-38. Hamburg 1970; Joachim *Peck*, Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien. Der deutsche Imperialismus und China 1937. Berlin (Ost) 1961; T.C. *Liu*, German Mediation in the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-38. In: "Far Eastern Quarterly", 1948, pp. 157-171.

(34) For details see: *Seps*, op. cit. p. 506.

(35) Lincoln *Li*, The Japanese Army in North China 1937-1941. Problems of Political and Economic Control. Oxford University Press 1975; Joyce C. *Lebra*, Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II. Selected Readings and Documents. Oxford University Press 1975.

(36) *Sommer*, op. cit. pp. 82-102.

(37) Hubertus *Lupke*, Japans Russlandpolitik von 1938-1941. Frankfurt am Main 1962.

army, who had always favoured a close relationship with Germany, were deeply offended by the Germans' egotistic way of acting which did not fit in at all with the idea of cooperation in the struggle against communism. With regard to international politics Japan found herself completely isolated and was forced to readjust her politics at a time when the war against China assumed a vast scale.

While German-Japanese relations deteriorated, Chinese advances in Berlin which attempted to reestablish the traditional friendship met with a favourable response. Secret armmunitions support, either via the Transsiberian railroad or by ship via Hanoi and invitations for retired German officers to resume their work as advisers against the Japanese hinted at a mutual rapprochement.⁽³⁸⁾ Even after the signing of the Tripartite Pact (September 27, 1940) the German government strove for a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Japanese war. The mediation of Foreign Secretary Ribbentrop in November 1940 was accepted, according to German source material, as a basis for negotiations by both belligerents.⁽³⁹⁾ But Ribbentrop's efforts were doomed to fail when Hitler finally decided to subdue Soviet Russia and thereby gave the fatal blow to the dream of an Eurasian anti-imperialistic bloc.

Without the war in China and the clear decision of the United States in favour of China, Japan would probably have remained neutral during the Second World War or might even have joined Germany's enemies. But the Japanese oligarchy was incapable of making concessions in the China question which would have been the precondition for any political reorientation. The traditional ruling class had made the cult of the Emperor and Japan's sacred

(38) Norbert *Sommer* (Freiburg i. Br.) will deal with these questions in his forthcoming dissertation on German-Chinese relations 1938-1948.

Interviews author-Kuan Te-mau in Taichung/Taiwan on January 31 and March 18, 1977. Kuan Te-mau, Robert Chi, and the newly appointed Chinese military attaché, General Kuei Yung-chin, were sent to Berlin in April 1940. See also the personal account of *Kuan Te-mau* (in Chinese) in: (Biographical Literature), vols 166, 167, 168.

The mission failed. On July 1, 1941 the German government formally recognized Wang Ching-wei. This was a mere diplomatic gesture by Foreign Secretary von Ribbentrop in order to please the Japanese and make them attack the Soviet Union (See: Bernd *Martin*, *Deutschland und Japan im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Göttingen 1969, p.98). But in response to the German recognition of the Nanking puppet government, Nationalist China severed diplomatic relations with the Reich on July 2, 1941. Finally, China declared war on Germany on December 9, 1941, immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

(39) For the German mediation in the Sino-Japanese war in 1940 within the broader context of World War Two see: Bernd *Martin*, *Friedensinitiativen und Machtpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Düsseldorf 1976, pp.407-424.

mission in Asia their programme. If it failed this would have necessarily destroyed the privileges of the ruling economic and military circles surrounding the court. The primacy of a stable domestic order to which Japanese foreign policy had always been subordinated, prevented the Tokyo oligarchy from improving relations with the Western powers. On the contrary: The Japanese widened the conflict with China in order to confront the white powers – whose interests for the moment were fixed upon the war in Europe – with a “fait accompli” in East Asia. ⁽⁴⁰⁾

Talks with Chiang Kai-shek were bound to fail because of the Japanese government's incapacity for any internal or external compromise. Furthermore, the inauguration of the Chinese puppet-government under Wang Ching-wei⁽⁴¹⁾ intensified the conflict with the United States. Thus, Germany again seemed to be Tokyo's only possible ally in her policy of imperialism. The German troops' lightning victory in Poland was admired by the Japanese army. For the first time the pro-Western naval and economic groups doubted the military force of the European colonial powers. Besides, the agreements between Germany and the Soviet Union had improved Japanese-Soviet relations. The German Foreign Secretary who, unlike Hitler, regarded the agreement with the Soviet Union as a definitive act, tried on his second visit to Moscow to bring about a mediation between Japan and Russia. Ribbentrop aimed at including the Soviet Union as a territorial link to Japan and thereby wanted to enlarge the “world political triangle” to an Eurasian continental bloc. By this world-wide coalition the British Empire was to be overpowered.

After the Germans' rapid success in the West and after the Dutch forces had surrendered (15 May 1940), the Tokyo government considered an arrangement on an anti-British basis with the Germans as an urgent task. But Japanese feelers did not meet a favourable response in Berlin. Hitler, full of resentments against the “yellow” Japanese, disdainfully called them “Johnny-come-latelies” (“Erntehelfer”), who in the shadow of the German victories did nothing but try to enlarge their own territorial sphere of influence. As long as there was any hope of the British giving in during the summer of

(40) For a more thorough discussion of Japan's domestic and foreign policies 1939-1941 see: Bernd *Martin*, *Japans Weltmachtstreben 1939-1941*. In: Oswald *Hauser* (Ed.), *Weltpolitik II 1939-1945*. 14 Vorträge, Göttingen 1975, pp. 98-130.

(41) John H. *Boyle*, *China and Japan at War. The Politics of Collaboration*. Stanford University Press 1972.

1940, all Japanese approaches were rejected. Because then, with the help of the English as a “junior partner”, the white man’s rule in East Asia would be stabilized and Japan’s influence could be checked.⁽⁴²⁾

Due to the unfavourable outcome of the “Battle of Britain” and due to the strong American commitment to the British Isles, Hitler then listened to the Japanese proposals. A special envoy, later to become the German ambassador to Tokyo, Stahmer, within no time negotiated a “preventive defense alliance” with the Japanese. This Tripartite Pact, signed on September 27, 1940, aimed in the first place to discourage the United States from entering a two front war and to abandon Great Britain in her apparently desparate isolation. Now, Hitler viewed Japan in terms of a political stronghold against the USA, but not, it must be emphasized, as an ally against the Soviet Union as he had done once before, when signing the Anticominternpact.⁽⁴³⁾

However, the German government without regard for her Asian partner planned to attack the Soviet Union.⁽⁴⁴⁾ After June 22, 1941 only Ribbentrop like his Japanese colleague Matsuoka strongly advocated a Japanese intervention in the war with Russia in order to maintain a territorial link. But on the German side Hitler – from his racist point of view – resisted the participation of the “Yellows” in subduing the “inferior slavonic hordes”. In Tokyo even the anticommunist groups within the army, with the South East Asian raw materials before their eyes, favoured the invasion of Southern Indochina instead of an attack in the North.

The Japanese southward advance led to an embargo on oil, imposed by the USA. This caused the Imperial Navy, which up to then had delayed the decision of engaging in war, to join the army’s concept of conquest. On September 8, 1941, the Imperial Conference, the supreme governmental council, agreed upon a tentative decision to make war. But only at the end of November, when strategic plans had been finished, were consultations begun

(42) For British-German peace feelers in summer 1940 see: *Martin*, Friedensinitiativen pp.234-336.

(43) *Sommer*, op. cit. pp.426-449. For the original English text and the secret amendments see *ibid* pp.514-516. Michael *Libal*, *Japans Weg in den Krieg. Die Aussenpolitik der Kabinette Konoye 1940/41*. Düsseldorf 1971, pp.36-53.

(44) German government circles and even Hitler himself dropped hints to the Japanese about the impending German attack on Soviet Russia. For details see: *Martin*, *Deutschland und Japan* pp.94-97. For the telegrams sent by the Japanese Embassy in Berlin to Tokyo in May and June 1941 see: *Andreas Hillgruber*, *Japan und der Fall Barbarossa*. In: “*Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*”, 1968, pp.312-336.

with the Germans about joining the war against the USA. About 60 hours before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor the German decision to take part was transmitted to Tokyo. This decision, however, taken by Hitler himself, of joining a war without even knowing where and when it was to begin, for the first time did not spring from a free choice of Hitler, but from military necessity. For the "Blitzkrieg" had come to an unexpected standstill at the outskirts of Moscow. Taking the step into the unknown, into a war that had not been for prepared form in any way, not even by the military, against the strongest western power seemed to be a method for keeping the American war effort contained in the Pacific in order to allow for a second attempt to conquer the Soviet Union without Japanese assistance.⁽⁴⁵⁾

While the Japanese army and the German navy were busy planning military cooperation via either the Soviet Union or the Indian Ocean, until the decisive German defeat at Stalingrad Hitler stubbornly opposed any Japanese assistance against the Red Army.⁽⁴⁶⁾ On the Japanese side, the Imperial Navy concentrated on the decisive defeat of the American Pacific fleet, which finally led to the disaster at Midway (4-7 June 1942).

During the time of the war alliance only the repeated Japanese attempts of mediating a separate peace between Germany and the Soviet Union were of some political impact.⁽⁴⁷⁾ But Hitler refused any mediation, although Mussolini had been supporting these endeavours from 1942 on. Even Soviet peace feelers that were attempted in Stockholm in 1943 could not shake Hitler's axiomatic conviction that communism must be defeated.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Similarly fixed were the Japanese leaders in defending the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" against the Americans' leap from island to island in the Pacific. They, too, did not even consider the possibility of a compromise with China or even peace talks with the Anglo-Americans until the military situation, as in Germany, left no choice but unconditional surrender.⁽⁴⁹⁾

(45) For a more detailed discussion of this see: *Martin*, Deutschland und Japan pp.37-46.

(46) *Ibid* pp.129-151 and pp.172-174.

(47) *Ibid* pp.178-199.

(48) Bernd *Martin*, Verhandlungen über separate Friedensschlüsse 1942-1945. In: "Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen", 1976, pp.95-113. Vojtech *Mastny*, Stalin and the Prospects of a Separate Peace in World War Two. In: "American Historical Review", 1972, pp.1365-1388.

(49) For the German surrender see: Reimer *Hansen*, Das Ende des Dritten Reiches. Die deutsche Kapitulation. Stuttgart 1966. For the Japanese surrender there is only one article in German—a translation from the Japanese: Takushiro *Hattori*, Japans Weg aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. In: Andreas *Hillgruber* (Ed.), Probleme des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Köln 1967, pp.389-435.

Within a democratic and capitalistic world order, nationalsocialist Germany and semi-feudal Japan had been drawn together because of their traditional social structure. The development of historically backward states towards authoritarianism necessarily made these countries incapable of any selfless cooperation. The differences between Germany and Japan were covered over by joint declarations of force and the initial military victories won by the partners independently of each other. Any real cooperation or clearly formulated joint aim was unimaginable. Yet, from their adversaries' point of view the Tripartite Alliance could not be looked upon as a mere declaration. It decisively influenced the formation of world-wide political fronts during the 1930ies as well as the allies' war coalition and, later on, the mistrust among the victorious powers which emerged in the Cold War after 1945. The accusation of "world conspiracy" brought forward against Germany and Japan at the Nuremberg and Tokyo war tribunals, however, was based on the same fiction that the German and Japanese propaganda had claimed for themselves: their overestimation of each other's military and economic capacities.

But the final question may be asked, although it can never be answered: What course history might have taken, if Germany had stuck to her traditional pro-Chinese policy and if the Reich had aided China in her struggle for sovereignty against Japanese aggression until final victory?