WAR PRODUCES not only deadly guns and poison gases but also golden dreams and illusions; and the greater the war, the more fantastic the illusions. In one recurring illusion each war is the “last war;” in another, “swords” are turned into “ploughshares;” and in a third, the world is made “safe for democracy.” Democracy as the path to a perfect world of peace and plenty has been a central slogan of our age.

All men are free and equal, the masters of their fate: is not this the essence of modern democracy? If the fate of any given country is decided by its majority, one might gather that the fate of the world is similarly decided by the majority of mankind. Thus the future belongs to ideas and ideals which are accepted by the majority of the human race. Of the world’s almost three billion human beings, over one billion—those within the Soviet bloc—follow a Communist set of programs and ideas; half a billion or more side with the West; the rest are uncommitted. Is it not obvious, especially to believers in democracy, which way history is leading us?

At the root of this approach lies the primitive method of counting noses in all the countries of the world, a method in which Bushmen and British, Congolese and Frenchmen are each given an equal voice.
and equal role in world history. This is of course a crude over-simplification, but is nevertheless part of an ideology and plays a role in the philosophical and political discussions of our days. According to this ideology, Moscow rides the wave of Khrushchev has often pointed to the numerical strength of his “camp,” and his followers have often repeated it.

In his speech of November 6, 1957, commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the November revolution, Khrushchev said: “Today hundreds of millions are marching under the banner of Marxism-Leninism. Tomorrow additional tens and hundreds of millions of working people will place themselves under that victorious banner.”

Other Communists, especially those in China, have gone even further to conclude that the governments in the Soviet bloc represent not only the population of their own countries but also the “interests” of “toilers” everywhere; since toilers constitute the great majority among nations, the “socialist commonwealth” can actually profess to speak for ninety per cent of the world’s population.

Another widespread illusion counts states rather than their population as units: does not the majority of the world’s 120 to 150 states determine the course of history? And does it not follow that the twelve or so nations of the Soviet bloc are bound to have as great an impact on world affairs as the fifteen nations in NATO? This theory takes for granted that a government represents its people. More realistic than the first one, it nonetheless builds on considerable fiction: it views Italy as equal to Chad, and France as equal to the Cameroons. Moscow has at times promoted this approach as a basis for its far-reaching claims and its general notion of Soviet influence on current history.

As in the UN’s forerunner, the League of Nations, the “one state—one vote” principle is a pillar of the United Nations General Assembly. The United Nations proceeds from the “sovereign equality” of its members. Since 1945, the number of members of the United Nations has more than doubled. Large and small nations, strong and weak ones, are equal before the world assembly.

However, this principle is not carried out consistently: the UN’s most important agency, the Security Council, contains a corrective which violates the thesis of the “sovereign equality” of nations: five great powers have permanent seats in the Security Council and the right of veto—the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and China (the latter having been given the veto power partly for sentimental reasons). The powers defeated in the second World War—Germany, Italy, and Japan—were at first left out of the United Nations altogether; Italy and Japan were later admitted but without becoming permanent members of the Security Council. Reflecting the political alignment of 1945, the structure of the Security Council has become increasingly obsolete.

The introduction of “great power” privileges into the structure of the United Nations punctured the democratic principle of equality of nations; but the privilege was indispensable if the United Nations was to come into being. No great power would have joined if it had to comply with decisions made against its own interests. It was President Roosevelt who proposed the right of veto in December 1944; Churchill and Stalin concurred as a matter of course. The Soviet Union has made abundant use of its veto power—a fact that has produced much unnecessary irritation in the West. There is a good deal in Soviet world policy and conduct to be indignant about, but, having once agreed to admit the Soviet Union to the United Na-
tions, we cannot expect it to act in any different way. When they have found themselves in a minority, other permanent members of the Security Council have likewise used the veto.

The veto privilege as a modification of "equality" takes us from the world of dreams to the harsh reality of international affairs. Neither size of population nor sheer numbers of sovereign states, nor majorities of either, are decisive in world affairs. It is as unpopular today to stress the ultimately decisive role played by the great powers as it is considered indecent to talk about certain ugly facts of life. In this respect we are still, all of us, in a primary grade. Yet the fact remains that the great powers—with their alliances, competition, and quarrels—remain decisive in the shaping of history.

**What are the distinguishing traits of a great power?** Certainly not the size of its territory. The fact that Europe rather than Asia has been the seedbed of the modern great powers proves this point. Nor is it size of population: the two most populous countries of the world, China and India, have not in recent centuries been among the world’s great powers, while Britain took a leading position at a time when her population was below ten millions. Nor is the degree of economic or even industrial development decisive in itself: Russia was a great power in the 18th and 19th centuries despite the fact that it was least developed industrially and was in fact a backward state. Scientific progress and general education are also poor yardsticks for measuring great-power status: Russia’s past record once again establishes the point. Nor is political homogeneity a necessary attribute of a great power: suffice it to point to France since the end of the 19th century. And while peculiarities and specific traits of “national character” may be one element in the total configuration, they are an element of vague significance rather than determinants of a nation’s growth to big-power status.

The fabric of which a great power is woven is complex and hard to analyze. The main characteristic is stability over a long period of time. Neither war nor defeat, earthquakes, floods, nor epidemics can remove such a nation permanently from the concert of powers. The ability of such a nation to recover and often rise to new heights after a catastrophe distinguishes a great power from other nations; its rehabilitation of course implies rehabilitation of military power.

This is not to say that a group of chosen nations has a corner on big-power status for eternity. History has recorded the passing of empires—in the Near East, the Mediterranean basin, and elsewhere, including ancient Greece and Rome. More recent centuries have seen the fall of the Ottoman empire, of Sweden, and Spain, and the destruction of Poland. Yet other powers have proved to be more durable and have lasted for centuries.

Paradoxically, the total destruction of a great power in a war creates a longing for its resurrection on the part of its destroyers. The vacuum it leaves, like the gaping hole left by removing a keystone from an edifice, demands restoration, and in their own interests the victorious powers seek to bring it about. In international affairs, too, *natura abhorret vacuum*.

**Attempts to deprive** a defeated power of its military capacity have regularly failed; more often than not it has been her former enemies who have helped the nation to rearm.
Napoleon's France, definitively beaten in 1815 after a long series of wars in which she was the aggressor, was left impotent and subjected to military occupation by an allied force of 150,000. Within a few years France re-emerged as a dominant power on the continent, with Russia, one of the engineers of her defeat, helping her to resume her traditional role.

After the first World War Germany was deprived of her right to maintain an army of over 100,000 men. But long before the Nazis came to power, she was permitted to build a new navy. From 1933 on, the Nazi government disregarded all restrictions and rapidly re-armed the country; this was possible because Britain was not prepared to use force to stop the process.

Russian history presents an illuminating record of the rise and fall of a great power. In 1919 Russia was defeated and practically disarmed. She was encircled and isolated from the West. From 1922-23 on Germany, in need of Russia's support against the West, embarked on clandestine military cooperation with her, while the Western powers, on their part, welcomed Russia's return to a modicum of economic normalcy. Russia then proceeded gradually to rebuild a substantial military establishment; her military industrialization in the 1930's, achieved at a tremendous cost in money and human lives, was another indication of her permanence as a great power, albeit of the Asiatic type. By the time of the second World War Russia was again one of the major powers in Europe.

The efforts of the victors aimed at military sterilization of a defeated state, are natural, logical, and probably necessary; however, they can be effective only for a limited time. When applied to a great power, they must always end in failure. Perhaps the most striking case in point is the policy applied by the Allies toward Japan in 1945-47. The Potsdam Declaration—signed by the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union—called for the total destruction of Japan's military and naval power. In addition, the command of the American occupation forces put pressure on Japan to adopt a constitution which prohibited the maintenance of men under arms. The new Japanese government and Diet were happy to make their country the first to adopt this exemplary progressive law—a law which, it appeared likely, would soon be imitated by all other nations.

"Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, [read Chapter II Article 9 of the Constitution which came into force on May 3, 1947] the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

"In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized."

General Douglas MacArthur told the Allied Council for Japan on April 4, 1946, that Japan was not only renouncing war, but also surrendering the sovereign right of resort to arms in the international sphere. Japan hereby proclaims her faith in a society of nations governed by just, tolerant and effective rules of universal social and political morality, and intrusts its national integrity thereto. . . .

There can be no doubt that both the progress and survival of civilization is dependent . . . upon the realization by all nations of the utter futility of force as an arbiter of international issues. . . .

I therefore commend Japan's proposal for the renunciation of war to the thoughtful consideration of all of the peoples of the world. It points the way and the only way." 

General MacArthur predicted that the
renunciation of war would be adopted by other countries, which would peacefully “federate together” in the same manner as the states comprising the United States. This was the same MacArthur who barred Soviet troops from the territory of Japan and opposed Soviet efforts to gain influence in Japanese affairs.

It did not take long before the American authorities had to change their minds. By agreement with the United States, after Japan had been completely demilitarized, a new Japanese “national security force” was initiated in 1947-48. This force was gradually expanded, although the constitutional provision renouncing war provided a barrier and gave the pro-Soviet elements and naive pacifists in Japan powerful weapons, including court proceedings, to oppose the rehabilitation of their country as a major military power.

Allied policy in Germany after the Second World War was motivated by the same point of view as in Japan. The conviction prevailed in the West that the main task was to weaken Germany permanently; to accomplish this it was found necessary not only to demilitarize the country but also to lower its economic standards by making it a non-industrial nation. Stalin had never accepted these theories literally; his long range aim pointed in another direction. For his own reasons, however—in order to cripple all possible centers of anti-Sovietism, among them the potential strength of an independent Germany—he supported the efforts of his allies.

Among the originators of the most fanciful illusions about Germany were a number of highly-placed Americans, whose views contrasted with those of the more realistic British leaders around Winston Churchill. The Morgenthau Plan, which almost became the program of the United States government, provided for the permanent “pastoralization” of Germany after the war. The Potsdam Conference of 1945 prescribed (paragraph 13) that “In organizing the German economy, primary emphasis shall be given to the development of agriculture and peaceful domestic industries.” It went almost without saying that a permanent prohibition against the maintenance of armed forces would be imposed. Paragraph 11 of the Potsdam Declaration read: “In order to eliminate Germany’s war potential, the production of arms, ammunition and implements of war as well as all types of aircraft and sea-going ships shall be prohibited and prevented.” And paragraph 3 (b) stated: “The maintenance and productions of all aircraft and all arms, ammunition and implements of war shall be prevented.”

There was some uncertainty as to whether Germany as a sovereign state, should be permitted to exist at all. While Churchill and Stalin did envisage a future German state (each had a different Germany in view), the French wanted to go beyond the Potsdam restrictions, to demand permanent partition and the separation of certain territories from Germany. On behalf of the United States, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes submitted to the Allies the draft of a treaty providing for the demilitarization of Germany for a period of twenty-five years. The Soviet government dissented: Molotov demanded forty years. On the other hand, Molotov rejected the French program of separating the Ruhr, Rhine, and Saar areas; he also rejected all “pastoralization” plans and insisted on the establishment of a united German government. While exaggerating the revolutionary potential of Germany, Moscow was in general more realistic than some of the Western allies about the future re-emergence of Germany as a great power.

Germany, sustained by the victors in the first postwar years, became a power again by the end of the 1940’s. A West
and an East Germany were created, each of which laid claim to govern a united country. Each was helped by its great-power allies, and each was rearmed with their help. At first the process of rearmament was opposed, particularly by Moscow. Finally, about 1955, even the Soviet government acquiesced.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, when Russia was expanding toward the West, there existed in the heart of Europe a large state whose historic function was to serve as a buffer and to cushion drives from the East. This was the Hapsburg empire. More than other states, Austria-Hungary combined under one dynasty a number of minorities—Slavs, Germans, and Hungarians; the territories of these nationalities had repeatedly either been threatened or invaded by the Mongols and Turks. Austria-Hungary (and its predecessor the Austrian Empire), which had earlier served as Europe’s bulwark against the East, maintained this role in the 19th century, but now the enemy was not Turkey, but Russia.

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918-19 brought the structure of Europe tottering. But before long two new military powers had re-emerged—Germany and the Soviet Union. By swallowing Austria and her neighboring lands, Hitler’s Germany arrogated to itself Austria’s former role of European bulwark. When the small successor states of Austria-Hungary re-emerged from the holocaust in 1944-45, they were unable singly to resist the big Eastern power; their continued separation from one another was jealously watched over by the new master of Central Europe.

Winston Churchill considered “the complete break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire” as a “cardinal tragedy.” The empire, he said, had afforded security to a large number of peoples, none of whom in our own time had the strength or vitality to stand by themselves in the face of pressure from a revivified Germany or Russia. . . . There is not one of the peoples or provinces that constituted the Empire of the Hapsburgs to whom gaining their independence has not brought the tortures which ancient poets and theologians had reserved for the damned.2

When Austria-Hungary disintegrated, Europe’s masters of the time—France and England—did not recognize the dangers inherent in this process. Both Russia and Germany were impotent in the Versailles and Trianon era, and no one apparently foresaw their early re-emergence in the role of conquerors. The world had paid dearly for this destruction of one of the pillars of Europe’s stability.

European stability cannot be restored until a new power is created in Central and Eastern Europe, though on a more modern basis. This implies that lasting peace cannot be achieved until the Soviet empire is dissolved and its western parts combine in some modern form of federation, confederation, or series of alliances.

Unlike the several fallacious theories of international relations discussed earlier in this article, another standard—that of the great powers as the driving forces and agents of history—will lead to different and more realistic conclusions. In the last hundred years eight great powers have predominated in world affairs: Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Italy, and Austria-Hungary, in Europe; the United States; and Japan. After the division of Austria-Hungary (1918) and the defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan (1945), four powers remained. Overwhelmingly stronger than the nations with which she has alliances or pacts, the Soviet Union alone thus
faces the three other major powers.

In recent times Russia has rapidly acquired a formidable military capacity. She has surrounded herself with a number of loyal and almost-loyal satellities; she has created an international system of which she is the undisputed head. This accretion of power and influence is not enough, however: Russia’s isolation cannot be overcome by alliances with the satellites because there is no substitute for firm cooperation with another great power in international affairs.

This situation is not simply a matter of a numerical relationship of one against three. Each of the three Western powers, with its inevitable shortcomings, compensates for the weaknesses of the others; each has its special assets—geographical, economic, military. France, it is true, has lost much of her standing since 1940; Britain is usually inclined to flexible policies; the United States is reluctant to plunge deep into European waters. Yet, the three Western powers conjointly constitute such a powerful force that Moscow must draw conclusions from its existence. In particular, the Soviet government must:

(1) Prevent, or at least delay, the complete adherence of France to the bloc of Western powers, specifically her realignment with West Germany and a close alliance with the United States. From this vantage point, Moscow welcomed France’s colonial involvements, which obliged France to keep large forces outside of Europe and to expend great sums and efforts overseas. To the Soviet government Europe is by far the most important arena of international activity. Up to now she has been glad to have only a feeble France as an adversary on the continent. From the Soviet point of view, the situation became considerably more complex once the Algerian problem was “solved.”

(2) Prevent, or at least delay, the rehabilitation of Western Germany. Germany is a logical candidate to become again a great power; her growing role in world affairs cannot be impaired for long by propaganda or diplomatic gestures; she can be paralyzed only by a war, the outcome of which is, however, uncertain. Consequently, Moscow has no effective means of preventing West Germany from attaining the stature of a strong power as an addition to the Big Four.

(3) Try to divide the Western coalition, for instance, by splitting Japan and Germany from their Western Allies. A return to the wartime alignment of powers, which made it possible for the Soviet government to extend its control over a number of countries in the West and the East, would be most advantageous for the Soviet Union. But the prospects for such a turn are slim.

(4) Prevent or delay any rapprochement among the countries of Eastern and Central Europe which would be independent of the Soviet Union, no matter what socio-economic system prevails in these areas. Even Communist governments, adhering to what they view as a socialist economy, would be dangerous to Moscow once they undertook to play a separate role in European affairs. The most menacing kind of rapprochement, certainly, would be a federation or confederation of former Soviet satellites.

(5) Emphasize the tactics of bilateral dealings between the two super-powers—the United States and the Soviet Union—which between them could solve most outstanding problems. In this club of two super-powers Moscow would not be faced with the unfavorable ratio of one-to-three or one-to-five. Moscow would be glad to enter into a bilateral pact if only the United States dropped her allies: “... the entire international situation is to a certain degree dependent on the state of Soviet-American relations... If two such mighty powers as the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. would base
their relations on the principle of coexistence, this would be to nobody's detriment, while the cause of preserving peace would definitely gain."

Accordingly, the Soviet side tends to minimize the strength and role of Britain and France. "On what ground [Khrushchev asked at a rally in Moscow on his return from the United Nations] can England now be considered a great power while India cannot? . . . Why is France considered a great power and Indonesia not? Why are India and Indonesia put in another category at the United Nations than England and France, and why are they not, for example, permanent members of the Security Council?"

In its search for alliances to exploit and manipulate, the leadership of the Soviet Union turns out to consist of peculiarly unrealistic men,—who believed only recently that they could, as in earlier years, combine empire-building with great-power "amity." But blandishments offered to the West cannot succeed so long as a single state is permitted to wield predominant power over Europe. In the long run, this predominance, achieved by arms, threats, and encroachments, cannot endure.

\footnote{Winston S. Churchill, \textit{The Gathering Storm}.}

\footnote{\textit{Pravda}, November 10, 1960, p. 2.}
\footnote{\textit{Pravda}, October 21, 1960, p. 2.}